

Ann Arbor Discovering Downtown Downtown Zoning Advisory Committee

November 15th, 2006 Meeting
4th Floor Workroom, City Hall

Members Present: Fred Beal, Bonnie Bona, Michael Concannon, Bob Johnson, Carol Kuhnke, Brad Moore, Sonia Schmerl

Staff Present: Wendy Rampson, Lindsay Hard

Guests: Ethel Potts (Planning Commission), Evan Pratt (A2D2 Steering Committee)

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. Overview of the A2D2 Project

Based on the recommendations of the Downtown Residential Taskforce, in May of 2005, Calthorpe Associates was hired by the City to develop a vision for the downtown. After six months of work, including multiple opportunities for public input, Calthorpe Associates produced a report that provides a recommended vision and policy framework for downtown Ann Arbor. City Council accepted this report and directed staff to identify a strategy for implementing the recommendations.

Council approved an implementation plan in March 2006, and in September 2006, City Council established the Ann Arbor Discovering Downtown (A2D2) initiative to implement the high priority recommendations of the Downtown Development Strategies Project. The five high priority implementation initiatives are:

- Create Overlay Zoning
- Implement Urban Design Guidelines
- Clarify Historic Preservation Criteria
- Streamline Development Process
- Pursue Comprehensive Parking Strategy

A question was raised regarding what geographic boundaries the committee would be using. The Downtown Residential Taskforce used a ¼ mile buffer around the DDA boundary to enclose the downtown area. Staff indicated that, at least to start with, the DDA district boundaries would be used unless a zoning change in an adjacent area was necessary support the downtown zoning changes.

3. Review of the City Council Committee Charge & Structure

The A2D2 Steering Committee developed a charge for the work of this advisory committee. The committee shall provide input on possible zoning scenarios and provide advice on amendments to the Downtown Plan and related zoning code changes. The committee shall:

- Evaluate data and reports provided by staff regarding downtown zoning scenarios;
- Work with staff to identify amendments to Downtown Plan;

- Make recommendations to staff and ultimately to the A2D2 Steering Committee; and
- Assist with public information and outreach, including each member's constituency.

The anticipated structure will consist of the project lead presenting different zoning scenarios to the advisory committee. The committee will review these different options to see how different concepts would operate and provide feedback for consideration by the lead staff and Steering Committee. At this point, it is anticipated that staff will rewrite the zoning language.

The committee noted that the schedule for completion of the work plan is June 30, 2007 and one member questioned what was driving the timeline. It was noted that the Calthorpe report was completed a long time ago, and there is an increasing amount of development pressure downtown, so the City needs to move forward.

Another question came up regarding the impact of any zoning changes on projects that are currently coming on line. Staff explained that, if a site plan is approved, the property owner has the right to develop as it was approved for three years after the approval date. It was noted that for the next 6 to 8 months it may be a potentially difficult time for developers as they seek to get projects approved as the rezoning discussion is going on.

4. Review of the Zoning Work Plan

The work plan for this committee consists of three phases:

- Phase I – Scope project/conduct inventory (May – August 2006)
- Phase II – Develop framework for regulatory changes (September 2006 – March 2007)
- Phase III – Draft ordinance amendments (March 2007 – June 2007)

The committee reviewed a matrix of Downtown Development Projects from 2000 to the present and discussed the increased use of residential premiums since 2000. The committee asked for background information such as a summary of the primary zoning districts and their characteristics. Other topics touched upon included the legal precedence for what can and can't be regulated, infrastructure capacity issues, and the desirability of PUDs.

5. Next Meeting

The committee discussed the need for a larger room next time, and reaffirmed that everything that is discussed in these meetings can be communicated to other interested parties. The next meeting will be Wednesday, December 13th at 4:30 in the conference room on the 6th floor of City Hall and will include time for public comment.

Prepared by Lindsay Hard