



Madison's Central Business Improvement District (BID)

MEMO

Date: April 7, 2011

To: Sustainable Design and Energy Committee
Jeanne Hoffman, Facilities and Sustainability Manager

cc: Economic Development Committee

From: Mary Carbine
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Re: Input on Draft Sustainability Plan

Dear Committee members and staff,

Thank you for all your work to create and issue the city's Draft Sustainability Plan. We would like to offer input from the perspective of Madison's Central Business Improvement District (BID).

About Madison Central BID

Madison's Central Business Improvement District encompasses the greater State Street and Capitol Square areas. It includes some 220 commercial properties and 370 retail, restaurant, entertainment and service businesses, many of which are locally-owned and/or small businesses.

The aim of the BID is to increase the vitality and health of the district and promote business within it. Our constituents are commercial property and retail business owners in the district, and their customers, both residents and visitors. Specific BID goals include:

- Increase retail sales within the district
- Attract, retain and expand businesses
- Create a positive experience and welcoming environment for customers: clean, safe, easy to get to, from & around, well-maintained, attractive.

BID Input in Sustainability Plan

A business district that is clean, green and easy to get around, and Madison's reputation as environmentally friendly, are positives for attracting downtown customers, residents and visitors.

The Sustainability Plan offers ideas that the BID has supported in other contexts, such as investing in infrastructure for dense development downtown (p. 28), and economic development assistance and programs for businesses to help them implement energy efficiency and sustainability programs.

When viewed from the perspective of downtown's many small, locally owned businesses, two suggested Plan actions raise concerns:

Page 22: "Require events that are granted either a park use or street use permit, and that anticipate attendance over 200 people, have a TDM plan."

Such a requirement will place an undue burden on the many small, not-for-profit organizations whose events are so important for attracting customers to downtown, from Maxwell Street Days to Cars on State. Transportation Demand Management (or TDM) plans can cost thousands of dollars to create and implement. Few organizations that present events could either afford to have a TDM plan developed, or have the expertise to develop one in-house.

We suggest instead that the City take the lead in developing its own TDM plan that incorporates a TDM template, options and suggestions for permitted events.

Page 28: Research impacts of downtown toll zones (with electronic monitoring) that target reducing numbers of vehicles and resulting emissions from the central city.

Congestion pricing is usually implemented in major metropolitan areas with populations ranging from 850,000 (Stockholm) to 1.3 million (Milan) or 7.8 million (London), and with highly developed public transportation systems. Congestion pricing can have a negative effect on retail businesses and on economic activity in general (and has been opposed in cities much larger than Madison for this reason).

We do not agree that Madison, with a population of roughly 225,000, is an appropriate candidate for a downtown toll zone and congestion pricing.

- Central Downtown Madison needs *more* people and visitors to sustain it as a retail district. We do not need the disincentives of added cost.
- City parking garages and lots are not fully utilized.
- Most of the competing shopping areas and communities offer free parking. Customers already complain about having to pay for parking downtown. If customers also have to pay just to drive downtown, they will simply stay away.
- Madison does not have a fully developed regional public transportation system. Visitors (including regional visitors) are key to the downtown economy. If visitors cannot get here via public transit, and you add an additional toll for them to drive here – they simply won't come downtown. This will be damaging to downtown businesses, Overture Center, and the economy.