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**TO:** City of Ann Arbor Planning Commission

**FROM:** Ben Carlisle, AICP  
Megan Masson-Minock, AICP

**DATE:** July 28, 2023

**RE:** Stakeholder Consultations and Recommended Policy Options

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It was a pleasure to meet with you on July 11, 2023 to discuss policy options for amendments to the Unified Development Code (UDC). For reference to our memo from that meeting, please see [here](#).

We are looking forward to meeting with you on August 8, 2023. The purpose of the meeting is to review amendments to the UDC based on your input. The direction given at that meeting was to eliminate premiums and increase the allowed density.

### Discussion Question

We ask that you come to your August 8<sup>th</sup> meeting prepared to discuss the following question:

- *Does the proposed UDC amendments implement the goals defined by the Planning Commission for this process?*
- *What changes are needed before a public hearing on these proposed amendments?*

### Amendments Approach

Please find proposed UDC amendments in the appendix of this report. In consultation with City staff, we opted for regulation by height only, instead of an increase in floor to area ratio (FAR), in order to implement the request of the Planning Commission for the following reasons:

- **Simplicity:** Rather than increasing the FAR and maintaining height restrictions that may be in conflict, we opted for the simpler option of eliminating FAR altogether in the D1 and D2 zoning districts. In our research of zoning regulations for the downtowns of 17 cities similar to Ann Arbor (see appendix), most regulate by height, not FAR or a combination thereof. Four of those cities use height maps, similar to how Ann Arbor regulates height

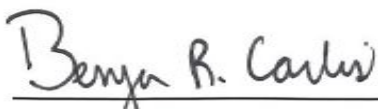
Benjamin R. Carlisle, *President* Douglas J. Lewan, *Executive Vice President* John L. Enos, *Vice President*  
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Paul Montagno, *Principal*, Megan Masson-Minock, *Principal*, Laura Kreps, *Senior Associate*  
Richard K. Carlisle, *Past President/Senior Principal*

in the Downtown Character Overlay zoning districts (see map in the Appendix). In those character districts, the maximum height ranges in the D1 from 180 feet (State Street, Liberty/Division, East Huron 2, Midtown, Main Street) to 3 stories or 120 feet depending on setbacks (East Huron 1). In the D2, the maximum height is 60 feet, except in the Main Street character district where areas 150 feet from the East William Street Lot can have a height of 120 feet. A spreadsheet with heights of existing buildings in the D1 and D2 approved since 2008 is in the appendix.

- Height Exceptions for Sustainable and Affordable Housing Developments: Section 5.18.4 allows for a height increase of 30% across all zoning districts when a sustainable or affordable housing development is proposed. The elimination of FAR would remove a constraint on use of this option in the D1 and D2 zoning districts, while still offering an incentive for sustainable development and affordable housing.
- Transit Corridor (TC-1) Precedent: The most recently adopted zoning district, TC-1, does not have FAR regulations. It relies on height, setbacks and design standards to regulate the size, bulk, and design of new buildings.
- Comprehensive Plan: FAR limitations can force variety in building design and architectural articulations, which may not happen when height is the sole factor limiting factor on the bulk of the building. However, design regulations, like those in Section 5.17.6, can require variety and articulations. The upcoming comprehensive plan update is an opportunity to explore appropriate design and bulk regulations for the D1 and D2 zoning districts and the corresponding Downtown Character Overlay zoning districts. A building type approach, like that used in the TC-1, could be evaluated as well.

We look forward to meeting with you on August 8, 2023. Thank you for the opportunity to work with you and the City of Ann Arbor again.

Sincerely,



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CARLISLE/WORTMAN ASSOC., INC  
Benjamin R. Carlisle, AICP, LEED AP  
President



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CARLISLE/WORTMAN ASSOC., INC  
Megan Masson-Minock, AICP  
Principal

# Appendix

**Proposed UDC Amendments**

**Updated Research from Other Cities with Height & FAR regulations**

**Downtown Character Overlay Zoning Districts**

**Heights of Existing Buildings in the D1 and D2 Zoning Districts**