

# Monument Square Changes Proposed

By Rob Golub - February 12, 2004

RACINE - Imagine a new Monument Square with the monument moved, a central area cleared for events, trees put up to shield traffic, and Christmas-style white lights glowing softly along wires overhead. These were some of the ideas offered by design consultants at a meeting of the Board of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services on Wednesday. Board members said they would give the new ideas some thought, months after officials rejected initial redesign proposals.

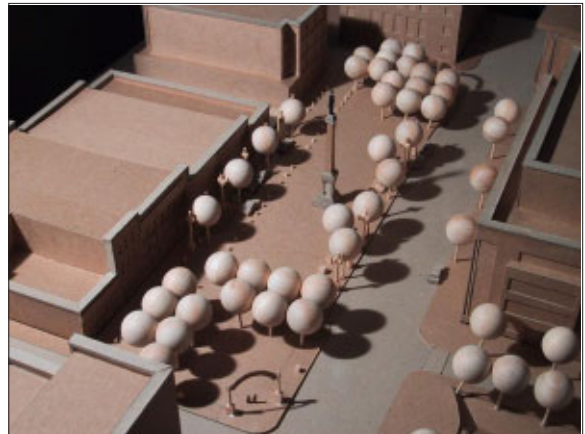
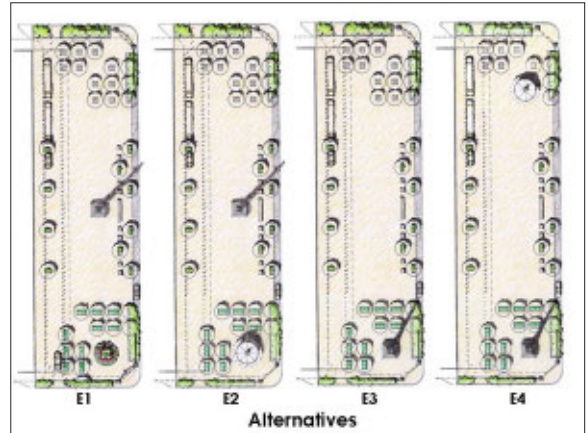
Consultants George Crandall and Don Arambula, of Portland, Ore., told the board they were not proposing any single design. Rather, the consultants showed board members several possible designs and described the elements that they'd recommend for the revitalization of Monument Square. Arambula said the costs are difficult to predict since so many choices must still be made, but he said the amount should be lower than a previously quoted \$2 million estimate.

A flat area is recommended, instead of stages, to accommodate different kinds of performances and uses. Crandall said it's a common design mistake to build a stage that musicians and performers will later say is inappropriate. It's better to let them bring their own stage.

The consultants seemed partial to reducing parking and eliminating curbs near the restaurants and shops. Built-in bumps could alert drivers who start to stray into pedestrian areas. The area could be sprinkled with some fun extras. There could be an iron gateway arch, an espresso booth, some built-in chess and checker boards, and oversized planters hugging trees. Imagine countless light bulbs overhead, possibly strung between old-fashioned double-headed street lamps on either side of the square. "Special lighting would give this place a magic and sparkle at night," Crandall said. "It would be very simple, very elegant, and very inviting."

The consultants recommend art with some interactive value for children. Crandall gave one example, a lifelike bronze statue of a man in an animated pose, holding an umbrella. Another option would be bronze horses on the square, a tribute to the area's farmland past. Alderman Jeff Coe asked about a fountain, but Crandall said that's not necessary, since the Laurel Clark fountain already exists behind the Johnson Building.

Many of the sample configurations have the monument moved from the center. Arambula appeared to lean toward moving the monument from the center of the square. He noted that it was originally placed to stand before the entrance to a courthouse that no longer exists. He said it's difficult to say how much it would cost to move the monument. It could cost more than \$100,000.



## Monument Square Changes Proposed (continued)

The consultants favor greenery instead of a wall to shield traffic from the square. They'd like to cut paths through trees to turn Monument Square into an easy pedestrian's connection between Sixth and Main streets. That will probably mean a diagonal path across at least part of Monument Square.

"One has to think about how the pedestrian moves," Crandall said. "If you fight it, you discourage people from using these kinds of spaces."

"Really, the big idea here is to unify Main and Sixth. Main Street will do better and Sixth Street will do better."

As for the next step, the consultants gave out surveys to Parks and Recreation Board members to gauge their preferences for a Monument Square redesign. The consultants will review the results and return with a new proposal for the area. A specific timetable for a redesign was not given.