January 3, 2021

Hello all!

I am contacting you because I believe you all are big thinkers with big hearts who can help develop this idea.... To build a place where we can develop community, foster the arts, host cultural events and encourage business innovation.... in a welcoming, accessible environment...with a good cup of coffee!

I have attached a "Vision Statement" and some supporting discussion.  The first page is an executive summary that quickly depicts the center's vision and mission and the following pages begin to lay out each of the sub-elements.  It is a work in progress and I welcome input!

Some folks (including my family) might think this is too ambitious and slightly crazy and would wonder why I am doing this now...when I should be enjoying retirement.  Here's why:

1.  Because I can.  My previous career has afforded me a pension and health care which provides the freedom to do this.

2.  Because it's needed.  I have talked to many folks here in the last six months and they are thirsting for a "place" that welcomes all ... young, old, kids, teens, strangers, families.  An indoor "town square" of sorts.

3.  Because I am called.  I know...I'm struggling with this one.  But I do feel a calling and I feel that you all can understand this.  I don't understand it yet, but I feel it.

It is ambitious, but I think we can build a coalition that can make this happen.  I'm willing to lead that coalition of the willing.  Are you with me?   There are many, many, unanswered questions that you - as community leaders - can help answer.

I have asked for this to be brought to the Madison EDA for consideration and am already working with the organization that supports our EDA (Community and Economic Development Associations), SBA and VA lenders and grant-making organizations.

Kris

**The Madison Mercantile**

*Executive Summary*

**Mission:** Create a center for Arts, Culture and Innovation in Madison, Minnesota.

**Vision:**   Located in the “Brehmer Hardware Building,” this center, tentatively called “Madison Mercantile,” will provide an accessible, inviting and welcoming location to facilitate tourism, history, arts, culture, entrepreneurship, small business development and remote work.

**The facility will include:**

**1.  Coffee Shop.**  The Shop – decorated as an old “general store” - will draw both locals and travelers, providing a downtown community hub for fellowship, information sharing and community building.  The coffee shop will highlight the area’s history.   The shop will host community events, learning opportunities, book clubs and youth programs.

**2.  Tourism Center.**  In coordination with the City of Madison and County of Lac Qui Parle, the Coffee Shop would include tourism information for the city and surrounding area in a dedicated portion of the building.

**3.  Art Gallery.**  The gallery, co-located with the coffee shop, will showcase area artists and craftsman.  This will enhance the “coffee and community” goal and provide an opportunity for local artists to display and sell their work.  The Art Gallery will be the physical home of The Madison Arts Council.  The Gallery will host Artist workshops, local musicians and writers and will provide space for youth art and music classes.

**4.  Remote Work Center.**  This “co-working” area will draw people that work remotely but need access to dedicated work space on an ad hoc basis.  This will include high-speed internet access, work areas, printers and copiers and small meeting rooms with access to “Zoom” capability.

**5.  Small Business/Entrepreneur Center.**  This “business incubator” will provide office space, manufacturing space, storage and display space for small businesses.  The space can be partitioned to support entrepreneurial needs.

**6.  Artisans Co-op.**  The Co-op will provide creative space for artisans of all kinds to create their works and store their raw materials or finished products.  The Artisans Co-op will also conduct a monthly  indoor artisans market that will provide year-round opportunity for local artisans to sell their creations.

**7. Storage.** This area will provide small climate controlled storage capabilities.