

Bruce Sylvester

From: Stephanie & Pete Leuer [leuer@tds.net]
Sent: Tuesday, September 16, 2008 3:06 PM
To: bruce.sylvester@ci.verona.wi.us
Subject: Downtown/Transportation Feedback

Dear Bruce,

I was at last night's meeting to discuss the future of Downtown Verona and the transportation issues we face. I am not much of a public speaker, so I did not say anything last night. Please feel free to pass my comments along to the rest of the committee.

I want to first say that I live in the 100 block of South Jefferson Street. I can see Franklin Street from my front window. We live near downtown because we enjoy being able to walk to Millers, Verona Hometown Pharmacy, Tuvalu, the library, school, post office and many other nearby businesses. We love our street and the neighboring streets around us. It is the first place we have ever lived where we have had a real sense of community. We love to be able to walk across the street to say hi to a neighbor and that our kids can safely play in the front yard.

While I can sympathize with the city's need to deal with future traffic issues, I do not believe a paired one-way on either Franklin Street or Schuman Street is a good idea. Many families and individuals live on these streets because they love living in a great neighborhood. By changing the traffic flow to go through these areas would create a huge negative impact on these neighborhoods. Kids would no longer be safe to play in their front yards, residents would have to fight traffic to get out of their driveways, the volumes of traffic would break up the bond the residents feel with their neighbors across the street and so much more. It is already difficult to walk in our city and I cannot imagine how this would help that at all. Many children in our neighborhood have to walk to school. I cannot see how they would benefit if we added another busy street to cross into the mix. I have a feeling the value of these properties would also decrease due to the undesirable busy street they now located on. I not only see this negatively affecting Franklin or Schuman but surrounding streets as well such as Jefferson or Marietta.

Other suggestions were mentioned at the meeting last night. A roundabout has been mentioned in the past. I am against this idea as well. Since we do a lot of walking in Verona we have a good deal of experience with dealing with trying to safely cross busy streets. Right now Verona is very non-pedestrian friendly. It is very difficult to get across Main Street or Verona Avenue. The the main intersection at these street crossings almost seems like a nightmare sometimes when crossing with small children. People ignore the flags used by pedestrians who are trying to safely cross these busy streets. Better crossings on both Main Street and Verona Avenue would be a huge help to our city. Having a roundabout at this intersection would make it even more difficult for pedestrians to get around in our city. I have driven in areas with roundabouts in places such as Middleton and Mount Horeb. I think many drivers become confused that these type of intersections and are not certain when to pull out or what lane to be in. I cannot see how this would work in a busy intersection such as Main and Verona Avenue.

Parking was also discussed at last night's meeting. We enjoy visiting many areas of Madison that do not have a huge amount of public parking such as State Street or Monroe Street. These areas have so much to offer, that people do not mind walking a few blocks to get somewhere. I can see how the city would like to add more parking, but I am not certain if back alley parking that bumps up against residential property is the answer. I would not want a parking lot in my backyard. This may drive some long time residents out of their homes. Someone also mentioned a parking ramp last night. A parking ramp seems very far from the Hometown USA feel Verona wants to have. A parking ramp would be a eyesore that area residents would have to live with. It would not be a welcome site in a residential neighborhood like Franklin Street. I can honestly say I would not want to have a parking ramp located just around the corner from my house. Flat lots seem safer and more desirable of all of the options. I am not sure what location would be the best for such a lot.

The committee mentioned they wanted residents to weigh in on what they wanted to see in our downtown. I love that we have long time businesses such as Millers and newer niche businesses like Tuvalu and Sows Ear. A concentrated downtown with more niche businesses would make Verona seem unique and a place where people would want to visit. No one from out of town says, "Hey let's go to downtown Verona. They have a cell phone dealer and a chain where you can get your haircut!" People are drawn into unique businesses. Verona could look to streets like Monroe Street in Madison or the downtown in Mount Horeb for inspiration. We would like to see Verona work towards a concentrated downtown rather than a spread out downtown area. We already have several vacant building that do not currently have tenants. A spread out downtown would also start to affect area streets such as Franklin, Schuman, Jefferson and other side streets. In the future more and more businesses may start to creep into these neighborhoods pushing out residents.

We bought our house on Jefferson Street because we love how close we are to downtown. We also love older homes and buildings. We were attracted to our home because of it's age and the older homes around our neighborhood. Verona does not have a lot neighborhoods with older homes and we have very few old buildings left in our city. They are long gone all in the name of progress. In their place we are surrounded by cookie cutter buildings and confusing architectural designs. We would love to see the city focus on protecting older neighbors and help them to remain desirable & affordable neighborhoods for families to live in. We would love to see older homes kept as residential rather than be converted to businesses. It is almost shameful to see what has happened to some of the beautiful older homes in our city. We want to see them protected and taken care of by residents that are proud to call Verona home.

We would love to help get the word out to our neighbors about the upcoming open house. If anyone has questions or comments about the plans for downtown or transportation, should I direct them to you?

Thank you for taking the time to read my very wordy message. I hope everything makes sense. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Leuer