

## Urbana looking to attract visitors, students in new marketing campaign

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Amid questions of proper wording and fears of hastily made decisions, the Urbana City Council pushed back an important discussion about liquor licenses Monday and instead focused more heavily on budget proposals and marketing plans. A sizable portion of the meeting was devoted to the development of an ad scheme, tentatively called "Marketing Urbana." The end goal is to create an integrated ad campaign that targets the citizens of Urbana, especially the large population of undergraduate students.

The board agreed that many of the entertainment opportunities and amenities that Urbana has to offer are simply unknown to college students. From the bars and restaurants in downtown Urbana to the theater and the farmers market held on Saturdays, the residents are not utilizing many quality businesses.

As a result, the council is developing a comprehensive marketing campaign to create a unified image for the city. By coordinating the look of road banners, the city website and printed material, it is hoped that customers will be better informed and travel to downtown businesses. As a secondary effect, many believe residents will feel a greater sense of pride for their city. It is suspected that all aspects of the campaign will be worked out and in full effect when students again flood the two cities at the beginning of fall semester.

Councilwoman Danielle Chynoweth further characterized the problem.

If you're new to the community, she said, "Then you might be disoriented."

Cities such as Madison, Wisc., and Portland, Ore., have maps placed by bus stops and other key areas of high traffic that describe the general layout of the city, with the university, residential and business districts clearly labeled. Maps placed at strategic points would be extremely helpful to guide not only new residents but also students who do not travel into Urbana often, Chynoweth said.

"Other communities have done it, we can do it too," Chynoweth said.

Electronic kiosks that provided similar information were also popular among the council members.

There could be some shortcomings of the plan, however. As Councilman Robert Lewis warned, everyone needs to "think outside the box."

"(Although Urbana should have) a vision of who we are as a community," Lewis said, "there are a whole lot of avenues that need to be explored."

Whatever the outcome may be of this discussion, the real purpose is to attract people to the city. Both Chynoweth and Councilman Brandon Bowersox agreed that the problem was not retaining citizens, but rather getting them to visit in the first place.

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