

**From:** Mary Carbine [<mailto:MCarbine@visitdowntownmadison.com>]  
**Sent:** Monday, December 19, 2011 3:46 PM  
**To:** Olver, Aaron; Yessa, Peggy  
**Subject:** BID Board preliminary Downtown Plan feedback for the EDC 12/21 meeting

Dear Aaron and Peggy,

Please forward the below comments to members of the Economic Development Committee in advance of their Dec. 21 meeting for which the Downtown Plan is on the agenda.

The Board of Madison's Central Business Improvement District (BID) has designated a subcommittee to work on the Downtown Plan, and anticipates approving final recommendations in early February. In the meantime, the BID Executive Committee has identified initial key feedback, below, focusing on Key 2: Strengthen the Region's Economic Engine, and the central downtown retail district.

- The vision and recommendations for retail include many good things, but need to be more grounded in retail economics and trends.
- Retaining and attracting retail is about hard numbers (population, households, income) rather than wishes and desires of residents.
- Food, entertainment, arts, culture are the new anchors. Department stores are not the future of retail, and they are not coming downtown (and they don't pay rent anyway).
- Retail opportunities will not "arise." Downtown Madison must compete for retailers—locally, nationally and with surrounding communities.
- It's especially important to build the downtown resident households and worker populations because they are a more stable customer base for retail than visitors.
- The projected additional residents, workers & median income benchmarks in the Plan are not enough to bring the kind of retail downtown residents want. The projected 20-year benchmarks (p. 131) of only 5,000 additional residents and median household income of \$25,813 will be unlikely to sustain existing downtown retail, much less support additional. (By comparison, the 2010 citywide median HH income is \$54,761 and the median HH income within one mile of Hilldale Shopping Center is \$69,082.)
- The plan needs to encourage more density of certain types of housing (family, professional, executive) and employers (office space) to support the retail residents want. There needs to be more flexibility in height limits to help achieve this.
- If residents want more retail, residents and the city need to be willing to support downtown projects that allow retail spaces of 7,000 SF or more, and which modernize buildings. Downtown will need spaces for existing retailers to expand (i.e., retention) as well as to attract local, regional and national retailers.
- The plan needs to include more metrics and specific goals (number of households, income within 3 mile radius, etc.).
- The concept of small "retail nodes" located throughout downtown is unlikely to work. Retail needs to be near other retail to succeed. Other than convenience stores, retail "islands" tend to have a lot of turnover and be difficult to lease.
- The city has opportunities for action now to support retail retention and recruitment: enhancing/expanding downtown cleaning, maintenance, and landscaping (little things matter); creating a handbook for small businesses; and continuing to improve process and customer service for small business permitting (more recommendations to come).

About Madison's Central Business Improvement District (BID)

Madison's Central BID is a special assessment district that 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. The BID works to create a rising tide and bigger market for all downtown businesses and the district as a whole.

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