

THE COVER-UP IN CITY HALL CONTINUES

From the Hartford Citizens for Responsible Government

October 3, 2006

Hartford Mayor Scott Henke and the Common Council apparently have a new vision for Hartford, that being a move of the city's retail and shopping district to a massive new 150-acre shopping mega-center on the west side of the city.

The people of Hartford need to be aware of this new vision, and its impact on the community. City officials in return should be taking this plan to the residents, and not hiding it from them like they did with the proposed 184,000 square foot Wal-Mart super center.

This is the start of a project that will forever change the complexion of this city. The people that elected these officials deserve the respect of informational sessions (or at least statements to the media) and get support for this vision instead of waiting until the petitions come through for annexation of the land as they did with the Wal-Mart project. Mayor Henke has stated, and rightfully so, that we cannot have "town hall sessions" for every little project that comes to the table. But we are not repairing a curb in a residential area, or filling some pot holes in a parking lot here. This is a major re-direction of the retail concentration of the city.

The HCRG contends that this is what the city had in mind all along, and that these facts have not been presented to the people of Hartford for their input and/or approval. The impact to traffic, the environment, and the local economy for this kind of project have not been properly addressed, and rather, pushed under the table, and worked out in "back-room agreements" with developers and big-box representatives. A previous memo released by the HCRG indicates that Mr. Koppelberger was working on the Wal-Mart deal for two years before it was brought to the attention of the public. Assuming this being so, he has also been working on deals for the adjacent land for a long time already.

Officials point out that Wal-Mart super centers have been successful in nearby communities (specifically West Bend and Cedarburg), but fail to mention that the complexes surrounding those shopping centers are also close to main traffic arteries or have nearby free-way access.

The traffic is already a nightmare in Hartford. The traffic study for the Wal-Mart project suggests another 11,000 vehicle trips each weekday and 16,000 per day on weekends. How much more will they now anticipate with another 100 acres of retail? Do they know? If not, why not? If so, why are they keeping it from us?

The right way to approach west side development is to concentrate on a truck/traffic by-pass, and get the people of Hartford, Washington County, and the State of Wisconsin to accept and support the plan. If the support is not there, then the city needs to change their vision for the commercial growth in Hartford.

It's time to share the vision, not cover it up.

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