

Walmart's Wrong Plan for Green Bay

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GREEN BAY - The size of the Larsen Green is comparable to 10 Lambeau fields or 3 Port Plaza Malls. If it were on the east side of the Fox it would extend from Walnut to Pine Street and from the riverbank to Adams Street. I recommend anyone who is interested in the Larsen Green debate to walk around the site. It is immense.

Walmart's plan is to build a supercenter and pave the rest for parking. A small corner is allotted for On Broadway Inc. office space. Another corner is granted air rights above the parking lot. The historic cold storage building would be demolished and the zoning essentially changes to commercial. The tax levy on Walmart would be about \$300,000.

With Walmart's plan there is no room for further development. The air rights are less than 3 acres. They sit under high-powered lines and any construction cannot be anchored between two buildings and would thus require an easement from Walmart for pillars to provide a foundation. The air rights cover too little ground and are developmentally problematical. Walmart wants to be part of the Broadway vibe, but are knocking down the historical, cold storage building. The surface parking of 600 stalls (the zoning only requires 400) takes up 2/3 of the site. The plan Walmart has submitted is a suburban plan that basically gobbles up 15 acres of downtown property. This is larger than any other Walmart site in the area. Walmart has stated they want to be downtown. If Walmart wants to build in an urban setting, they need an urban plan, one that allows for a high density of development that will increase Green Bay's tax base.

The current plan adopted by the Planning Commission zones the Larsen Green for mixed use. This allows for a dense development of housing, retail, office space, and possibly recreational construction of an indoor/outdoor musical auditorium or baseball stadium. The historic Larson Building is reutilized and the projected tax levy of the entire area will range from \$900,000 to 2.7 million.

It is true this plan will require a little investment and time to be realized. However, if we consider we are coming out of a recession; if we appreciate the recent projects happening on the east side of Downtown: the Metreau, the City Deck Landing, Schrieber Foods, Prevea, the expansion of the Meyer, and the reconstruction of Monroe Street; if we remember how much the Broadway District has changed and look at the expansion of Tiletown on Broadway that demonstrates how remarkable the reuse of the historic canning factory can be, then I believe we can with some confidence say a mixed use development of the Larsen Green is practical and realistic.

There is a need in the downtown or a near downtown district (perhaps Velp Avenue) for businesses that will provide goods and services people living in the area want at prices they can afford. The majority of my constituents have made this very clear to me. The majority of my constituents, however, oppose Walmart's plan of the Larsen Green. To lose hundreds of thousands of tax dollars to a parking lot that destroys an historic building is a terrible, terrible waste. For the city of Green Bay to allow Walmart to take up 15 acres of downtown property is like the farmer who sells his farm to buy a cow because he needs milk. It is not the wisest of decisions.

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