



Dear Chairman Todd Wallace,

On behalf of the St Charles Business Alliance, I want to reach out with some concerns about the proposed changes being considered to the PUD approval ordinance.

The Alliance, who was formally the Downtown St Charles Partnership, was heavily involved in the creation of the original Overlay document. The intent of the original document was to insure that we keep checks and balances on the amount of retail, restaurants, and office businesses on our first floor buildings. Our Downtown is the heartbeat of the City, retail sales are an important economic indicator because consumer spending drives much of our economy. If we do not have a thriving downtown, it will affect everything from our residents, tourism, future businesses that come to St. Charles and even our current businesses.

We understand that the original document was created 15 years ago, and should be reviewed for possible updates and changes. We are proposing that we complete an in-depth review, and take the time to make sure the changes to the ordinance are the best option for the future of our Downtown. This would include bringing in more key stakeholders, as well, into the process.

As we are just coming out of a pandemic, all past findings or research isn't viable anymore. Everything has changed, from people's work habits, to eating patterns. The changes being proposed to the ordinance, is removing the 25% cap of office (banks, insurance offices, investment offices etc.) use, to allowing 100% capacity on the amount of these types of businesses. This may be detrimental to our downtown, as these types of businesses do not drive people to come shop, dine, or engage in the community, particularly during evening hours and on weekends. To have no cap on how many offices can be placed on the first floor of our downtown businesses could make for a totally desolate downtown.

As, the City's DMO (Destination Marketing Organization), our mission is to promote, protect and improve our businesses and community and keep our stakeholders informed and inspired. The original vision that was "sold" to the current existing businesses and to the community on and around 1<sup>st</sup> street, was that of mixed- use of retail and restaurant to create a vibrant atmosphere, that would enhance foot traffic and business. We continuously get feedback from the current businesses about how their

neighboring businesses have a major influence. For instance, if Brunch Café has a long wait, people tend to spend their waiting time shopping at Jeans and a Cute Top shop. Or someone attending a Pilate's class at St Charles Pilates, then walks next-door to pick up a dessert at Kilwins. There is a current synergy that needs to keep building and not be cut short.

The St Charles Initiative, which includes the 1st Street Plaza Expansion project, has many goals of making First Street a place where the community gathers and engages. However, if there are only banks, offices, and brokers, this will not bring people into the downtown area to enjoy this \$4 million dollar project.

We continuously hear from City leadership that St Charles is on the cusp, and that we are truly becoming a destination. If we make these changes too hastily, and without more research, we could be could halt the progress being made.

Everyone has heard that about our housing market in the Fox Valley and how many new families are moving in rapidly. We are about to have a whole new demographic, and we need time to find out their needs, their patterns, and to find what amenities or businesses they are missing or in need of.

Again, more time is needed, and stakeholder opinions are needed. We recommend we table these changes until more research and time is given, so that we can set St Charles up for a successful future.



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