



Realizing the vision for Downtown Ann Arbor

Volume 1

February 2007

High priority projects:

Create special overlay zoning for the downtown that identifies areas of similar character

Incorporate a set of essential design guidelines

Streamline the development proposal process

Work with the Historic District Commission to clarify criteria for development

Pursue a comprehensive parking strategy for the downtown

Mark your calendar!

Feb. 8 at 5 p.m. Historic Preservation Criteria Advisory Committee

Feb. 15 at 4:30 p.m. Joint Downtown Zoning and Urban Design Guidelines Committees

March 7 at 5:30 p.m. A2D2 Steering Committee

Go to: www.a2gov.org/a2d2

A²D² Project Updates

In March 2006, the Ann Arbor City Council approved the Downtown Development Strategies Final Report Implementation Plan. The plan outlines a comprehensive set of actions in urban design, office/industrial/retail development, housing, public space and mobility that will help realize the vision of a vibrant, growing downtown.

Work on the five high priority implementation actions started in September 2006. Progress since December 2006 is outlined below. For information go to www.a2gov.org/a2d2 or e-mail a2d2feedback@a2gov.org.

Clarify Historic Preservation Criteria

The Historic District Commission held a public hearing on draft changes to Chapters 8 and 103 on Dec. 14. Comments were generally positive and supported amending the ordinances.

The A2D2 Historic Advisory Committee began discussions about design guidelines and provided guidance to staff on the table of contents, language tone and graphics. They have been asked to review and provide comments on the existing guidelines on porches, windows, banners/awnings and the 1989 Downtown Design guidelines.

Next steps:

In February, staff will distribute drafts of por-

tions of the design guidelines to the Historic Advisory Committee as they are developed for review and comment.

Once the Historic Advisory Committee's comments are received, the design guidelines will be distributed to the Historic District Commission for comment.

In late February or early March staff will begin the process of defining contributing and non-contributing resources within the historic districts in the A2D2 study area.

For additional information, contact **Kristine Kidorf** at 734.996.3008 or kmkidorf@a2gov.org.

Streamline Development Process

The Development Process Advisory Committee met in December and January. The committee has focused on several general policy issues, including inspection timing and the level of detail currently required for site plan approval.

Staff is developing process improvements concurrent with the A2D2 effort. These include a new schedule that commits to certain deadlines if a project is complete, and conditional Planning Commission approvals, which are monitored by a liaison group to satisfy the conditions before Council action. Communication efforts, such as the development of organizational charts, are also underway.

Selection of a development workflow software vendor is nearing completion. In December, a team of five Information Technology and five Planning & Development staff and an outside consultant selected three vendors to interview from the eight proposals received. Vendor interviews were conducted in January. The new software will provide web and phone access to the development process, in addition to wireless and tablet capabilities for staff.

Next steps:

In the near future, the staff team will bring a software package recommendation forward to City Council (scheduled for March). After contract approval, it is expected to take six months for implementation.

The Development Process Advisory Committee will meet in February to further review improvements to the development process.

For additional information, contact **Mark Lloyd** at 734.994.2800 or mlloyd@a2gov.org.

Implement Urban Design Guidelines

In December and January staff held two meetings with the Urban Design Guidelines Advisory Committee. The committee adopted the following goal statement:

"Propose the means to achieve desirable placemaking through predictable process that results in consistently high-quality outcomes."

On Dec. 4, staff sent an RFQ to 18 planning/consulting firms that have significant experience developing design guidelines and facilitating public input process. The responses were due and received on January 5th.

Based on the response to the RFQ, staff selected four consulting firms to move forward with the RFP process and interviews. The four firms have extensive planning experience and, more specifically, familiarity with developing urban design guidelines and facilitating public participation (including design charrettes).

Several members of the Advisory Committee assisted staff to evaluate 20 case studies of cities that have adopted Urban Design Guidelines. From these examples, four were determined to be most applicable to the characteristics and/or goals of Ann Arbor. The selected cities are Berkeley, Boulder, Seattle and Scottsdale. These guidelines will be analyzed further and used to create a framework for Ann Arbor Urban Design Guidelines.

Staff and Advisory Committee members are working on defining character areas for applying urban design guidelines. This is important to determine what guidelines will be applied to difference areas of the downtown to achieve different design goals and ultimately influence/preserve the street character. We are also taking a closer look at the overlay areas identified in the Calthorpe Associates report to determine if they are suitable for design guidelines character areas.

Additionally, the committee is assessing options for implementing a visual preference survey to solicit input regarding urban design. We hope to use these examples, as well as images from other cities, as a basis for the survey.

Next steps:

Complete a design guidelines framework based on the selected case studies. Arrange a "kick off" meeting with the consultant, staff, steering committee and advisory committee. Review RFP responses, conduct interviews, and select a consultant; hold a joint meeting with the overlay zoning advisory committee in February; and hold a joint meeting with the historic preservation advisory committee in March.

For additional information, call **Coy Vaughn** at 734.997.1516 or cvaughn@a2gov.org.

Create Overlay Zoning

The Downtown Zoning Advisory Committee met three times in December and January to review downtown zoning patterns. The Committee reviewed projects approved since 2000 to identify how well the zoning regulations are working.

The Committee found that the existing zoning in the "Core" and "Interface" areas of downtown is fragmented into 10 different categories. The Committee evaluated changes that would create two main zoning districts for the downtown, and reviewed the need for adding height limits. The Committee also began discussion of whether the floor area premium options should be revised.

Staff met with the DDA Partnerships Committee to discuss the role of under-

ground utilities (sanitary sewer, water and storm sewer) in supporting new development. The Committee indicated support for a City proposal to hire a consultant to do additional sanitary flow monitoring. The Committee also encouraged staff to investigate funding options, like revolving funds, to allow developers to recoup costs spent on increasing capacity in City infrastructure systems.

Next steps:

In February, the Committee will meet with the Urban Design Guidelines Advisory Committee to explore ways in which zoning can be adapted to achieve desired building form in the downtown.

To learn more, call **Wendy Rampson** 734.994.2802 or wrampson@a2gov.org.

Comprehensive Parking Strategy

After reviewing progress on the comprehensive downtown parking strategy in December 2006, the A2D2 Steering Committee recommended revising the work plan for Phases II-IV, and reviewed a proposal from Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates to oversee Phase II-IV tasks. The Steering Committee recommended that the City contract with the firm to conduct the work.

On Jan. 22 City Council voted to accept its A2D2 Steering Committee recommendation and revised work plan, and authorized a contract with and provided half of the funding for Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates to oversee Phases II-IV. On Feb. 7 the DDA Board provided funding for the remaining half of Nelson\Nygaard's contract.

In January 2007 Nelson\Nygaard completed a 95 percent draft of its final parking study report. The DDA Board and DDA and City staff reviewed this report and provided edits to Nelson\Nygaard.

It is anticipated that the final report will be provided electronically and in hard copy by mid-February.

Next steps:

DDA staff will make presentations outlining the Phase I study findings at the area associations throughout February.

City staff will finalize the contract with Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates and hold the kick-off meeting for the next phases of the project. The Project Lead for the next phase will be Eli Cooper, Transportation Program Manager.

To learn more, call **Susan Pollay** 734.994.6697 or spollay@a2dda.org.

Visit us on the Web:

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www.A2gov.org/A2D2