

Capitol Neighborhoods Inc
Downtown Plan Committee Meeting

November 26, 2007, 5:15pm
Barriques Coffee House, 127 W. Washington Ave.

In Attendance: Ledell Zellers, Fred Mohs, Gene Devitt, Davy Mayer, Melissa Berger

Minutes:

Ledell explained the reading list, and that the Downtown Advisory Report was of foremost consideration as we organize CNI's goals and mission in contributing to the Downtown Plan. She explained how the rest of the Comprehensive Plan had been completed, but due to the enormity of the downtown section, it is the last part to be completed. A rough timeline for the Plan was sent out earlier in document "DT Plan- Discussion Paper on Proposed Process", but we will be given a revised schedule when Bill Fruhling presents at our December EC meeting.

The question is posed: how should CNI be involved in the Downtown Planning process? What areas of concern do we have?

Fred specifies a desire for more owner-occupied, high-grade housing. No more student housing is necessary with the recent development boom in this area.

Ledell calls for a broad vision which ensures that what is being done in the Downtown Plan supports CNI's vision of the quality of life downtown.

Gene wants to make sure the question "where density does density go?" is answered. He says we should identify locations for both high and low density development in the downtown area.

Ledell points out CNI's commitment to protection of historic neighborhoods.

Fred points out that in other cities there is a history of successful, historic neighborhoods not necessarily mirrored in Madison's history. He points out Park Street and East Washington Avenue as areas of great potential to go in and develop them into areas of high esteem and success.

Gene proposes we start with general ideas about how CNI regards the Plan, but then also concentrate on some specific areas for potential density.

Fred asserts that by pointing out areas CNI encourages for high-density development, we will balance our call for historic preservation requests.

Ledell accentuates that we can keep emphasis on our current neighborhood plans (e.g. Bassett, First Settlement, soon Mansion Hill) where we have them.

Davy asks if we plan to concentrate our efforts on unmentioned issues in the Downtown Advisory Report, or on incongruencies in the plans and proposals we have.

Gene points out that as a general-downtown proposal, the Bassett Neighborhood Plan would have loopholes, likely because of the needs of specific area it covers.

Ledell points out that Mansion Hill's plan is appropriate for historic preservation.

Gene says that there is a James Madison Plan he has seen, but that it is extremely old and out-dated.

Fred points out that the current "Old Marketplace" neighborhood plan only goes to Blair Street.

The question is posed whether or not we should be concerned with areas possibly construed as "downtown" that are not within CNI borders, for example certain parts of E. Washington Ave. Davy contends that we should be interested in certain adjoining neighborhoods, and with the traffic that they bring in and out of the CNI borders.

Fred asks how would CNI feel about high density development in other areas, for example Park Street.

Ledell reads from the Downtown Advisory Report and points out that the Report touches on East and West Washington Avenues, but does not venture much beyond CNI's borders.

It is agreed that we should use the framework provided in the Downtown Advisory Report as a basis, and Chapter IV (pages 14-41) is identified as an important chapter about which this committee should be knowledgeable. Members present agree to read this chapter before the next meeting.

Gene asks that we consider the future of certain deteriorating buildings downtown, using the GEF buildings as an example.

Fred warns that we must beware of critiquing such buildings, making sure that we don't encourage business and government to move out of the downtown area.

The question is posed: who else should we include in our committee and our dialog? Bill Fruhling, Mark Ollinger are suggested. Group agrees to first do research within the group, getting a handle on our role. Then after 2-3 meetings we will explore including these people in a valuable way. Ledell encourages group to think of others who might have something to contribute to the committee. There is a consensus to be inclusive and open to other members, and to present our proposals to CNI Executive Council and the neighborhood for critique and enrichment.

It is reiterated that CNI should specify conservation districts as well as areas with high-density potential.

Ledell hands out article on "Takings" and encourages members to read it.

(http://www.law.georgetown.edu/gelpi/current_research/documents/RT_Pubs_Other_Rypkema.pdf)

Fred muses over our purpose by reminding us that there are many cities around the world which we love and treasure (examples: Paris or Washington DC), and those cities characteristically have many rules to ensure they maintain their charm and integrity.

Gene shares his concern with churches and their possible misuse of tax-exempt status. Fred pledges to inform the group about his discussion with the bishop regarding the re-building of St. Raphael Cathedral.

The next Downtown Plan Committee meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 10, at 5:15 at Barriques.