

SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

(This document was pulled from the BUILD application submitted by the city Planning and Development Department to the County) BILD Program

This Letter of Application is for the first phase of the East Washington Capitol Gateway Corridor (Capitol Gateway Corridor) planning initiative. The focus will be on developing detailed land use recommendations and urban design guidelines for the Capitol Gateway Corridor as a supplement to other planning and development activities that have been, and are, occurring in the East Isthmus area. The purpose will be to develop a vision for the corridor and a set of tools to aid in the implementation of that vision for this very important street into the heart of Madison.

DESCRIPTION OF THE EAST WASHINGTON CAPITOL GATEWAY CORRIDOR

The planning area for the Capitol Gateway Corridor development area includes both the north and south frontages of East Washington Avenue between Blair Street and First Street (see Map 1).

The Capitol Gateway Corridor is one of the primary entryways into the City of Madison and Madison's downtown from the east, close to both the present downtown government and commercial districts and to the East Isthmus residential neighborhoods. As such, it is a logical and attractive location for relatively intensive redevelopment as a future extension of the downtown employment area. Presently, the planning area is comprised primarily of commercial and industrial uses (see Map 2).

While the East Rail Corridor planning initiatives presently underway includes only the south frontage of East Washington Avenue, both sides of East Washington have significant redevelopment potential. In fact, the north side currently has a larger percentage of very low-intensity land uses than the south side. Because the north side of East Washington Avenue was not within the East Rail Corridor planning area, the East Rail Advisory Committee's recommendations for that area should be considered preliminary suggestions that will need to be evaluated in more detail. Certainly, the Capitol Gateway Corridor Plan will need to work with the plans and residents of the Old Market Place and Tenney-Lapham neighborhoods to consider how the potential for more intensive development along East Washington Avenue will transition to the less intense uses behind East Washington, especially to the north. Furthermore, the major property owners and businesses that are members of the East Capital Neighborhood Association will be actively involved in redevelopment discussions and decisions.

The East Rail Advisory Committee recommended that redevelopment within the East Washington Avenue Corridor be guided by the following recommended land uses, development and design standards, and implementation approaches. While not very specific, the recommendations do point out that there are people looking closely at East Washington and its potential.

The recommendations that the Advisory Committee believes are important in examining the potential of the Capitol Gateway Corridor as part of this process include:

- Land uses along the north side of East Washington Avenue between Blair Street and Breese Stevens stadium should include major employment uses (offices), residential uses, and residential and business supporting uses, such as small scale retail and service uses. Large-scale retail uses are generally not recommended at this location, with the exception of a grocery store.

These sites are adjacent to established residential uses on the north and west, and development with urban-scale mixed employment and residential uses is considered appropriate. Employment development should be located primarily on the East Washington Avenue frontage, with residential uses toward East Mifflin Street.

- Land uses along the north side of East Washington Avenue east of Breese Stevens stadium

(Brearly Street) should be relatively smaller-scale employment and residential uses. The large block near the Yahara River between East Dayton Street and East Washington Avenue, including the west side of Dickinson Street, was identified as a potential redevelopment site in earlier City plans.

- Land uses along the south side of East Washington Avenue should primarily be office or industrial employment uses, as well as limited amounts small scale retail and service uses serving the employment district. In general, residential uses should be limited to very selective adaptive reuse opportunities.

This area includes several major established non-residential uses, and is adjacent to other planned commercial-industrial development locations to the south. While occasional residential uses are not necessarily incompatible, it is important that enhancing the area as an attractive business and employment location remain the primary focus of redevelopment activities.

- Maximum allowed building heights along East Washington Avenue should be greater at the western “downtown” end of the Avenue and decrease toward the Yahara River. There are limits to the development potential of the historic downtown, and the western end of the Avenue has the potential to develop with relatively high urban densities and an extension of the downtown core.

Having the tallest buildings on the higher elevations at the western end of the avenue and lower buildings near the river will tend to reinforce and enhance the natural topography of the Isthmus, rather than working against it (as does the “capitol view limit” for example).

Relatively lower building heights near the river are most compatible with the smaller-scale uses that are expected to continue in the adjacent neighborhoods---including the planned Yahara River District within the planning area.

- Detailed building and site design standards should be established to guide future redevelopment along the East Washington Avenue Corridor and ensure that future development will be of high quality and contribute to creation of a coherent and attractive “gateway” to downtown Madison and the Capitol Square. These standards should cover development on both sides of the avenue, and might be incorporated into detailed criteria for developments within the existing East Washington Avenue Urban Design District.
- Buildings along East Washington Avenue should not be located right at the sidewalk, but should be set back in order not to appear to “crowd” this high-volume arterial.
- Building coverage on sites should be relatively high to maximize the potential to develop additional employment and business space. Use of structured parking facilities and shared parking are ways that more of a site can be made available for development, rather than used for surface parking lots. In those locations recommended for buildings up to 8 stories in height, there may be a need to review the potential effect of the maximum floor area ratios established for the current zoning districts covering the area to be sure there is no unintended constraint.
- Parking uses should be prohibited on the East Washington Avenue frontage. Parking that cannot be located under or within the buildings should be located behind buildings on the interior of the sites or on adjacent streets. This recommendation applies to both surface and structured parking facilities.

It will be very important to review these recommendations within a larger planning context and to test them against opportunities in the market and the vision that is adopted for the area. That is the fundamental purpose of this application.

DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE PROJECT WILL ADVANCE BUILD PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The Capitol Gateway Corridor Plan is consistent the BUILD Program Objectives in the following ways:

1). Make better use of existing infrastructure. The focus of the Capitol Gateway Corridor is fundamentally about better utilizing infrastructure, both in terms of what presently exists and with the anticipated reconstruction of East Washington, to more fully develop adjoining properties to better utilize the multi-million dollar improvements made with the reconstruction. These improvements, including bicycle lanes, pedestrian safety enhancements and streetscaping, are all elements of a revitalized Capitol Gateway Corridor. The infrastructure improvements will also help provide an impetus and an environment where further private investment can occur. There are many places along this stretch of East Washington that additional intensification of uses will help support the investment of transportation funds in the area.

2). Locate community services, jobs and shopping in close proximity. The Capitol Gateway Corridor is presently the location of a significant range of services and jobs; ranging from social service agencies to artists, professionals, offices, and a significant number of manufacturing and other light industrial uses. The area has been the location of many of these kinds of uses for well over one hundred years. Major employers of significance currently are Madison Dairy, Research Products, Don Miller and MG&E. With the transformation of the East Isthmus, especially in its residential neighborhoods, the potential to retain existing uses while attracting new uses is a significant element of recent planning efforts in the East Rail Corridor. It is clear that an opportunity exists to create a truly dynamic mixed-use area that combines additional opportunity for services, employment growth (from many sectors), housing, and support retail. An outcome of the planning process will be to help better understand the nature of future land use along the Corridor and the form the Corridor itself will take. Both of these aspects recognize the importance of a true urban environment and business retention.

3). Stabilize and enhance existing neighborhoods, downtowns and other business districts. The Capitol View Gateway Corridor bisects some of the most desirable neighborhoods in the city of Madison. Assessed valuations for single-family homes in the East Isthmus have grown significantly over the past five years; underscoring the attractiveness of the area to households looking for a high quality traditional neighborhood environment in which to live, and increasingly work and recreate. This project will support these revitalization activities by working to develop the environment necessary to create an Avenue that recognizes the symbolic importance of East Washington Avenue as a ceremonial entrance to the Capitol, but also as a vastly underutilized extension of the downtown. As the Capitol Square and environs becomes built-out, East Washington provides a significant opportunity to have employment growth that would like to be in close proximity to downtown without actually having to be on the Capitol Square; or to take advantage of the increasingly talented and creative pool of workers that call the East Isthmus home.

This project understands and supports the neighborhood-serving business districts on East Johnson and Williamson Streets. It does not propose to compete with them, but complement them by improving the opportunity to provide for new development that would use the services available those two streets.

4). Produce housing and jobs for low- to moderate-income people. Development is occurring on the east side of the Capitol Square. At this point, most of that is residential. And the residential that is being developed is a mix of owner-occupied condominiums and renter-occupied apartment buildings. The Capitol Gateway Corridor provides an opportunity to look at parcels along its length that could provide a significant supply of housing that truly could be affordable. The land is available; much of it used as surface parking. It could become something else. Given sensitive and creative site planning and design, housing is a real option along the Corridor.

Likewise, providing opportunities for employment growth along the Corridor, especially new infill development, will provide two ways to produce employment for low- and moderate-income people. One, by providing an opportunity for new development to occur along the Corridor, some of the pressure to convert existing manufacturing/light industrial uses (often paying living wages to moderate-income households) to other uses will be reduced. In essence, acting as a retention strategy designed to support

existing businesses and help them remain in the area. Two, not all of the jobs created along the Corridor will require highly skilled, highly educated workers. There could be a whole array of employment opportunities along the Corridor. Identifying the types of employment that might locate and thrive along the Corridor is a significant element of the proposal.

5). Avoid converting productive farmland on urban fringes and in rural areas. Absent a specific proposal, it is difficult to state with confidence that the Capitol Gateway Corridor process will prevent the conversion of productive farmland to "urban uses." However, by providing a focused effort on providing for a mix of uses, a higher intensity of those uses, and larger land area, it is possible to state that a revitalized Capitol Gateway Corridor will become an ever more attractive place to open a business, establish a use, or live in what is now often viewed in a negative sense. Improving the character and function of the Corridor may reduce pressure on the periphery and in other areas of downtown as well.

6). Provide viable options to auto trips by supporting walking, biking, and transit. The Capitol Gateway Corridor presently carries traffic volumes rarely exceeded by a surface street elsewhere in the city and state. It is a major transit route, will have a bike lane added as part of the East Washington reconstruction as well as provide protected cross-Isthmus crossings along the Corridor at several locations. Both the land use planning and urban design aspects of this project will focus on reducing auto-oriented trips and support other forms of transportation, into, through, and across the Corridor.

7). Have the potential to clean-up environmentally contaminated sites. Along, or adjacent to, the Corridor are a number of environmentally contaminated sites. The City and the DNR are well aware of the presence of these sites. A high priority of the City in East Rail planning has been to pursue funding from the EPA and the DNR to assist in the clean up of contaminated sites. Unfortunately, in early 2003, an application for EPA funding was not approved and DNR brownfields funding was recaptured due to the State budget crisis. Development within the Corridor will help clean up these sites, and this project is designed to help define a market for future development activity on some of those sites.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DESIRED OUTCOMES OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Capitol Gateway Corridor Plan will produce the following outcomes:

- 1). Provide a venue for the City, the neighborhoods, property owners, area businesses and the larger community interested in the Gateway Corridor to be the focus of a concentrated, participatory, and facilitated process. In almost all of the other plans that have been prepared in the general area, East Washington was viewed as an edge, or a barrier. Given the level of traffic volumes, and the rather lackluster character of much of the Corridor, this is understandable. But given the change that is taking place throughout the East Isthmus, it is time to focus some energy on East Washington. The BUILD process provides the catalyst to get all of the players in the area together.
- 2). Create a vision for the Corridor, from a land use and urban design perspective. It is difficult to have a vision for a place when it is not the focus. The BUILD process will help craft a vision for the Corridor within the context of its role as ceremonial gateway, business and employment center, and potentially a place people may call home.
- 3). Use the land use plan recommendations to develop both economic development and housing strategies to support the final recommendations contained within the Corridor plan. These recommendations will have a very important role to play in the ongoing marketing efforts targeted to changing the perception of East Washington as an underutilized, unattractive street.
- 4). Update the Urban Design Guidelines for East Washington Avenue. The Corridor has been a part of Urban Design District Number 4 since the Design District was designated by the City of Madison in May 1992. Adopted design guidelines for East Washington Avenue are of a general nature. An outcome of this project proposal is to create more specific urban design guidelines for the Capitol Gateway Corridor that will help set a course for future private investment along the Corridor.

5). Have the final report adopted by Madison Common Council and use the final report as a way to guide future City initiatives in the area; including infrastructure, capital budgeting and investment, financial tools and incentives, and land use approvals.