Date: August 27, 2010

To: West Midway Study Task Force

From: Penelope Simison

Subject: Clarifying some questions about the task force's work

It's come to our attention, following the first two meetings of the task force, that some people are unclear about just exactly what the task force is doing and what it's trying to accomplish. I thought it would be useful to lay out some thoughts about the task force process and the substance of the plan we're preparing.

On the process – two issues.

1. The plan is a **collaboration between task force members and staff**. There are probably a dozen City people working on various pieces of the plan – examples are brownfields, stormwater management, transportation, design, zoning. But we're not working in a vacuum. City staff is **depending on task force members to bring several things to the discussion –**
    - What you know about how the West Midway functions, year in and year out.
    - What you know about your industry and other industries, the economy, your neighborhood that is important in shaping the plan.
    - Using information you get during task force meetings to decide what to put into the plan for the West Midway's future.

2. The **sequence of meetings was deliberately planned** so that –
    - The early meetings focus on basic information about the West Midway, particularly its assets, and about employment centers in general. Assets can be something obvious, like proximity to major highways; they also can be the critical mass of existing businesses and jobs that we can build on so the West Midway is a better fit in the regional economy.
    - The middle meetings will focus on decisions about the overall character of the West Midway in the future ("Building land use layers").
    - The remaining meetings will focus on decisions about details important to making the overall character function well (brownfields, design, transportation, zoning, redevelopment strategies, etc.).

The **"decision points" piece** we'll talk about at the September meeting will be used to focus on the issues in each of these meetings.

On the substance of the task force work and the plan.

The City's *Comprehensive Plan* identifies the West Midway as an employment center. So, one objective is strategies so the West Midway can produce more jobs.

To accomplish that, the plan will be a **land use plan** and, similar to the Minneapolis plan for the SEMI/Bridal Veil area, an **infrastructure plan**. As such, **it will focus on physical recommendations for the West Midway – how land and properties are used and what is needed to make these land uses more productive.** It will not be an economic development strategy. Even so, land use and infrastructure strategies (streets and other transportation modes, contamination cleanup, greenways, etc.) can be written so the area is more attractive to industries likely to thrive in the future and industries we'd like to capitalize on, for whatever reason. **Said another way, the physical recommendations in the plan will try to foster economic development.**

To that end, **a big part of the September meeting will be work on development principles – or, what are your goals for the West Midway?** What should we all pay attention to as we decide how the West Midway should evolve and develop in the coming years? What land use strategies and infrastructure components are needed to make that happen? What else is needed (contamination cleanup, building design, and bike paths and sidewalks are examples) to make the area more productive? These are very complex questions to try to answer. **Is it just a continuation of what's there now? Or, how can land be used to make it enticing for new industries to move in and start capitalizing on the West Midway's assets?**