

Save the real pubs

After Lebowski Fest's free movie screening at Cathedral Square last weekend, I spent time with out-of-towners from far and wide. These costumed revelers fittingly ended up at Real Chili on East Wells Street after a crowded bar proved too noisy. Several first-time visitors gushed about downtown, pleasantly surprised by our hopping scene.

A San Francisco woman, stunning in her green-cape-and-harness get-up (a la Julianne Moore's "Maude"), was especially effusive about our funky pubs with character. She groaned when she heard city officials might approve tax dollars for an "entertainment" mall next to a new arena, full of national bars and restaurants. "Keep your local character," she admonished "don't ruin it with cookie-cutter (expletive deleted)!"

City "leaders," eager to keep up with the Joneses in other cities, may hand over millions to help Bucks owners put up an "Anywhere USA" mall. I bet most Common Council members are not fully aware of downtown's buzzing night life just steps from a planned arena. They could naively vote to kill (or at least hobble) the goose that's laying golden eggs. They would not be the first city government to be bamboozled into buying a major sports cartel's bill of goods. Let's hope they see the light. We must preserve our authentic businesses frequented by appreciative tourists and residents.

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