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# Mitch Henck: Make John Nolen proud Downtown

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Now that the massive Judge Doyle Square Project is delayed again, let's take a deep breath. What are we doing to our Downtown?

Famous Madison city planner John Nolen stated 100 years ago in his proposal "Madison: A Model City" that "No other city of the world, so far as I know, has such a unique situation on a series of lakes with an opportunity for so much and such direct relationship to beautiful water frontages. The physical situation is certainly distinctly individual."

That quotation appears in the city's \$5 million Downtown Plan Guidebook.

I can't believe Nolen would have approved \$42.5 million in public financing for a roughly \$200 million project that does not come close to taking full advantage of Lake Monona. Part of the plan is to build a \$20.8 million private parking ramp to assist employees of a new Exact Sciences office building and guests of a new hotel to go where the current municipal building and parking lot are now.

The private ramp would face Doty Street. The ramp would be almost half of the tax incremental financing money. Then you have the \$12 million grant to Exact Sciences for 400 jobs, and \$9.7 million for the value of the land and \$1 million for a bike center.

In addition, the city will pay another \$19.2 million for a public underground ramp where the Government East Ramp now sits. That money would come from parking authority profits over years of plugging the meters and fines.

“Actually, Exact Sciences could get what it wants anywhere in the city,” says longtime Madison-based architect Kenton Peters. The man who designed and developed three major buildings on Lake Monona has a grander vision for the proposed Judge Doyle Square site.

“How many people gather Downtown to look at a parking ramp,” Peters says. One part of his grand design in the tradition of John Nolen is to celebrate the lake. Peters says the city could build a public ramp over John Nolen Drive with a six-acre park on top for the public to enjoy.

After consulting with a major contractor, Peters said the one-level ramp would cost \$15 million, and the park on top could be done for \$4.2 million. That comes to the same \$19.2 million the city already wants to spend underground in a much uglier spot.

It would be called Lake Terrace Park. Peters proudly displays the model in his beautiful condo over the lake. Peters has designed 109 buildings all over the Midwest. He designed the courthouse in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, as well as the federal courthouse in Downtown Madison.

Peters says the beautifully landscaped urban park would have walking and bicycle access to the water’s edge.

If taxpayers are going to peel off big money for a project that doesn’t pay for itself for 27 years, why not do it in a way that would have made the late John Nolen proud?