

## **Downtown Development Draft Report Comments**

Ma'am/Sir,

I would like to inform you that I support the Calthorpe report, and would like to take action to help implement it's ideas and goals. As a single professional engineer working and living in the Ann Arbor area, I find it difficult to afford my own residence in the pedestrian area of downtown Ann Arbor. I do not want to be forced to find an affordable house in suburban Ypsilanti. This is what most of my single peers seem to be doing. Please let me know any actions you recommend I take to help these goals be adopted.

Thank you very much for your help,  
Mark Gilley

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Dear Colleagues,

I received an email from Erica Briggs at the Chamber of Commerce encouraging folks to contact you with personal comments in order to help raise the profile of the community's widespread support for the recommendations contained within the Calthorpe Report.

I strongly support density downtown, and am delighted that the Calthorpe report emphasizes the addition of (as many as possible!) new housing units as well as retail - including the strategic inclusion of national chains. I believe, and my family and friends' behavior has demonstrated, that people really want to shop and live downtown. We just need the opportunity to do so. Please take action on Calthorpe's recommendations: increased housing density and aggressive recruitment of all sorts of businesses - from locally owned (which we should support and encourage as much as we possibly can) to national stores.

The following editorial comment may be an unwelcome aside, but I just have to add that the folks who are so vocal about needing more parks downtown - particularly at the Main/William location - are NOT in the majority, as far as I can tell from my many conversations with colleagues, neighbors, friends, and family. I think having pocket parks here and there to add green space to the urban landscape is somewhat desirable, but certainly should not be prioritized above the addition of large-scale mixed-use development that increases the City's tax base and adds opportunities for new residents and customers to be downtown. Please know that the vocal minority opposing that position is precisely that: a vocal and oppositionist minority (which is the nicest way possible to put it).

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Kerry Sheldon

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These are my comments on the Calthorpe draft report dated Dec. 5, 2005

Bob Johnson, January 13, 2006

In many ways, I think this document makes reasonable suggestions for Downtown. However, its single-minded focus on shopping as the main component of a vibrant downtown is disheartening. My comments are selective.

**Substantive concerns:**

Page 13 – “less appealing side” of Downtown includes “many examples of non-pedestrian-scale architecture”. Is Calthorpe willing to be specific?

Page 18 – “land use strategy recommends...placing the pedestrian first”. Well stated.

Page 19 has the specific zoning recommendations. The first bullet point makes it clear that the focus of this report is increasing the opportunities for retail sales downtown. This is a weakness in the focus of the Calthorpe report. The cultural and entertainment attractions of Downtown are generally not considered or fostered in this Report. For example, the Hands-On Museum is even mentioned in the Calthorpe report, yet that is a major draw for the City of Ann Arbor. The movie theatres are mentioned once, yet the chance to see unusual films and shows is a major draw for Downtown that is not regarded as important by Calthorpe. The single-minded focus on retail and shopping (bringing residents in because they are good shoppers) is a disheartening aspect of this Report. I strongly believe that we need a more humanistic approach to Downtown life than Calthorpe offers.

I agree that City policies on the regulation of development ought to be streamlined.

Page 20 – The zoning recommendation for Downtown Core are good: maximum height, 10 stories. FAR – 660%. Upper floor setback, 10-20 feet above 3 stories.

Page 24 suggests an additional FAR of 100% for 10% affordable housing. “Affordable” needs to be defined before this can be implemented.

Page 24 suggests an additional FAR of 100% for underground parking. I’m not sure that there should be a bonus for underground parking. Underground parking in lieu of open lot parking nearly pays for itself because the land that would be open lot parking can be built on.

Page 35: the retail section seems to be solely about fostering shopping. But entertainment (broadly defined) is also important. We need to protect areas like the First Street clubs. These are fragile local businesses, under threat of redevelopment. I would like to see an Entertainment zoning, along with the existing commercial zoning.

Page 36 – destination retail. This section is well put. This matters for a strong downtown shopping draw.

Page 37: What does it mean that national retailers offer assistance with capital improvements? Assistance to whom? Similar question for the technical assistance, tenancing assistance. I see how they help with regional marketing.

Page 38: subsidize downtown retailers. How does one select the retailer?

It's a reasonable policy suggestion that AA should actively recruit retailers.

Page 41: Braun Court is not actually a pedestrian space. It is not used that way.

Page 42: good recommendations

Page 43: Specious recalculation. I strongly object to this. Including Braun Court, Kerrytown and the Community High parking lot as “park land” is unequivocally objectionable. This must be revised.

Page 46: (top of page) The connection is not funded. The study is the only thing that is funded.

We need ample parking. It is legitimate to ask downtown business owners to contribute.

Page 47: Gateways are recommended here and in many other places. I would object to this. I think that gateways are pretentious and pompous. I prefer a city that gradually reveals itself, as Ann Arbor does as one drives down N. Main. This is a pretty strong preference for me.

The rest of the recommendations are reasonable.

Page 49: Vision plan proposes development of the two maintenance sites that are now generally assumed to be part of the Greenway. I think that development of these parcels in the floodplain probably should not be done.

Figure 43 shows buildings on the First and William lot. I believe this is unlikely to happen for the foreseeable future.

Figure 45 envisions redevelopment of privately owned properties. Does Calthorpe recommend rezoning here?

Note that figure 47 shows the “Y” site with a much smaller building than the one actually proposed. Indeed, the recommended height limit for this part of Downtown is 10 stories.

Page 53: The Y proposal is supported, but it is not specified whether this refers to the original Council approved plan or the revised plan that being developed with staff. Please specify.

Page 54: Kingsley Lane is called a small development. Please specify whether this comment refers to the original proposal or the revised plan.

We need the gas station on Main and Miller. It is the only convenient gas station for people living downtown and for many commuters. Wanting to get rid of it is “design” run amok. It is part of a vibrant downtown just as much as a retail grocery.

In many ways, despite its many virtues, the Calthorpe report has as its focus turning Downtown into a premiere shipping area. More residents are desired because they shop.

Page 55: Clear opposition to the Greenway project is expressed in bullet point two.

I like Fingerle Lumber where it is! That Calthorpe wants to get rid of the lumberyard and replace it with more shops and apartments is one more indication of their implicit vision of Downtown – shops and shoppers. All the elements that give character to the existing downtown - the working downtown – appeared to be regarded as impediments to the vision of more shoppers.

#### **Presentation issues:**

Suggestions: Scales on all maps. A map without a distance scale loses much of its value. Some of the maps are unreadable; fig 14, for example, is nearly useless.

P 16, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph, line 6 – ‘faculty’

Define FAR more completely at its first appearance (p 18)

Fig 15 is too dark

Figure 28 is hard to understand.

Figure 39 is very hard to understand.

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The "Archimedes" stance is simply to deny through zoning any possibility of building in floodplains or floodways. I urge you to require the inclusion of strong zoning language, against any new building, in the Allen Creek Floodway AND Floodplain, in all documents associated in any manner with planning in the downtown.

Displacement of water is easy to see when one jumps into a bathtub. It was also easy to see recently in the sad situation in New Orleans. PLANNING, however, keeps these situations from happening. We know that if we fill the tub too full before hopping in that it will overflow. So, too, if we place big objects in an empty tub, and then fill it the customary amount, it will also overflow (although that is not quite as obvious as the former scenario). Extend that idea to putting buildings in the floodway--where does the displaced water go? It goes into the floodplain. Now suppose there are buildings in the floodplain. The water gets displaced even more. Where does the displaced water go?

Outside the floodplain? Where? Certainly I wish that planners in New Orleans had thought ahead on this matter. So, why build in a floodplain, ever? Can engineers build "floodproof" buildings...no doubt they can build all sorts of wonderful things. Still, in the matter of the entire floodplain and adjacent areas where displaced water might go, and not simply on the matter of safety of residents in a single building (or small group), if buildings are placed in floodplains, they will, necessarily, displace water when the floodplain fills up. That is Archimedes principle, roughly; it has been a valid principle for centuries and it is an enduring one. Think about it. Also think about the fact that our maps that delineate floodplains may not be all that accurate...should we be doing anything with the floodplain until we do have good maps?

That brings us back to ask why one might even consider building in a floodplain. I hope that the decision makers of this city will continue in the tradition of the Ann Arbor I know and love and make decisions based on broad goals that will allow future generations to reap the benefits of thoughtful long-range planning.

Best wishes  
Sandy Arlinghaus.

TO: Members of City Council, Planning Commission, DDA and other interested parties  
FROM: Susan Wineberg  
Re: Calthorpe Report

I couldn't help but notice that the three illustrations on the cover of this report from December 5, 2005 were all of historic buildings: a South Main streetscape, the Ann Arbor Observer Building (the second oldest commercial building in Ann Arbor built in the 1840s), and the Nickels Arcade on State Street. Sprinkled throughout the report are pictures of historic churches, buildings, and historic streetscapes. Right now these are all protected because they are in historic districts. The Calthorpe people picked up on these features which give Ann Arbor its charm and character. This is what historic districts are designed to protect. But given the recommendations on pages 28 and 29, it's not clear that this would continue.

I have been involved with historic preservation issues in Ann Arbor since 1976, beginning with the unsuccessful effort to save the U-M's Barbour-Waterman Gym. I later served on the Old Fourth Ward Study Committee, the Landmarks Study Committee, The Downtown Historic District Study Committee, The Awards Committee, and The Lower Town Historic District Study Committee. I have also served on the Historic District Commission three times, in the 1980s and at present. I've written two books about Ann Arbor's historic buildings: **Historic Buildings, Ann Arbor, Michigan** with Marjorie Reade (1992) and **Lost Ann Arbor** (2004). I also served for five years as the President of the Washtenaw County Historical Society (1994-1999) and five years as the newsletter editor (1999-2004). From an interest in the house I rented an apartment in, I developed

an interest in my neighborhood, then my city, and then my county. My understanding of the special characteristics of each area led me to volunteer my time to protect them from insensitive changes or demolition.

Until recently, historic preservation has had the support of City Council. As development pressures have increased, however, this has become a contentious issue. I don't think this report sheds any light on how to accommodate growth with historic preservation. In fact, it shows an appalling lack of understanding of the purpose of designation and enforcement and doesn't present the facts correctly. The very first thing needed is to get the facts straight, and they didn't.

For example, in the section on historic districts, in the paragraph following the introductory praise, the report states that the Main and State Street districts are surrounded by 10 other districts. This is very misleading. Yes, there are 13 historic districts in Ann Arbor, but two of these are single buildings (Cobblestone Farm and Northern Brewery) and one is three buildings (East Liberty). Within the downtown there are five districts, created as such because of requirements by the State of Michigan (we attempted to make it one Downtown District and were not successful). These five districts all operate with the same ordinance. Surrounding the downtown are three historic residential neighborhoods: the Old Fourth Ward (which includes the Ann St. Historic Block), the Old West Side and Washtenaw Hill. In fact, what a developer has to contend with are basically 4 historic districts, not 10. And if we strictly deal with the Downtown, we are dealing with really one (1) district!

In a second misstatement of facts, the report goes on to discuss outstanding architecture and 'ordinary' buildings whose removal "could be allowed." No historic district legislation at any level in the country has provisions for removing 'ordinary' buildings because they are ordinary. The whole purpose of historic districts is to **protect** the ordinary buildings. This was a new idea in the 1960s and it has proven, over the last 50 years, to be a useful tool in revitalizing neighborhoods and increasing the "ordinary" citizen's pride in their home and environment. Without the ordinary buildings, the exceptional ones lose their context and thus their importance is diminished. This idea is understood as the bedrock belief for DISTRICTS. This basic concept does not seem to have been understood by the writers of this report. Does anyone really think that St. Andrew's church should be surrounded by high rise buildings?

A third problem with the report's ideas for historic preservation is the suggestion to "update the adaptive reuse ordinance." Ann Arbor does not have such an ordinance. A fourth suggestion, consolidation of all the districts into one or two historic districts, is simply not possible given the state enabling legislation. Clearly there was no effort to acquire this knowledge before writing the report.

An important first step would be to fill the vacant position of the historic district coordinator. We need a knowledgeable, full time person who knows the local, state and federal laws regarding both the districts we have in place and any plans to alter them.

There are logistical problems for this coordinator however. Being a unit within the Community Services Area, historic preservation is sometimes at odds with development proposals and both units are overseen by the same person. This puts the Historic District Commission and its staff in an awkward position. I have noticed that staff attending city council meetings will be supporting the developers but not the historic preservation projects on the same agenda. This conflict of interest puts the HDC at a constant disadvantage.

One suggestion I've thought of is having a council member as an ad hoc member of the HDC, the way council persons are on Planning and other Commissions. In this way, Council would have a better understanding of the workings of the Commission. There are many fine ideas in this report but they are hard to grasp because the presentation of the material is flawed. Many maps do not have north at the top and streets are not labeled (see pages 51 and 52). The reader has no idea what direction they are looking and which streets are which.

I attended one of the work sessions in the summer and I was taken aback at the process as well. We were given sets of development options, not choices of whether to have development or not. The entire process seemed flawed to me precisely BECAUSE so many of those in attendance had a point of view, including myself. Wouldn't it be more enlightening to have a random sampling done of citizens and their views, given that we live with members of the University of Michigan who have developed this form of survey into a fine art?

In other words, I believe we need to agree on the goals we want, and then develop the tools to implement the goals. A livable, walkable, exciting city with pleasant homes and gardens doesn't seem like a bad place to start. I would like to see efforts to make development and preservation work together for the future of Ann Arbor. This report is a good first start but much revision is needed before it is adopted as City Policy.

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To Whom It May Concern,

I am just writing to express my support for the Calthorpe Report. It is a much needed step in the right direction.

Kristin Hass

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As an Ann Arbor resident for 25 years, I think improving the health of the downtown area is crucial. I strongly support the Calthorpe recommendations.

Roger Albin

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Greetings, I would like to let you know that I support the Calthorpe Plan.  
Regards,  
Gjon Camaj

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I support the report.

JPaul Dixon  
Vice President  
Dobson-McOmber  
A Member of the Hylant Group

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I think the Greenbelt is unrealistic and a poor plan. Another park in downtown Ann Arbor is a ludicrous idea. Just take a look at Liberty Square! Do we want another blight on the city landscape. I urge the city to build on the lot at William and Ashley. It is about time we put more land on the tax rolls to make the city more financially secure. It is time that we build more housing in the inner city.

Lawrence N. Lup

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I support Calthorpe and want you to do the same.

Pete Richards

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## Washtenaw County Department of Planning & Environment

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TO: City of Ann Arbor  
FROM: Anthony VanDerworp, Director  
DATE: January 10, 2006  
SUBJECT: *Recommended Policy Framework for Downtown Ann Arbor* in the context of *A Comprehensive Plan for Washtenaw County*

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The *Recommended Policy Framework for Downtown Ann Arbor* (Downtown Plan) furthers the vision of *A Comprehensive Plan for Washtenaw County* (County Plan). As Washtenaw County grows, the Downtown Plan promotes the County Plan's goals of an efficient pattern of development that maintains our sense of place, preserves our natural resources, and reduces the effects of sprawl. Comments on the Downtown Plan sections and how they relate to the County Plan are provided below along with recommended actions for the City to consider in implementing the policy framework.

### Land Use

The Downtown Plan's Land Use policies call for strengthening downtown Ann Arbor as a mixed-use center by allowing for higher residential densities and taller buildings while respecting existing adjacent residential neighborhoods as well as the context of existing downtown historic structures.

This is consistent with the County Plan's Landscapes Objective 1 – Promote higher density infill development and redevelopment within existing cities, suburban areas, and smaller cities and villages and areas surrounding them - Recommendations 1.1 – Urban Infill Development Character and Design and 1.3 – Urban Auto Dependent Uses. For more detail, see the attached Landscapes element of the County Plan.

### Urban Design

The Downtown Plan's Urban Design policies center on having buildings developed or redeveloped with the pedestrian, not vehicle, as the focus as well as stressing the importance of historic resources. These policies align well with the goals of the County Plan including building design standards, non-motorized connections and historic preservation.

This is consistent with the County Plan's Landscapes Objective 1 and Recommendation 1.1 as stated above as well as Parks & Recreation Objective 2 – Leverage the resources of parks and recreation providers in developing regional open space systems and a countywide greenway and trails system - Recommendation 2.1 – County-wide Greenway Network.

### Housing

The Downtown Plan and County Plan encourage housing opportunities for all income levels by offering incentives to developers to rehabilitate and develop a diversity of new housing types including apartments, senior housing, townhomes, and condominiums.

This is consistent with County Plan's Housing Objective 2 – Increase the private sector production of affordable housing along – Recommendation 2.4 – Density Incentives.

Recommendation: As the County pursues its goal of providing for workforce housing throughout the entire County, the Downtown Plan also recognizes the need to establish a common set of definitions for affordability and short and long-term goals for each definition of affordable in Ann Arbor. With a common definition and understanding of what the housing needs are in the City and in the County, reaching specific housing needs goals can then be achieved.

### Economic Development

The County Plan seeks to attract “Target Industries,” or emerging industry sectors that are realistic to grow and attract, and provide employees with an average wage that will meet or exceed the current median family income.

This is consistent with the County Plan's Economic Development Objective 1 – Identify the specific needs of target industries and develop the infrastructure needed to grow and attract these emerging businesses and Objective 3 – Develop an inventory of ready sites for expanding and new businesses – Recommendation 3.1 – Infill Development Sites for Target Industries.

The Downtown Plan reinforces this goal through its policy of attracting a variety of new businesses to Downtown Ann Arbor. Through incentives, training and support for new businesses to expand, the growth in this area will allow for the increase in those Target Industry positions.

Recommendation: The recently formed SPARK organization is in the process of identifying specific location, capital and training needs to grow the innovation sector. The City should coordinate closely in this endeavor to ensure that the Downtown supports innovation sector development.

### Environment

The County Plan emphasizes the protection of our natural resources which meets county resident's vision of a sustainable future. The Downtown Plan also recognizes the importance of our natural resources through

policies relating to stormwater protection, public open space, appropriate parkland-per-capita, and sensitivity to development along open spaces.

This is consistent with the County Plan's Natural Resource Objective 1 – Protect and improve the quality of our water resources through a comprehensive approach of planning, maintenance, retrofit and new development best management practices – Recommendation 1.4 – Urban Stormwater Systems.

Recommendation: The Downtown Plan's Public Space section recommends considering transfer of development rights; ways to provide stormwater retention for all new development (as opposed to building by building); water capture within potential parks along Allen Creek; and DDA and City funding for large-scale retention/detention facilities. The City should consider a transfer of development rights program prior to increasing allowable densities (public open space can be used to promote the Greenbelt program and potentially provide areas for downtown stormwater management). The City should move immediately to identify water management needs to serve the downtown area. This assessment should not be limited to regional detention facilities but look to add value by using creeks and public spaces to provide water management, recreation and pedestrian connections.

#### Mobility

The Downtown Plan provides an inventory of what exists for those seeking to gain access and circulate around Downtown Ann Arbor. Pedestrian, non-motorized, transit and automobile routes are available to access Downtown Ann Arbor. The potential for a commuter rail connection to Detroit's Metro Airport and beyond is also given focus. In addition, as the vehicle is the main access to Downtown Ann Arbor, a comprehensive parking strategy is recommended.

This relates to many areas of the County Plan's Transportation element including: Recommendation 1.2 – Expand Transit Use for Commuters, Recommendation 2.5 – Development Density to Support Transit, Objective 8 – Expand the County's transit system to reduce auto dependency and meet the needs of County residents, Recommendation 8.6 – Congestion Relief through Rail, and Objective 9 – Become the State's leading example of implementing pedestrian, bicycle and trails systems to reduce automobile dependency, connecting residential to educational, work and leisure opportunities.

Recommendation: While the Downtown Plan does recommend for improvements to the existing pedestrian, non-motorized, and transit connections. The City should move immediately to identify improved connectivity among destinations throughout the County. Examples include increased access to additional park and ride facilities and the potential for transit consortiums with neighboring cities/villages/townships to reduce the dependence on the automobile for access to downtown Ann Arbor. As with water management, the ability to accommodate infill development and have long term sustainability in the downtown area will depend on providing additional non-motorized opportunities and connections to the regional system.

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I would like to add my name to the many supporters of the Calthorpe Plan. As a former member and chairman of the DDA, I have had a long association with and interest in the downtown area. This plan presents an opportunity for the City to start a renaissance to develop and sustain the beauty and function of Ann Arbor. I would also encourage you to give attention to the ideas for implementing the planning process presented by Peter Allen.

Dave Shipman

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The Calthorpe report, being a document heavy on the platitudes and light on specifics is largely a waste of the paper I printed it on. Where it does make specific

recommendations, those recommendations couldn't be more harmful and ignorant of how things work in the real world.

Saying that our city needs to be pedestrian and bike friendly is nothing new. Nor are the statements in support of "affordable housing". The only road maps provided by this report are the ones making Ann Arbor a more developer friendly place, however even such recommendations as giving developers "bonuses" for good behavior could back fire and end up causing more confusion and frustration.

I recommend that these bonuses be trashed. We need an authentic community forum on design standards and then the codification of these standards by council to make any plan for our future something beyond an exercise in civic silliness.

This report being useless may as well be sent to the recycle bin ( both the plastic one at the curb and the electronic one). Please don't waste any more of our time and money with this nonsense. Let's get to work on design standards that will move our community towards our shared goals.

Lou Glorie

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Please register my support for this plan to revitalize downtown Ann Arbor and keep it growing smartly!

Francyne Stacey

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I would urge you to make public comment in person or in writing regarding the recent Calthorpe Study.

I would like to forward the message regarding the Calthorpe Study and building in the floodway and floodplain (listed below) from Dr. Sandy Arlinghaus with strong support.

Her comments seem to sum up the folly of building in the floodplain and floodway very well indeed.

Unfortunately the Calthorpe Study did not seem to take this into account in its planning recommendations. As the Allen's Creek Valley is a major defining feature and runs through a major part of Ann Arbor, with it's accompanying floodway and floodplain, it seems hard to imagine why it was not included in the planning process in a more significant manner.

There was extensive reporting on the **potential for considerable development** in the Allen's Creek floodway and floodplain.

This occurred without the **concordant discussion** of the **clear and apparent merits of**

**preserving the floodway and floodplain** for a Full Greenway and public open space in the downtown. This is a more common planning goal for many communities with substantial funds coming from federal sources including the FEMA, Army Corp of Engineers and EPA.

A Full Greenway in the floodplain would clearly create a significant reduction in flooding potential for the adjacent neighborhoods and businesses, and also create a much-needed downtown greenspace with pedestrian and alternative transportation opportunities.

It seems this in the “Tree Town” with no real treed greenspace in the downtown.

Much more effort must be made to manage this important natural feature in a manner that has the long-term interest in the community at heart.

Your comments and recommendations are needed if more wise management of the floodplain and floodway is to occur.

**Times and dates** for Public Comment are listed below, as is the link to recent materials from the **3D Atlas of Ann Arbor**.

Thanks,

Vince Caruso  
Coordinating member ACWG

Hi All, a number of public hearings are scheduled on the Calthorpe document. Please read it and consider commenting on it. The "Archimedes" stance is simply to deny through zoning any possibility of building in floodplains or floodways.

Displacement of water is easy to see when one jumps into a bathtub. It was also easy to see recently in the sad situation in New Orleans. PLANNING, however, keeps these situations from happening. We know that if we fill the tub too full before hopping in that it will overflow. So, too, if we place big objects in an empty tub, and then fill it the customary amount, it will also overflow (although that is not quite as obvious as the former scenario). Extend that idea to putting buildings in the floodway--where does the displaced water go? It goes into the floodplain. Now suppose there are buildings in the floodplain. The water gets displaced even more. Where does the displaced water go? Outside the floodplain? Where? Certainly I wish that planners in New Orleans had thought ahead on this matter.

So, why build in a floodplain, ever? Can engineers build "floodproof" buildings...no doubt they can build all sorts of wonderful things. Still, in the matter of the entire floodplain and adjacent areas where displaced water might go, and not simply on the matter of safety of residents in a single building (or small group), if buildings are placed in floodplains, they will, necessarily, displace water when the floodplain fills up. That is Archimedes principle, roughly; it has been a valid principle for centuries and it is an

enduring one. Think about it. Also think about the fact that our maps that delineate floodplains may not be all that accurate...should we be doing anything with the floodplain until we do have good maps?

That brings us back to ask why one might even consider building in a floodplain. I hope that the decision makers of this city will continue in the tradition of the Ann Arbor I know and love and make decisions based on broad goals that will allow future generations to reap the benefits of thoughtful long-range planning.

Happy 2006 to all (an unofficial list of meetings I found is listed below for your convenience but double-check before going out in the snow...)

Best wishes  
Sandy Arlinghaus.

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I urge the city (council, the DDA, the HDC, and so forth) to take seriously Calthorpe's recommendation to alter the approval process for new development within the city limits, and/or to re-zone the city.

Naturally, the proposal will be modified further to serve the city's (perhaps idiosyncratic) needs. The proposal might be a very good way to model Ann Arbor after other successful cities, but we don't want to be a copy of some other city--of course we want the city to grow in a manner unique to its character and history. Having said that, I think if the city is to grow at all, something in the overall management of its development needs to change.

Now I also agree some perspective should be taken on it, lest the city start to build for the sake of building. I agree that whatever direction the city takes, it needs to be thought out carefully, and based on real data, rather than on excited visions based on the experience of other cities in other environments.

Having said that, the current process seems designed to slow growth to a halt. Of course I want good-looking buildings. Of course I want neighborhoods to feel like neighborhoods. Of course I'd prefer real craftsmanship in our architecture. I also realize compromise is necessary. But it just feels like there are too many voices in the approval process that aren't communicating effectively, either to each other or to potential developers. Something there needs to change--I can't see the entire process, so I don't know exactly what needs to change, but those who are inside of it can hopefully see what needs to be done to make it more efficient and productive.

I realize part of the problem is established residents of Ann Arbor who have no desire whatsoever for change to the city. I myself was born here, and although I moved to another state for several years during my adolescence, I have remained here since I returned for college. I live in a historical district, and yet I have no qualms whatsoever with the possibility of seeing another 10-story (or even 15-story) building go up on the edge of downtown. I have no illusions that Ann Arbor will turn into a major metropolis, but surely a couple of tall buildings isn't really a very frightening prospect, is it? Surely it wouldn't change the character of the city in any negative way, would it? I don't think it would, and I support efforts to increase density via taller buildings. I find the almost reactionary fear of them among many residents utterly baffling, and can only attribute it to complacency. Growth is neither positive nor negative; when properly managed, it can result in increased prosperity, both materially and culturally, for all. Of course a tall residential or office building, if planned poorly, could become a blight. But these things can be done well, and if done well, they can make life better for everyone. Whatever building occurs, of course it needs to complement the character of the city. But it can be done, as long as this is kept in mind.

What needs to be communicated to the citizens of Ann Arbor, in my opinion, are consequences. The city can decide for itself what direction it wants to take, but it needs to realize the consequences of its actions. Economic policies, the approval process, the zoning plan--all of these things have real-world consequences. They shape the future, and the citizens need to understand how. It seems like many of them can't see much farther than their backyards and the line at Zingerman's. Maybe I'm being condescending, but I think a better education in the economic and social realities that the city faces might be in order. But that's just my opinion.

I also realize that we're part of not only a county, but a region, a state, and a nation, and much about our economy, our political reality, and society, is driven by events somewhat beyond our control. Elections in Detroit and Lansing, relations between and within the many communities of SE Michigan, the state of Michigan's major employers, the global economy, state tax policies, Federal policies, and so on, all contribute to our situation. However, I think it's fair to say that Ann Arbor is, and will remain, a high-demand area for Michigan residents relocating, as well as for out-of-state residents relocating to Michigan. Furthermore, in my opinion, there are no Michigan communities that will rival it in attractiveness within the near future. Oakland county will continue to slowly develop its own sense of place, and for heaven's sake I hope Detroit someday comes to be a thriving, attractive city again. However, given the current economic realities, Ann Arbor is likely to remain one of the more attractive locations the state has to offer for the foreseeable future. Furthermore, it will remain so, even if the rest of SE Michigan can develop a more thriving economy and a better-planned urban experience. But if, due to a lack of housing and/or high housing prices and rents, and due to a lack of access to necessary resources (like shopping centers, grocery stores, and discount retailers, not to mention one of the most important resources of all: employers) people growing up here, or moving to the area (like young professionals, new families, and the like) can't actually live here, they'll live in the townships, and that's just a fact. We can watch it happen, and wonder naively why housing prices continue to rise,

why businesses continue to relocate to rural areas, why gasoline continues to be consumed in ever-greater amounts, why chemical run-off from lawns continues to pollute our streams, why the historical landscape disappears before our very eyes under a sea of subdivisions, why our roads are falling apart, and on and on and on...or we can try to fix it. In other words, we can watch exurbia become the new center of American life...or we can do something about it.

My two cents.

Sincerely,  
Michael T. Zeddies

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To Council and the Mayor:

As a member of the Downtown Residential Taskforce that ultimately led to the Calthorpe process, I am in a position to comment on some of the background for this process, and to address the “Why should we do this” question better than most:

You are of course yourselves aware of most of the history, but I would still quote from the DRTF report to remind you: YOU have always believed yourselves that increasing density is a good thing, and that its benefits will far outweigh any possible downsides, and on that basis initiated the DRFT with the following statements:

The council resolution starts:

- Whereas, A strong residential base is necessary for a dynamic economically viable 24 hour downtown;
- Whereas, A densely inhabited city center creates an exciting place to live, promotes a positive pedestrian atmosphere, and helps support downtown retail variety and quantity;.....

While the Calthorpe Report started with the assumption that density is good (and that based on the resolution as referenced above that council already agreed), and did not spend a lot of time on why this should be done, the Downtown Residential Taskforce did focus first on why. Here are a couple of excerpts from the DRFT; first relating to the support of every past plan for improvements to our downtown that include increased housing and a better retail mix, issues that are at the heart of Calthorpe, and then providing a series of bullet points on advantages to increased density.

Safeguarding Ann Arbor's quality of life continues to be a significant goal of the City and its residents. If additional downtown residential units are to be encouraged, it will be important to undertake changes carefully, so that the extraordinary quality of life we enjoy in Ann Arbor is not negatively impacted. The City's Downtown Plan (1988) and the Central Area Plan (1992) are adopted elements of the City's Master

Plan. Both documents set forward very important community values fundamental to any future planning for the downtown and near downtown.

The Downtown Plan emphasizes the protection of downtown characteristics, including a comfortable sense of scale, pedestrian orientation and the stability of neighborhoods located adjacent to downtown. The plan places significant priority on new residential development and ground level retail as objectives in reaching its goals for the downtown core. Concentrating density and height in the downtown core has been a contentious issue, as height and density are often perceived as possible threats to the history and character of this area.

Some of the Downtown Plan's tenets are listed below:

- Do add housing to the land use base
- Do strengthen the retail sector
- Do foster central business, government, and cultural functions
- Do provide needed support parking
- Do not sacrifice identity as a special place
- Do not compromise pedestrian scale / orientation
- Do not lose compact, convenient structure
- Do not jeopardize the stability of the areas now zoned residential

While the Central Area Plan echoes many of the values of the Downtown Plan, it identifies a series of problem statements, including the lack of certain amenities important to support residential uses (parking, open space, convenience goods, etc.), the lack of available "lower-cost" housing, and issues relating to security, maintenance and cleanliness.

The Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority (DDA) was created in 1982 and renewed through 2033 to undertake public improvements that strengthen the downtown area and attract new private investments. In its 2003 Renewal Plan, the DDA set forward a number of strategies that would enable it to accomplish its goal of a vital, attractive, and unique downtown, including a focus on housing. The DDA recognized that residents are necessary for a dynamic, economically strong 24-hour downtown, and that a substantial residential base near and in the downtown has a positive effect on the retail climate, local transportation systems, and quality of life. Moreover, a densely inhabited city center creates an exciting place to live and promotes a positive pedestrian atmosphere, and in turn, downtown residents enjoy the convenient availability of community services, retail goods, cultural activities, and nearby employment.

To encourage the development of additional residential units and to support existing residents, the DDA set forward a number of tactics, including:

- The encouragement of mixed-use projects that feature retail businesses on lower floors and residential housing on upper floors.

- Strengthening the existing retail environment and encouraging the attraction of businesses that serve residents
- Providing grants to support affordable housing projects in and near the downtown, particularly projects that provide housing for downtown workers.
- Work with the DDA Citizens Advisory Council to support various strategies and projects to enhance downtown residential life.

It is critical that this report be read in conjunction with these other planning documents and be seen as planning for residential growth in light of these community values and strategies.

Downtown is special. It is the heart of the city and represents "Ann Arbor" to the region. In a sense, it is a center of commerce, culture and recreation that belongs to everyone. Yet it is also a neighborhood, unique among our neighborhoods, and the thoughtful expansion of its population can only add even more vitality and opportunity to the community. It is with this in mind that the Downtown Residential Task Force urges consideration of its recommendations.

#### D. Possible Advantages to Increasing Downtown Residential Development

The International Downtown Association reports that communities across the country are using residential development as a key strategy to revitalize and strengthen their downtowns. A number of possible advantages were discussed by the Task Force, which include the following:

- Downtown is primarily commercial in nature and would be a livelier, more diverse and efficient place with more housing.
- A substantial residential base in and near the downtown supports retail, restaurants, and other downtown businesses, as well as cultural and recreational amenities.
- Residents are a particularly important customer base for independently owned small businesses that are unable to pay for the kind of advertising that's needed to draw customers from greater distances.
- A densely inhabited city center supplies an important ridership base that supports a successful transit system.
- Downtown residents tend to be more likely to walk or use buses, and less likely to rely on automobiles for daily purposes than others, thereby helping to ease traffic congestion. On average, they take fewer and shorter automobile trips than suburban residents.
- Many downtown residents who work outside the downtown move their cars in time for these spaces to be reused by downtown employees, doubling the potential use of each parking space.
- Residents know their neighborhood awareness of potential problems can serve as an important deterrent to downtown crime.

- Infill developments and more dense redevelopment near the downtown provides one of the few remaining opportunities to expand the tax base, as much of Ann Arbor is built out and the restrictions placed by Proposal A and the Headlee Amendment limit other kinds of tax growth.
- Expanding the supply of housing can help meet the housing demand that is driving sale and rental prices up. Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) predicts that the population in Washtenaw County will grow 13% by the 2010 census and another 8% by the 2020 census (which could mean as many as 78,000 new County residents). This demand for housing appears to be driven by the high quality of life in our community and the proximity of jobs and opportunity.
- New home construction in the urban core rather than on the fringes is a far more efficient use of existing infrastructure and city services.
- Downtown living options increase the range of residential choices for homebuyers and renters.

My final point would be one that comes up from various sources every time a new project is proposed. We now have at least three different “accepted” downtown plans: the zoning ordinance, the downtown plan, and the central area plan. These three plans are in conflict with one another, and in the 18 years since the downtown plan was developed have never been reconciled. For effective long term planning – no matter what the goals are – we need a revised zoning ordinance that reflects the community’s vision for its future. Its about time we assembled one.

Fred J. Beal

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This is a response to your invitation for comments on the Calthorpe report.

The report, in general, is not very "green." Yet, it is safe to assume that Ann Arbor will want a downtown with plenty of green spaces and ecologically intelligent features.

At the same time as we look, incredulously, at engineering problems in New Orleans, we talk, incautiously, about developing our flood way and flood plain land. Clearly, the time has come to make as much flood land, as possible, pervious and to begin using it in environmentally responsible ways.

Also, it is a fine piece of luck that lovely undeveloped, city-owned land forms a crescent around our downtown. This land is treasure of a quality of life sort and should not be traded in as treasure of an economic sort. Treatment of this land as a green way, will protect against flooding and, indirectly, add greater economic value to the city over the longer haul than income from a sale will do in the short run.

Lois Kane

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The report is very pretty. Color is used lavishly in text, maps, and pictures, most of which are not needed to understand it. It is also a long-winded document that includes 9 pages of tales of conditions in other cities and lots of descriptions of Ann Arbor things that are common knowledge. It is difficult to avoid the suspicion that the author of this report didn't really want to encourage public review. It took me over 19 minutes to download it, and its 2 column format complicates the process of studying it. The city really should issue a condensed version with the frills eliminated. 3 to 5 pages should be the goal. - Clan Crawford, Jr. 761-7180

Clan Crawford, Jr.