

To: Alderman Amelia Burgess, Downtown Task Force Committee Chair
From: Katie Simpson, City Planner
Date: Wednesday, October 18, 2017
Subject: Commentary on the Draft Final Recommendations Report

On Tuesday, October 17, 2017 the Downtown Task Force met to discuss a draft of the final report. The Task Force solicited additional commentary on the draft document. Below are my recommended edits/points of clarification.

Section 1: Beautification/Public Art

- Under the "Planning Document References" section, supporting material could be added from The Streetscape Master Plan. While never officially adopted by Council, the document also recognizes the need for Murals, Public Art and Street Trees (pg. 27-28) see section 6.2 "Opportunities" for supporting documentation .
- Under the "Recommendations" Section:
 - a). Expand the first recommendation to incorporate additional opportunities for incorporating rain gardens, biosoils, and other natural storm water treatment landscaping into the Downtown Streetscape. The Streetscape Plan calls for improving bump outs; bump outs may require additional storm inlets, but may also be an additional opportunity to improve the landscaping by adding rain gardens. Public Works, Parks, and Planning should coordinate on this if incorporated into the recommendations.
 - b). Expanding on Recommendation 4, the Streetscape Plan guides the installation of conduit and new service feeds. As the plan is implemented, the city should look for additional opportunities to add electrical outlets to tree wells and other areas that may lend themselves to future lighting installations. Additionally, this poses an opportunity to identify new locations for tree wells.
 - c). Consider adding an additional recommendation that encourages improved landscaping on private parking lots. The Comprehensive Plan identifies the need to screen and landscape parking lots in the Downtown. Perhaps there is an opportunity for the city to partner to improve landscaping and screening of existing surface lots, and to encourage owners to make small improvements by adding temporary planters or public art installations.

Section 2: Public Spaces/Walkability

Under "Recommendations" the Task Force may wish to consider adding an additional recommendation that the city look for pop-up opportunities before moving forward with the phased implementation of the Streetscape Plan. Resurfacing and implementing the Streetscape Plan, provides the city with an opportunity to carryout "pop-ups" and "pilot" programs, such as changes to parking orientation, temporary bump-outs, or parklet designations before making the actual improvements. Public Works, Parks, Planning, and the Downtown Development Division (DDD) should coordinate to capitalize on these opportunities.

Section 3: Public Parking

- Consider adding the following references to the “Planning Documents References” Section:
 - Goal D-5 Continue to develop a multi-modal transportation network in Downtown
 - D-51 Improve parking conditions, access, and encourage shared public and private parking spaces.
- Under the “Recommendations” section, the Task Force may wish to encourage shared parking of private lots with other businesses and residents, especially for businesses that have staggered hours. Some businesses are already renting lots to food trucks or shuttles, but there may be other opportunities.

Section 4: Catalyst Projects

Under “Additional Information” for the Market Street Garage, the Task Force may want to add that, although improvements, such as lighting and new gates, were installed or are proposed, these improvements can be reused in a new structure if/when the garage is torn down.

Under “Additional Information” for the Library, the Task Force may want to add that Planning Division never reviewed the proposal for expanding the Library in its existing location, which went to council earlier this year. Planning offers the following comments and identifies the following challenges associated with the Library Expansion proposal:

1). The Library site is difficult to access by car or walking. It is landlocked on the east side by US-51 and access is limited to the South by Oakland Ave and the Railroad Tracks. Business Highway 51/East Street creates a physical and visual barrier separating the Library (at its current location) from Downtown. Expanding at the existing location may be less effective for achieving downtown revitalization as well as improving walkability and access to public resources.

2). Option 1 shows the expansion of a library and the construction of a massive surface parking lot that stretches south to connect to the Constitution Trail and Railroad Tracks. Realizing Option 1 would require vacating E. Jackson Street between S. Prairie St. and East St. This disrupts the grid pattern and reduces connectivity in the area. Furthermore, it decreases access for the Public Works site west of the library, possibly limiting its future redevelopment potential.

2a). The Comprehensive Plan identifies Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) as a tool for improving the physical environment to enhance public safety. A large surface parking lot landlocked by a railroad track and Constitution Trail encourages a large volume of space with a low level of activity and contradicts the CPTED principals. Parking at this location should incorporate safe design and to encourage a more effective use of land. Nonetheless, the added surface parking would most likely increase the need for parking lot lighting and could negatively affect the surrounding property owners. The site development process should address these considerations/concerns.

3). Options 2 and 3 proposed to council also require vacating E. Jackson Street and create the same concerns as listed above. Additionally Options 2 and 3 incorporate retail into the redevelopment of the existing location. New retail at this library site competes with existing downtown businesses and revitalization efforts. The current zoning, S-2 Public Lands and Institutions, does not allow retail and would need to be amended. Staff is also concerned about the negative impacts new retail in the existing library location could have on the adjacent residential district.

4). The proposals should receive a more thorough review by the Public Works Department, Water Department, Fire Department, Parks Department, and Community Development Department for consistency with city codes and ordinances, comprehensive plans, circulation, and to ensure sewer and water are adequately sized at this location to accommodate the new development.