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Public Works

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MEMORANDUM

Equipment Maintenance
Roadway Maintenance
Collection & Drainage
Building & Grounds
Engineering

To: Gregg Mandsager
FROM: Jim Edgmond, City Engineer
DATE: April 07, 2016
RE: Conversion from One Way two lane traffic to Two-way, two lane traffic
Downtown 2nd Street from Pine Street to Mulberry Ave.

INTRODUCTION:

On February 19, 2016 the City Council voted to table this issue until a third public information meeting could be held to gather input on this proposed conversion. The third public information meeting was held on April 6, 2016 in the City Council Chambers. The third meeting was well attended with approximately 35 people present. The two important concerns that came out of this meeting were a concern about the deliveries once the street would become two way and the other was about parking. About half of the meeting attendees 18 out of 35 voted in favor of keeping the street a one way, and about half (17) voted in favor to convert the street to a two-way street. In the two previous public information meetings the overall response was the people present were in favor of making and keeping 2nd Street a two-way street.

BACKGROUND:

Due to the upcoming Mississippi Drive reconstruction work, a detour is needed that will minimize the economic impact of the project on the downtown businesses. Converting 2nd Street to two-way two-lane traffic and detouring the traffic to 3rd Street is judged to be the best way to detour traffic. However, the conversion of 2nd Street to a two way will act as an additional route to relieve traffic from the construction detours. The perceived benefits of this conversion are the same as outlined in the previous memo.

- Saves the cost of converting back to one way.
- Will provide more convenient access and traffic pattern for the proposed parking garage on 2nd Street between Iowa and Chestnut.
- Will provide traffic relief to the MRDC detour and better access to the downtown.

In the public information meetings several items were identified that the conversion will need to address:

- Deliveries will need to be pushed to the alleys to the fullest extent possible.
- No double parking will be allowed on the street.
- The loading zones on the street have been evaluated to make sure those needing on street deliveries have loading zones nearby including making room for one

**"I remember Muscatine for its sunsets. I have never seen any
on either side of the ocean that equaled them" — Mark Twain**

semi-truck loading zone on the west end of the street to address specific concerns voiced in the second public meeting.

- The parking time of 3 hours free was brought up as something that should also be changed. The perception is that this is too long. The general consensus was that this should be changed to 90 minutes although there were participants that thought one hour and two hour parking time would be best. It was agreed that the time should be the same for all meters regardless of what the time was. Getting rid of the parking meters on the side streets to 2nd Street was also requested.

The current plan is to start the conversion as soon as possible in order to be complete prior to the start of the MRDC project so the motoring public can get used to this change prior to the start of detouring traffic for the corridor project. A comprehensive public information plan, including door knocker, changeable message signs, city website messages and radio announcements is planned in advance of the conversion. The cost to convert the street is estimated to be \$9,000, not including the traffic signal at Mulberry, which is planned to be converted to flashing red to enforce the intersection becoming a four-way stop temporarily until the Mississippi Drive Corridor reconstructs this intersection. The creation of additional parking spaces in the pedestrian islands midblock and at the Pine Street Parking lot is estimated to cost \$45,000. This would add approximately five additional parking spots to 2nd Street.

RECOMMENDATION/RATIONALE:

Recommend city council approve the conversion proposal for 2nd Street from Pine to Mulberry.

OTHER ITEMS:

1. Recommend the Pine Street Parking lot be expanded to provide more parking.
2. Recommend that part of the midblock pedestrian crossings be removed to create more on street parking.
3. Recommend City Council authorized the start of the process to change the parking to a 90 minute limit.
4. Recommend to the City Council that the conversion of the street to a two way street be evaluated once the MRDC project is complete to see if it is having a positive effect.
5. Direct City staff to be open to what can be done to make the deliveries in the allies better and to see if anything else can be done to make 2nd Street function better from a standpoint of deliveries.

Additional Information from Planning.

Over the past two decades, a strong national consensus has emerged on the desirability of converting one-way downtown streets to two-way streets. More than 1,200 cities have made one-way to two-way conversions in the past few decades. This shift has coincided with an ever growing body of peer reviewed research showing the advantages of two way streets in downtown areas as opposed to one way streets. More specifically, these advantages can be broadly grouped into increased: livability, safety, ease of navigation, and economic vitality.

- **Livability:** In communities that have converted downtown one way streets to two way streets there have been numerous studies that have observed an increase in livability as measured

through reduced vacancy rates, increased retail sales and employment, increased pedestrian activity, and increased property tax assessments.

- **Navigation:** One-way street networks can be confusing for drivers. Visitors driving in a two-way grid network can easily approach their destination from any direction. A one-way network may prevent drivers from approaching their destination from the most logical direction. This uncertainty can intimidate drivers and, in some cases, make them hesitant to return.

- **Safety:** two way streets have been found to be safer than one way streets. This due to two factors:

- Speeds tend to be higher on one-way streets, this is not a surprise as the original purpose of a one way street is to increase vehicle speed.
- Numerous studies have shown that many drivers on one way streets pay less attention to the road because there's no conflicting traffic flow.
- For example in Louisville, a decrease in collisions of 36 and 60 percent was observed in the two years after the conversion of two, one way streets into two way streets.

- **Economics:** Conversion of one-way street to a two-way street can assist with the further economic development of the converted streets. This is particularly true on streets on which the businesses located rely on visibility to passing traffic. Two way streets provided better visibility of downtown business to new and occasional visitors to downtown. It is the new and occasional visitor that is often confused and discouraged by an encounter with an unfamiliar one-way street network. Often, these motorists are able to see their destination but are shunted away from it by the one-way streets. But these occasional users are in fact the customers that a downtown needs to attract to become revitalized.