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10 September 2008

Bruce Sylvester  
City Planner  
City of Verona  
11 Lincoln St.  
Verona WI 53593

Dear Mr. Sylvester:

The following comments were created by a subcommittee of the Verona Area Chamber of Commerce's Economic Development Committee regarding the City of Verona's proposed Comprehensive Plan. These comments refer only to the chapter of the plan covering land use as it relates to the downtown. The sub committee did not comment on every aspect of the draft chapter, instead focusing on items of particular interest to the business community.

Overall, those offering input were pleased with the scope of the plan and the effort on the part of the city to address issues on a long-term basis. It is also common belief that actions are indeed necessary to resolve issues of parking and traffic flow in the downtown area.

What follows is a summary of the comments provided to the Economic Development Committee by its members and other interested members of the Verona Area Chamber of Commerce.

1. In the "Existing Conditions - Traffic" section, the plan references several options for coping with the existing/future downtown traffic. A progression of options should be pursued: First, the timing of the traffic signals should be analyzed. Are they providing for optimal traffic flow during peak and off-peak traffic times? Second, any attempts to reduce or eliminate street parking in the downtown, either entirely or during peak traffic periods, would have extreme negative repercussions for a number of businesses. Third, there exists extensive concern about any plan that would limit ingress and egress to downtown businesses through the creation of controlled access points. Of particular concern

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would be any plan to shut down access to businesses from Main Street and Verona Avenue. Any plan that would inconvenience customers and hinder walk-up traffic would face stiff opposition from the business community.

Some downtown traffic congestion is a good thing; it is indicative of a strong downtown; one that is a destination. Only after the City has explored these inexpensive options should the notion of one-way pairs or a round-about be explored. Both would have significant detrimental impacts on the character of the downtown. It was suggested that city staff study the Monroe Street area of Madison as a potential model for traffic movement in downtown Verona.

2. There exists a consensus opinion that parking, or the lack thereof, is a problem in the downtown area. Any plan for the downtown should include the expansion of parking options for the business community, whether that is achieved through a public parking facility or other means. As a short term measure, the city might consider a parking area dedicated to the employees of downtown businesses.
3. The concept of alleys to control parking and entry onto Main St. has both supporters and detractors. The detractors are concerned that such alleys could decrease the likelihood of "impulse" or "one item" shoppers stopping at their establishments. This is of particular concern in the two northern "quadrants" of the downtown and the southwestern quadrant. The Chamber is particularly aware of potential disruptions to homeowners in the two northern quadrants and would urge the city to approach these residents with tact and patience, even if it means delaying any plan several years. In contrast, there would be significant support for such a plan in the southeastern quadrant, especially if such a plan led to additional parking options. This is a case where extra "education" and discussion with the affected parties would be beneficial prior to embarking on any plan.
4. The goals for the plan are laudable and achievable. However, an additional goal is needed: The City should promote and participate in the preservation and/or creation of downtown "anchors" (ex. Millers, Ace, WOV, boutique hotel, etc.). Clearly, preservation of the downtown is critical to the City. The City should have an "open ear" for participation in development and re-development opportunities that support downtown.
5. The Plan Elements are well thought out and logical. They are a concept for what can happen in the downtown. If approved, each quadrant needs to have an implementation plan developed including estimated costs and a specific timetable. Also, it is strongly suggested that the city approach any plan with respect for both commercial and residential property owners and the investments

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they have made in their properties. Open forums and similar events where affected residents can voice opinions and concerns will be vital to any process.

6. In the "Utilities including Stormwater Management" section, the option of creating a stormwater utility should be aggressively pursued. The cost of stormwater management in Dane County will only continue to rise and a utility is the most efficient way to deal with it. Development of stormwater ponds on individual properties in the downtown is wasteful and unacceptable. A regional basin should be constructed on property near the Badger Mill Creek to deal with runoff issues.

On behalf of the Verona Area Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Sean M. Cleary, President  
Verona Area Chamber of Commerce



Karl Curtis, Executive Director  
Verona Area Chamber of Commerce