

AGENDA # 1

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: February 11, 2015

TITLE: Directing the Department of Planning and Community and Economic Development to conduct a one or two year collaborative effort to implement many of the recommendations in the 2012 adopted Downtown Plan, and to take an expanded and more detailed look at a number of issues associated with State Street, the Capitol Square, and adjacent areas (36697)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: February 11, 2015

ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Cliff Goodhart, Tom DeChant, John Harrington, Richard Slayton, Lauren Cnare and Melissa Huggins.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of February 11, 2015, the Urban Design Commission **RECOMMENDED APPROVAL** of a resolution to direct the Department of Planning and Community & Economic Development to conduct a one or two-year collaborative effort to implement many of the recommendations in the 2012 Adopted Downtown Plan, and to take an expanded and more detailed look at a number of issues associated with State Street, the Capitol Square and adjacent areas. Bill Fruhling, Principal Planner, Department of Planning and Community & Economic Development discussed the resolution and the issues associated with this area. Many of the issues are interrelated and therefore necessitate another look at the vision for State Street and the Capitol Square. This resolution anticipates a 1-2 year planning effort and is very comprehensive. At minimum the plan will look at a number of design and character issues, including pedestrian access, street furniture, public amenities, storefront rhythm and design, signage, historic issues, programming issues (how public spaces and the streets are being used for large events, small gatherings), sidewalk cafes and vending spaces and how that all fits in, food carts, business issues, affordability in rents, marketing trends and the change in downtown consumer base, transportation issues (taxis, bus access, bicycle lanes and wayfinding), and behavioral issues. The point of this is really comprehensive and it really takes a look at this part of downtown moving forward. The market study mentioned in the resolution is important to have a good understanding of the market of the area, how the market demand is going to change with the housing units that are coming, the issue of the changing face of retail and how much purchasing is actually done online. The amount of money and the number of staff members dedicated to this is not yet known; the intention is that existing staff from Planning, Economic Development and Transportation will lead this effort.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- Could what you learn here be used again on different streets?

- Possibly. Each of those different areas are unique and the situations they face are unique, but there are some takeaways (Monroe Street and Williamson Street) that are by and large experiencing some of the same changes in occupancy as State Street, with maybe less emphasis on retail and more on food and beverage establishments.
- Are you going to be looking at any of the other similar streets, doing some benchmarking and talking to those folks to understand how they make it work? I think it would be really helpful as a part of this study to even go and look at some of these places and talk to some of the people who are running them.
 - We typically do that with a lot of our projects.
- I think on State Street we also need to look at the issue of how building height to street width affects the pedestrian mall. One of the things that makes pedestrian malls successful is light and that concerns me. To me that pertains only to State Street, not the Capitol Square.
 - I think one of the main reasons this was referred to boards and commissions is to let everybody know that this is coming, but also if there are issues you think are important to these areas that you can make that be known now going into it.
- I'm concerned that State Street is very student-oriented, and this 1-2 year effort, before you even start it's going to be two years. One year makes it either optimistic or not all inclusive.
 - The one thing on this that gives us a reasonable chance of being able to do this within two years is that it is very comprehensive in scope but very tight in terms of geography, so I think that will help keep us focused.
- When you walk down State Street there's a vista that you would see, like walking down a hallway. Be aware of that.
- Think of the width of the storefronts, really study active entrances and different uses versus what looks like a nice busy active street.
- I've gone to a lot of these neighborhood conferences and I hear planners talking about not doing so much comprehensive planning, but doing very targeted, light planning efforts that can focus and move on, and I worry that making this a "Christmas tree with everything" is going to un-focus it. Discussions could range anywhere and if you want a focused discussion, not having comprehension is probably a better strategy.
- If this is related to market, we see all of these housing projects coming through but they're not limited to what is the downtown and the Downtown Plan. That whole concept is not very functional today but it's much more central Isthmus core in terms of the housing, and I think the retail market is that kind of a market as well. I worry that you're setting up some tensions here that are not going to get to some of the points that need to be highlighted quickly in trying to do something comprehensive. Maybe as you do this you might think about quick reports coming out of a study like this that give it tentative focus on an area, get some comments and see what needs rounding out about that study rather than wait for a comprehensive study that's just going to sit there.
 - I think that's actually how we're looking at this, getting all the cards on the table but they may not really all be addressed in this.
- I sat on the State Street Mall Design Committee and there were a lot of recommendations that came out of that related to many of these issues that aren't reflected in the final design. You're getting into those areas, re-highlighting some of those studies.

ACTION:

On a motion by Huggins, seconded by DeChant, the Urban Design Commission **RECOMMENDED APPROVAL OF THE RESOLUTION**. The motion was passed on a vote of (6-1) with Cnare voting no.

**URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: Implementation of 2012 Adopted Downtown Plan
Recommendations**

	Site Plan	Architecture	Landscape Plan	Site Amenities, Lighting, Etc.	Signs	Circulation (Pedestrian, Vehicular)	Urban Context	Overall Rating
Member Ratings								

General Comments:

- Consider spatial quality of State Street = light, hall effects of adjacent buildings.