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### Madison arts study on 'facilities crisis' gears up

by Joe Tarr

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Karin Wolf, Madison's arts program administrator, often hears the same complaint.

"What we hear at the city all the time is there's a facilities crisis. [People say], 'What we really need is some incubator space, production space.' Then I talk to others, and they say, 'I think the space is there, but we need a way to connect people to the space.'"

Wolf hopes that soon there will be a simple, easy way for people to find out what spaces are available. The city is about to undertake a \$100,000 study of its arts venues.

Mayor Paul Soglin feels so strongly about the study -- which made up .04% of last year's \$240.7 million budget -- that he threatened to veto the budget when the Common Council tried to nix it.

Madison is set to award the contract for the study -- pending council approval -- to Webb Management Services of New York.

Wolf says the information will help the mayor and council make funding decisions down the road.

"Say there's a theater, and it anchors the businesses around it. Maybe there are restaurants, maybe a wine bar," she says. Knowing how a theater anchors a whole neighborhood's economy will help elected officials make funding decisions.

As part of the study, city staff are working on a database of venues. Wolf says it will include venues to the "micro-level," including every church basement that might have performance space.

"I want this mapped to see where the natural clusters are and where the voids are," Wolf says. "There could be whole parts of town that don't have access to [arts venues]. It indicates an inequality we need to pay attention to."