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## UDC August 4

1 message

John Harrington &lt;jaharrin@tds.net&gt;

Mon, Aug 2, 2010 at 11:04 PM

To: Al Martin &lt;AMartin@cityofmadison.com&gt;

Cc: Richard Wagner &lt;rrdickwagner@gmail.com&gt;

Dear Al

I am at a conference and will not be at the UDC meeting this week. However, I have a few comments on Item 1 the review of the City Development Process, if a discussion takes place where they would be appropriate. The memorandum from the committee dated June 11 has good recommendations, but I am concerned with some of the proposals brought forth in other memos I've read.

Efficient or not, Madison should recognize that the development process it has used so far has resulted in far more attractive and environmentally sound development than in many neighboring and regional cities. Despite the economy Madison has one of the lowest office vacancy rates in the state and attracts development for a variety of reasons. Certainly we lose some projects, but I suspect the reasons for those losses extend well beyond the level of efficiency of the development process. It would be helpful for me in reviewing proposed changes to the process to see the data on the developments that have been lost (with an evaluation of the "fit" of the development for Madison) and *specifically who* finds Madison hostile to development. Such statements are easy to make but without specifics they are seldom justification for change.

The major concern appears to be how long it takes for a project to move through the City process. I can only speak to the UDC, but specific suggestions would be:

- (1) Projects be brought to the UDC on an informational basis to discuss concerns that commissioners may have and perhaps be asked to sign off if they choose not to do this.
- (2) Development projects be brought to the UDC only when all required materials are provided for distribution to the commissioners (one of the major delays we have is that developers do not bring all necessary materials with them when requesting initial approval.) This could be aided by the UDC in reviewing with City Staff what is expected and that City Staff then work with the developer to be sure she/he understands what materials are required for submission and that items are not placed on the agenda without these materials (context maps and existing trees are one item that seem to be constantly missing.)
- (3) Materials should be submitted by the deadline, if not the item should not be placed on the agenda. New or revised plans (or other major material to the project) should not be allowed to be passed out at the UDC meeting.
- (4) Presentations for minor projects should have time limits.
- (5) Staff discretion should be used, but time limits should be placed on presentations for major projects as well. We as commissioners need to be briefer and to the point in our comments but this is also true of presenters. The commission, if necessary, can extend the time for presentation or ask questions to address items that were not fully covered in the presentation.
- (6) Commissioners should not design projects but articulate what are issues and concerns. It is not our job to resolve the problem, the design teams are paid to do this and know the project much better than we do.
- (7) To provide flexibility, the UDC chair, in conferring with City Staff, should be allowed to make exceptions to the process when circumstances warrant.

The purpose of the above suggestions is to help developers understand what they need to be providing and presenting to the Commission and to shorten the time it takes for a project to move through this commission. One of the major reasons I find for project delays is that the materials needed for our review are not available to us at the initial meetings. A second reason for delays is the lack of a developer's response to requests by the commission. As illustrated by one of our recent projects, projects are referred by the commission because previous

requests are not met (such as bringing the project architect to answer our questions), issues previously addressed are not resolved (this may mean better articulation on our part) or major changes to a project are brought to us at our meeting. I find it difficult to support a cap on referrals for this reason. At the same time we need to continue to be sure we are clear about expectations.

John

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