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## **PREFACE**

### **THE EAST RAIL CORRIDOR: THE CHALLENGE OF ORGANIC URBAN REDEVELOPMENT**

Frank Lloyd Wright, the native champion of what he called organic architecture, was quoted as saying a city should be a celebration of circumstances. This is the opportunity of the East Rail Corridor---to celebrate the circumstances of its industrial, utility and transportation heritage, the circumstances of a diverse and caring community, and to build its vibrant future as a part of the urban region.

Bringing these assets together in a planned redevelopment---that builds on the existing without clear-cutting, that adds new uses without displacement of long-term futures, that recognizes the required balancing of regional functions with neighborhood impacts, that sees opportunities for new, creative economic growth, that deals with housing affordability, that creates models for sustainable community-used green space, that builds on public and private partnerships---all this provides the opportunity for an organic redevelopment model. A model that grows respectfully from what is there to what could be there.

### **GETTING THE REGION TO AN ORGANIC REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT**

Madison and the Dane County region have experienced great growth in the last several decades. Much of this growth has occurred on the periphery of the City, but some major experiments with urban redevelopment have occurred with varying degrees of success and sometimes unforeseen consequences. While many parts of the country have failed at urban reinvestment and learned to love urban sprawl, the Madison region has tried to balance growth in new areas with redevelopment within the urban fabric.

All too often the past redevelopment attempts have meant a rending of the urban fabric, replacement, and then a stitching back together. The early redevelopments of the Triangle area and the University Avenue areas took place during the clear-cutting mode of the 1950's and 1960's. The result was the physical destruction of cherished neighborhoods, the blighting presence of vacant land over long periods of time, and eventually replacement with totally new structures which, while perhaps good, were unrelated to previous uses or character.

More successful were recent and ongoing efforts in the Old Market Place and South Campus redevelopment areas. Both added substantially to the residential stock of the City and reorganized institutional and commercial uses. While perhaps pointing the way, neither redevelopment area is on the scale of the East Rail Corridor, and the South Campus areas has relied almost solely on replacement structures. The Old Market Place redevelopments have become part of a larger functioning neighborhood.

Two other redevelopment areas have also seen remarkable change. The West Rail Corridor process is only partway done, but it too appears to be largely utilizing

replacement uses and structures. The Downtown's rebuilding with new office structures and condos represents a lively reinvestment that would be envied in most urban places. The office upbuilding has kept jobs focused in the urban core and further supports the regional investment in transit. Offices and condos, plus other public investments, have created the urban civic space that enlivens the urban character of the entire region. The Capitol Square as the prime urban focus, now complemented by Monona Terrace, and soon to be assisted by the Overture Center, makes urban Madison more of a reality than most cities in the country. Yet the tensions of encroachment on neighborhoods and older uses is quite real in this area.

### **THE EAST RAIL CORRIDOR REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY**

The East Rail Corridor provides a unique opportunity for the Madison area to hone its city-building redevelopment skills to a further stage. Plans for years have described the area as one of opportunity. Citizens have been serving for decades on committees that have at least alluded to if not actually studied those potentialities. Now, a number of factors come together to provide a unique opportunity, and one that could lead to a new organic redevelopment model. These assets include the following:

- The continuing vibrancy of urban Madison and the region as an area for reinvestment.
- Visions advanced by the Urban Open Space Foundation and contained in the Madison Parks and Open Space Plan to create and link urban green spaces in the core of the region and to address park deficiencies identified by the Madison Parks Commission.
- The presence of an existing major employment center and long-term businesses in the study area, coupled with a desire to retain jobs and increase central area growth.
- Visions for transit-oriented redevelopment for more intense land uses and potential new models for regional transit such as commuter rail.
- Regional transportation linkages such as a metropolitan bikeway, area-wide transit service, and a major State highway that now run through the area, and existing transportation facilities such as Metro's Service Center that serve the region.
- Major utility operations and regional transmission in the area that provide the power reliability desired by the new economy.
- Active neighborhoods interested, beyond the questions of physical redevelopment, in the social capital issues of redevelopment, such as affordable housing, neighborhood character, and public art.