



City of Racine

City Hall
730 Washington Ave.
Racine, WI 53403
www.cityofracine.org

Meeting Minutes - Final

Planning Heritage and Design Commission

Wednesday, January 22, 2020

4:30 PM

City Hall, Room 205

Call To Order

Mayor Mason called the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m.

PRESENT: 5 - Mason, Jones, Hefel, Jung and Peete

EXCUSED: 2 - Martinez and Austin

Approval of Minutes for the January 8, 2020 Meeting

A motion was made by Alder Jung, seconded by Commissioner Peete, to approve the minutes of the January 8, 2020 Meeting. The motion PASSED by a Voice Vote.

4:30 PM Public Hearings

[1371-19](#)

Subject: Consideration of an amendment to the document titled “A Comprehensive Plan for the City of Racine: 2035”, to incorporate the document titled “Downtown Racine Pedestrians, Plaza and Parking Plan” (PHDC-20).

Attachments: [Notice of Hearing Downtown Square & Parking](#)
[Downtown Public Realm and Parking Plan](#)

Mayor Mason introduced the Toole Design Group and Raj Mohabeer from Toole who worked this summer on the Downtown Racine Pedestrians, Plaza, and Parking Plan” (the Plan). Mayor Mason also acknowledged city staff along with the Downtown Racine Corporation for their work on the Plan.

Mohabeer gave a quick introduction to the Toole Design Group, those who helped develop the Plan, and discussed the recommendations that can be found within the Plan. He stated the study focused on Main Street and Monument Square and explained the public workshops that were conducted. Mohabeer spoke about the challenges such as speeding on Main Street, parking, safety concerns, etc. He explained that what was heard was that people want a family friendly place, they enjoy the architecture (in downtown), and they want walkable and safe space. He stated a total of nine recommendations were development – 1. Adopt the Plan; 2. Form a Downtown Racine steering committee that will maintain momentum; 3. Reverse one-way traffic flow on the west side of Monument Square and change parking configuration to parallel parking; 4. Promote and encourage the use of downtown parking ramps; 5. Transition to multi-space meters throughout downtown; 6. Restore Lake and Wisconsin Avenues to two-way operations; 7. Advance the State Highway change, concurrent with two-waying 32/20 (6th and 7th) and dieting Main Street; 8. Advance Monument Square

design; and 9. Sixth Street bicycle lanes east of Main Street connection to Pershing Park.

Mohabeer stated eight projects came out of the charrette such as reclaiming Main Street as a destination and shifting to two-way Wisconsin Avenue and 6th Streets. He explained the possibility of leveraging existing infrastructure as the streets are built to last. He stated that 7th Street is a little bit wider of a street and can be two-way traffic with the current bike lane. He explained that it may be possible to have two bicycle lanes by removing the parking on one side from 7th Street.

Mohabeer stated Lake Avenue can become a two-way with parking on both sides of the street. He showed a design of Wisconsin Avenue with angled parking and a two-way street. He explained the values behind the construction of one way streets; one-way streets were to get people out as quickly as possible while two-way streets result in slower and safer speeds and can be seen as more city-friendly.

Mohabeer stated there are 13 traffic signals in the downtown. He stated when you eliminate one-way streets and go to two-way streets you can move more towards stop signs. He stated with 4-way stop signs, pedestrians and cyclists can cross at any time because cars are required to stop. He stated the stop signs slow down traffic and are good for retail.

Mohabeer spoke about the recommendations for Main Street which include two travel lanes, bicycle facilities, and the addition of break pavers. He stated bicycle facilities behind the curb will make it safer and the addition of break pavers will slow down drivers and keep pedestrians safe.

Mohabeer spoke regarding Monument Square and the discussion with the community. He stated a flexible space was created that could be arranged in a way to have small and large events. He discussed the movement of vehicles, cycling, and pedestrians around Monument Square. He stated the key is flexibility.

Mohabeer explained the idea behind the flush curb plaza is that it is flush and there are no mobility issues. He stated a person would be able to walk to one side of an event to another. He stated environmental cues that tell drivers the break between the sidewalk and the road will encourage behavior of motorists that is conducive of motorist activity. He stated it is about creating a flexible space where everyone feels comfortable.

Mohabeer spoke about the roundabout and its possible removal to add free space to City Hall and the continuance of Pershing Boulevard to the downtown skew to continue the green space on the water side of the street.

Parking was also discussed. Mohabeer stated that 30 percent of the parking was occupied for the downtown area. He stated future conditions warrant for 48-53 percent occupancy which is below any threshold for a parking problem. He stated that when people see cars parked in front of stores, they think that the parking is full; the majority of parking is in ramps. He stated when you go to the mall, people are willing to walk from one anchor store to the next. Mohabeer suggested public parking signage and branding. He stated there is not a parking problem, there is a parking perception problem.

Mohabeer explained the early successes such as applying for local supplement grant

from WisDOT. He momentum needs to be maintained.

Alder Jung thanked Mohabeer and the Toole Group for their work and asked about the other communities that have made their downtown more pedestrian oriented.

Mohabeer explained that the mall is failing and Main Street is coming back. He explained the proximately to where people live and that from a pedestrian perspective, young people do not drive anymore – they want to live where they shop, work, and go to school. He stated the world is evolving and that there are less people getting driver's licenses and more people sharing resources.

Commissioner Hefel asked about bicycles and the notion that people have not been bicycling downtown.

Mohabeer stated that providing the infrastructure so more bicyclists feel comfortable. He stated his firm specializes in bike/pedestrian design. He stated the plans want the trail to continue along the water front to come up Pershing Blvd. He stated if reconstructed, the bicycle lanes could go behind the curb.

Alder Jung asked about the possibility of connecting the downtown to the lakeshore. He asked how the plan would make sure those who can experience downtown can also experience the lakeshore.

Mohabeer stated that people come to downtown for different reasons than they do the waterfront. He stated he has not seen trying to tie the downtown to the waterfront done successfully. He stated it is hard if the Main Street is not on the water to connect the two. He suggested making downtown good and focus on making the waterfront good, but to not connect the two.

In response to Mayor Mason's mentioning of having bicyclists walking their bike through the square, Mohabeer stated bicyclists do not necessarily need to dismount, however, if they are not comfortable and confident in a space with the people and a lot of activity, then they should. He stated dedicating the space specifically for bicyclists may not make others comfortable.

Mayor Mason opened at 5:17 p.m.

Mercedes Dzindzeleta, 609 Seventh Street, stated she wishes she knew about the meeting a little bit sooner. She spoke regarding the request and stated she has seen some of the plans and is hopeful for downtown to be alive again because it has been a bowling alley too often for cars – she stated humans do not walk fast enough and might be the pins that get knocked down.

Dzindzeleta stated that she used to walk around the stores downtown and recalled the old buildings along Fifth and Sixth Streets including theaters, cafes, hotels, etc...

She spoke about the parking ramps and asked why one would park in a ramp when you can park on the street for the same amount. She suggested making parking free and cheap on the evenings and weekends and maybe people would not mind walking. She stated we have to provide something that people would want to come to.

Dzindzeleta stated she would like to see it back to a lot of stores. She stated when Main Street was rebuilt, business increased 50 percent; there were no stop lights,

there were stop and go's (stop signs). She spoke about the green space in front of City Hall and stated would like to see the green space because there could be a lot of celebrations that can take place down here. She stated she likes the ideas of moving the streets to make two lanes instead of four lanes and the restoration of Wisconsin Avenue, Lake Avenue, Sixth Street, and Seventh Street to go two-way. She asked how long we would have to wait and stated her biggest concern is Wisconsin and Lake Avenues and making Highway 32. She stated she is very concerned about the Second Street corridor.

David Kamm, Downtown Racine Corporation Board of Directors, spoke regarding the request. He thanked those involved in the process and stated it was an incredible process. He stated we have an unprecedented opportunity for our downtown. He stated it is the economic engine of the entire city of Racine and economic development will fund what we need to do in the city over time. He stated there is no reason downtown cannot be like Lake Geneva with regards to walking and biking. He stated it should be most vibrant and diverse. He stated it starts with a vision and a plan to get us there. Kamm spoke of his friend who moved temporarily to Racine, dreaded it at first, but fell in love at last.

Kelly Kruse, Director Downtown Racine Corporation, spoke regarding the request. She stated she is thrilled with the charrette process. She stated it engaged not only those who live downtown, but those who love downtown and care about the downtown. She stated it is our plan – it became a vision that she can see Monument Square, outdoor dining. She stated it takes working together. Kruse stated the downtown will have 120 days of events for 2020 (200 days are recommended per Rogers Brooks).

Mayor Mason closed the public hearing at 5:37 p.m.

Mayor Mason read into record a letter from Andrew Dodge, Downtown Business Improvement District (BID No. 1) Chairman, giving their support and encouraging the PHD to adopt the plan.

Sadowski explained the comprehensive amendment, the planning process, the contents of the plan, and the timeline for adoption of the plan into the Comprehensive Plan. He explained the possible actions of the Commission.

Discussion after the motion:

Alder Jones asked if the parking in Monument Square were staying.

Mayor Mason stated that we are adopting a plan with a series of recommendations. He stated with the hotel that is proposed at the old Zahn's Building we are going to change the parking direction that will be used and have angled parking on Wisconsin Avenue to make Monument Square a bigger public space.

Alder Jones stated that some constituents and business owners on Sixth Street would like to retain the parking on Monument Square.

Mayor Mason stated what we learned is that we have an abundance of parking in our downtown. He explained that there may be a tradeoff between parking and expanding public space.

A motion was made by Alder Jung, seconded by Commissioner Hefel, to recommend approval of the request. The motion PASSED BY A Voice Vote.

End of Public Hearings

[0047-20](#)

Subject: Subject: Request from Michael Bannon and Nicholas Verhaalen, seeking approval of a three lot certified survey map for the property at 1917 S. Memorial Drive (PHD-20).

Recommendation of the Planning, Heritage, and Design

Commission 1-22-2020: That the request from Michael Bannon and Nicholas Verhaalen for approval of a three-lot certified survey map for the property at 1917 S. Memorial Drive be approved subject to conditions a.- d.

Fiscal Note: N/A

Attachments: [Review and Recommendation](#)
[Applicant Submittal](#)
[#0047-20 Resolution](#)

Associate Planner Jeff Hintz explained the request and showed the proposed division of the lot. He stated the document submitted meets all of the state statues and staff is recommending approval subject to conditions a. – d.

A motion was made by Alder Jung, seconded by Commissioner Peete, to recommend approval of the request subject to conditions a. – d. The motion PASSED by a Voice Vote.

[0048-20](#)

Subject: Request from Travis Kuehner, representing Advocate Aurora Health, seeking a minor amendment to a conditional use permit for façade and signage changes to the building at 2621 S. Green Bay Road (PHDC-20).

Attachments: [Review and Recommendations](#)
[Applicant Submittal](#)

Lisa Just, President East Corridor of Advocate Aurora, spoke regarding the request. She stated the clinic will be open Monday – Saturday 7:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. She stated they will start construction as early as April 1st of this year and plan to open as soon as Fall of this year. She stated they want to provide high quality and cost effective health care for the residents of the city of Racine. Just stated members of the design construction team were also present and spoke regarding diversity and inclusion in their construction process.

Hintz gave a presentation of the location of the site. Stated because of the minor changes notices were not needed and the PHDC will be the final approval for the project. Stated zoned B2 Community Shopping District. showed the proposed building façade rendering and the site plan for the project. The proposed signage and the possible actions of the commission were also explained. He stated staff is recommending approval subject to conditions a. – e.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hefel, seconded by Alder Jones, to

approve the request subject to conditions a. – e. The motion PASSED by a Voice Vote.

Administrative Business

Historic Preservation Work Session

Sadowski gave a presentation regarding historic preservation in the city of Racine. He explained the definition of a National Historic Landmark along with its evaluation criteria. He stated there are 48 national landmarks in Racine County and 39 of them are in the city of Racine. He stated we have seven National Register Historic Districts.

Alder Jung asked about the process of getting something that we feel as historic on the list.

Sadowski stated that first a reconnaissance survey is done to see what the resources are in the district (e.g. persons of note, architectural, etc.). He stated there was one done already for West Racine. Sadowski explained the next step would be to work with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to process the district application. He stated it would first be approved by the city and then forwarded to the SHPO to be on the National Register. Sadowski stated there is a local process that would follow the same steps, but would be processed through the PHDC and the Common Council.

Hintz stated local districts give local control.

Mayor Mason stated that we have a lot great historic districts with zero local protection.

In response to Commissioner Hefel, Mayor Mason stated that Orchard Street does not encompass a lot of West Racine.

Sadowski stated that a reconnaissance survey was done of West Racine and what was picked out from that was that the Orchard Street area had the most architectural significant buildings – the most original, better example of its period.

Mayor Mason and Sadowski stated Orchard Street is the newest historic district. Sadowski stated it is an interesting area.

Hintz stated all of the maps and layers of the historic districts are on the city's Geographical Information Systems (GIS).

Sadowski described the National Historic Landmark, Historic American Building Survey, and the Wisconsin Registered Landmark Program. He stated between 1975-2018, 68 listings were listed as city of Racine Landmarks. Sadowski explained the criteria for designating local landmarks. He described Historic Properties District – designated under the current ordinance.

Commissioner Hefel asked how designating a property as a landmark would be incentivized.

Discussion ensued about the perceptions of the tax credit program and ways to incentivize those who chose to be a locally designated landmark.

Sadowski stated Preservation Racine does Century Buildings honorary and have had

more than 300 listings between 1998-2018.

Sadowski explained the publications that were created by the Landmarks Preservation Commission and preservation initiatives. He spoke of the codes that were amended because of the preservation initiatives and described future initiatives.

Buildings being razed

None.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:42 p.m.