

CAPITOL

NEIGHBORHOODS, INC.
MADISON, WISCONSIN

February 16, 2011

Mr. Doug Nelson, Chair
City of Madison Economic Development Committee
Madison Municipal Building
P.O. Box 2983
Madison, WI 53701

Re: Economic Development Committee

Development Process Improvement Initiative – Report January 31, 2011

Dear Mr. Nelson,

We have had an opportunity to review the January 31, 2011 version of the report. There are several recent changes in the report which we feel compelled to respond to.

Goal F.1 (p. 29) The Urban Design Commission, Landmarks Commission and the Plan Commission each has different ordinance standards for review and brings different expertise to their review. The recommendation to limit review of proposals within the downtown to UDC and to limit review of certain demolitions to just Landmarks thereby eliminating the Plan Commission from these reviews will be detrimental to the City. Each Commission performs an important function. This recommendation is counter to maintaining our existing high standards.

Goal F.2 (p.29) There has been no information presented to the committee that the super majority requirement is a detriment to development in the city. Quite to the contrary the super majority vote is seldom involved in development related decisions. Passing anything through the Council requires 11 votes. The additional three votes required for the super majority is not an insurmountable burden in those few instances where issues of particular concern are involved. Super majority vote is required primarily related to budgetary changes and in instances when the vote has the capacity to irretrievably harm Madison's cultural, historic and architectural resources. Changes to the super majority voting requirements are not appropriate and again would lower our existing high standards.

Goal G.10 (p. 33) This is a recommendation that Commissions must act on a proposal in a single meeting and referrals would only be allowed if requested by the applicant. This recommendation is particularly misguided and will lead to more delays and frustration for those involved in the process. This will shortchange the due diligence of a commissions review. When inadequate information is available the

commissions will be left with the options of approving a proposal that is not fully considered or rejecting what may be a meritorious proposal that is simply not quite there yet. Rejected proposals have a waiting period before a reapplication can be submitted and there are additional costs. A referral allows a Commission to provide feedback, changes can be considered in a reasonable manner outside of the immediacy of a commission meeting and then the proposal can be brought back to the next meeting.

We note that there are a number of recommendations that Neighborhood Associations be required to do something with no consideration for the range of experience or abilities of the associations. Nor do these recommendations consider the range of proposals that are brought before Neighborhood Associations. With some interest we also note that no other stakeholders in the process are called out in a similar fashion with requirements.

A basic requirement which would aid the entire process has been completely overlooked by the report. If there were a strict policy that proposals would not be placed on an agenda until all of the required information had been submitted by the applicant, Commissions would function more efficiently and the number of referrals would diminish.

The last paragraph of **Goal A.2a** urges Neighborhood Associations to develop a standardized format for review of development proposals. The footnote is a reference to two neighborhood information forms not to a process. CNI has a written and tested review process which could provide a basis for this goal. <http://capitolneighborhoods.org/pdf/cni-protocol-%20adopted%20chapter%20breaks%20proof.pdf>

Over the months that your committee has been considering the review process CNI has continued to be engaged providing written comments and attending all of your meetings. Our written comments of August 6, 2010, November 16, 2010 and December 3, 2010 are part of your record. In these 20 pages we provided over 120 comments and recommendations. **We are dismayed** that fewer than 10 of our comments have been incorporated into the current version of your report. By reference we are resubmitting our comments from the three prior letters for your consideration as we believe these are still valid and important suggestions for enhancing the review process to ensure that it is efficient, predictable & uniform, and maintains our existing high standards.

Thank you for your consideration,

Development Review Oversight Committee

Capitol Neighborhoods

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