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## Deb Archer: Oliv project inspiring, will be great for Downtown Madison

Dec 3, 2021

For 26 years I was dedicated to the work of attracting visitors, conventions and sporting events to Madison. During this time, the city, Dane County, UW-Madison and private sector investments in infrastructure, retail and other assets helped elevate our community's profile as a visitor destination.

The organization I led was successful in luring dozens of high profile and interesting events to Madison, including Ironman, CrossFit, Congress for the New Urbanism and World Stem Cell Summit. We staged Bucky on Parade and secured the WIAA Boys Basketball Tournament. The thousands of leisure visitors these and other activities attract generate vital revenue for public venues and businesses and help create an energetic and vibrant community where people want to live, work and play.

This has been particularly true for our most famous street -- State Street.

The pandemic changed much of that activity coupled with the shuttering of businesses following the unfortunate riots in May 2020. The good news is that the recovery is underway. Most of us are seeking respite from the last 18 months, so travel is rebounding. Visiting friends and families and attending sports and cultural events are in the forefront of many of our minds. Part of the allure of travel is to have new experiences or recapture memories from our past.



Deb Archer

Madison has so much to offer new and returning visitors, and at the core of that experience is our beautiful downtown and especially State Street, which regardless of the season has welcomed residents and visitors to wander, gaze, shop, dine and people watch.

But at the core of our Downtown, issues remain. Safety continues to be a concern. Pedestrian traffic still remains 10% to 20% below pre-COVID levels in the two blocks farthest from campus, and business vacancies remain high, all up and down the street. The economic health of our community remains unclear. Downtown generates a disproportionately high share of our Madison's tax base as well as hotel room tax, which supports Monona Terrace and Destination Madison's work.

As a new grandmother, I think about the future a lot. What will my granddaughter and her parents and friends do when they visit Madison? What will Madison look like 10 or 20 years from now?

Now is the time for us to make decisions and investments that will create the brightest vision possible for our community and especially Downtown. The opportunities we need to support are those that provide solutions.



### **The bottom of State Street in Madison is still ripe for a pedestrian mall**

Wisconsin State Journal editorial board

One of the most promising opportunities to strengthen Downtown is in front of the Madison City Council and has received support from the city's Urban Design Commission and Plan Commission. The Oliv Madison project is inspiring. This development, proposed by Core Spaces, will bring housing for over 1,100 people to the center of State Street. It also will provide vital tax revenues.

This project could be the springboard we need to revitalize State Street, not to what it was pre-pandemic, but to an even stronger and more resilient place for all of us -- and future generations. The project offers sustainable spaces, affordable housing units and new retail spaces. It preserves the facades of well-known and beloved buildings.

The City Council has many priorities. Encouraging investments that keep our Downtown attractive and welcoming needs to be high on the list. I am hopeful and urge the City Council to support the Oliv project, which will help ensure our city remains healthy and vibrant.