

Parking Ramp – Common Sense? Who Really benefits?

City Council – September 22, 2014

Why is the city proceeding as though there is some urgency to building a ramp?

We know representatives from RCU and JAMF have spoken in favor of the ramp. What cost/benefit parking expertise do they bring to the table? What parking expertise, or even simple math, do they even cite to support the ramp idea? Strip mall developers, bankers, software developers are not parking experts. I am not an expert either, so in cases such as this, I seek out expertise beyond my own common sense. And I am quite proficient in basic math. I did speak with a JAMF employee at one of the parking ramp open houses. She told me she liked the ramp idea because then she wouldn't have to brush snow off her car. \$10 million? I wouldn't have the audacity to ask tax payers to provide that for me. If you really don't want snow on your car, you should probably be moving south. Is it not enough that JAMF scored that sweet location for their office building? Where else in the world could they have gotten such a deal?

The math doesn't add up. Even the VenuWorks report stated that if the land was worth less than \$1 million per acre, a parking ramp should not be considered.

This land is worth, per the City assessor:

Acres: 1.472

Assessed Value of Land: \$287,000

~ \$195,000/acre

The Livery is \$378,600 per acre. We are nowhere near \$1 million.

We need to apply some wisdom, some judgment and common sense to this decision. Roundabouts are not the solution to every intersection and parking ramps are not the solution to every downtown parking need.

We are not Minneapolis and we should be proud of that and grateful for that. In fact, I know people who can live where they choose, but their employer requires that they be within 2 hours of an airport. They choose to live in Eau Claire even though it is less convenient. They do not want the urban congestion that we are trying to create. We are going to have the headaches of Minneapolis without the benefits.

Also, keep in mind:

The Joint Review Board is instructed that it must find that TIF expenditure on the parking ramp will result in development that benefits the rest of the district. Where is this benefit?

a) The post office is moving and actually has to move to a temporary location due to our lack of accommodating their challenges. I guess we know they aren't on the "preferred" list. Now we are hoping to find someone to effectively take their place through the liner building. Speculative . . .

- b) JAMF and RCU are already there and their parking needs are already being met and can continue to be met with additional paved parking at the post office site.
- c) Proposed parking ramp will essentially not be providing public parking during the day.
- d) Hoped for Wisconsin/Barstow building will have to provide its own parking.
- e) New “blighted” properties receive no benefit whatsoever. They just get that nice label.

The statement that spending \$10 million sends a signal to the world that we are developing downtown is hardly necessary. Isn't that already obvious? As a community we shouldn't have to plow \$10 million into a parking ramp for this purpose. The statement that this really makes is “Eau Claire tax payers are patsies”.

Last spring, I attended an outdoor music event in Sarasota on the grounds of the Ringling Mansion overlooking Sarasota Bay. It reminded me just a bit of music in Phoenix Park, Thursday evening, but much more upscale and more people in attendance. No parking ramp intruding on the skyline. Utilizing surface parking now does not preclude building a ramp in the future but once you build a ramp, there is no going back. You are stuck with it. Haven't we learned that lesson yet?