

The Board of Directors of the Greater State Street Business Association(GSSBA) support the planned reconstruction of Peace Park and Visitor Center.

As an organization that represents the retail, restaurant, and other businesses in the area, our members are on the street every day and know what a gem Peace Park can become. The Board of Directors has been actively involved in the redesign process of Peace Park. Members of our association have served on both the first Lisa Link Peace Park Advisor Committee and the current Peace Park Subcommittee. The new design and the addition of a Visitor's center with public restrooms will help to turn this small park into a great asset for State Street.

As business owners, we are very aware of the importance of visitors to the success of our businesses. It has long been our goal to have a year-round Visitor Center in the State Street area. Visitors bring a lot of money to the Madison economy, and the downtown area is one of the major destinations for many of these visitors. It just makes sense to have a welcoming Visitor Center for this very important part of our city's economy, especially at a time when many retail stores and restaurants are seeing a downturn in sales. The addition of restrooms is a great plus for both citizens and visitors to State Street. Often, small shops on the street do not have public restrooms available for customers, and if one is not dining at a restaurant, it can be difficult to find one.

Most of the GSSBA members help to pay for the staffing that will be used in the visitors center. This is a plus for the whole city. The information that the Downtown Ambassadors currently provide is a great resource for the city and surrounding area. Whether it is a visitor looking for directions to the American Players Theater in Spring Green, or a local dad asking the hours of the Children's Museum, having a place that is central and visible will be asset to our city.

The new concept for the park will also make it a more open and welcoming green space to people in the downtown area. The addition of a stage area will help many local events that the Business Association now supports, like Folk on State. The trees, seating areas, and landscaping is designed to open up the park and make it more inviting. The current lack of trees (and therefore shade) often makes it very hot in the summer. The clear walkways from the Gilman Street side to State Street will also open up the park to walkers who will past through it on their way to and from State Street.

The small station that the Madison Police Dept. will have in the Visitor Center will help make their job easier. With the increase of safety issues downtown (people have been mugged at all hours of the day and night), a more visible police force will be a welcome addition to the area. High activity and greater numbers of people in and around Peace Park will make it more welcoming for everyone.

The Board of the GSSBA and the business we represent are looking forward to enjoying the new Peace Park and Visitors Center.

John Hutchinson, Pres, Greater State St. Business Association