



Movies, streetcars in Downtown Racine plan

By Mick Burke

RACINE - Here's an idea for a night out: Go Downtown, see a movie, ride the streetcar around and get a drink and something to eat.

That scenario may sound possible only in a long-gone Downtown Racine. But the half-finished Downtown Racine Refinement Plan outlines a city center that could make all the above quite possible again.

The plan, scheduled for completion this fall, will provide direction for the next 20 to 25 years. It casts a big, bold vision for a future city center, including:

- More than 3,000 new housing units.
- 700,000 square feet of new employment.
- New pockets of retail stores.
- A streetcar loop.
- A four- to six-screen cinema.

"I think it's very possible" to achieve those sorts of gains, said George Crandall of the urban design firm Crandall Arambula. He cited the transformation of his own city of Portland, Ore.

"When we came to Portland about 30 years ago, the

downtown was down and out," Crandall said. Now it's considered a model of urban renewal.

Crandall Arambula has drawn up a plan for Downtown Racine fully built-out. They have calculated the potential for \$600 million to \$700 million in new investment.

In the plan they add new major housing areas, liberally sprinkled with park blocks and green space.

They suggest a streetcar line looping through the area, starting and ending at the future transit station on State Street.

A new movie theater just off Main Street would become part of Downtown's mix of attractions.

And the intersection of Washington Avenue and Marquette Street would be rebuilt as a green, attractive gateway to Downtown. A roundabout there would handle the intersection while proclaiming the entrance to Downtown.

"Quality of life will get increasingly critical in development," Crandall said. "The attractive cities will grow, and the unpleasant cities will decay."

