



## Realizing the vision for Downtown Ann Arbor

Volume 1

May 2007

Ann Arbor Discovering Downtown (A2D2) was initiated by City Council to implement the Recommended Vision and Policy Framework for Downtown, better known as the "Calthorpe Report."

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!

**Urban Design:** Tuesday, May 15, at 3 p.m. (6th Floor Conference Room, City Hall).

**Zoning:** Thursday, May 17, at 4 p.m. (6th Floor Conference Room, City Hall).

**Steering Committee:** Thursday, May 31, at 3 p.m. (6th Floor Conference Room, City Hall).

[www.a2gov.org/a2d2](http://www.a2gov.org/a2d2)

# A<sup>2</sup>D<sup>2</sup> Project Updates

## Implement Urban Design Guidelines

### *Public workshop to be held May 30*

The consultant team of Winter and Company and RACESTUDIO began work on the urban design guideline project in April. The consultants met twice with the advisory committee to discuss key design considerations in the downtown, including the different levels of involvement a community can take in incorporating good design in new development. Committee members conducted photo inventories of the downtown and compiled descriptions and maps of the various character areas. The consultant team and advisory committee also began planning for the May 30 public workshop.

**Next steps:** The urban design public workshop is scheduled for Wednesday, May 30 at 6 pm in the Courthouse Square ballroom (100 S. Fourth Avenue). Participants will be invited to work in small groups to define urban design objectives for downtown's character areas. The workshop agenda includes:

**Defining Character Districts** - This exercise will have participants review the edges and centers of downtown's "character" districts.

**Urban Design Framework** - Participants will identify primary travel routes into downtown, important gateway locations, existing and future open spaces and landmarks.

**Character District Design Objectives** - Each group will work to identify three important design objectives for downtown. These could include:

- ▲ Shape and massing of buildings;
- ▲ Roof and building form;
- ▲ Street edge and orientation;
- ▲ Dominant materials and colors;
- ▲ Character of landscaping/streetscaping
- ▲ Other important features

**Potential Tools** - Groups will discuss the different approaches that can be used to support design objectives, ranging from voluntary participation to required review and approval.

Following the workshop, the consultant team will prepare draft design objectives, to be presented to City Council at its June 18 meeting. The report will also contain a recommendation about whether to proceed with the development of urban design guidelines.

## *June 2007:*

### **Approaching a milestone**

The A2D2 project reaches a key milestone in June. When adopting the work plans for the five priority projects, City Council set a deadline of June 2007 for delivering recommendations for each project. The A2D2 project leads will present the recommendations at a Council work session on June 11 at 7 p.m. in Council Chamber (2nd floor, City Hall).

City Council will receive reports on each project and consider action on the recommendations at its June 18 meeting.

The June A2D2 newsletter will contain highlights of the recommendations for each project. For a schedule of upcoming A2D2 advisory committee meetings and project updates, so to: [www.a2gov.org/a2d2](http://www.a2gov.org/a2d2).

## Create Overlay Zoning

### Committee supports 2-District zoning approach

The advisory committee met twice in April to review the zoning recommendations to be presented at the upcoming public workshops. The committee supported an approach that would combine existing downtown zoning districts into two main districts: the 'core' area and the 'interface' area.

▲ The core consists of an area made up of the Huron corridor and Main Street, State Street and South University business districts, representing the area of greatest density in the downtown.

▲ The interface area is located between the core and the surrounding residential areas, characterized by a density and scale that provides a transition between the two areas.

Details of the proposed zoning concepts were presented at public workshops held on May 2 and 4. Recommendations were provided for permitted uses, floor area limitations and bonuses, height, setbacks, lot coverage and off-street parking. Members of the public were given the opportunity to ask questions about the proposal and provide comments. Workshop materials, including a comment form, are available at [www.a2gov.org/a2d2](http://www.a2gov.org/a2d2).

**Next steps:** At its May 17 meeting, the advisory committee will review comments from the public and make refinements to the zoning proposal. This proposal will be presented to City Council, along with the other A2D2 proposals, for consideration at its June 18 meeting.

To learn more, contact **Wendy Ramson** at 734.994.2802 or e-mail [wrampson@a2gov.org](mailto:wrampson@a2gov.org).

## Clarify Historic Preservation Criteria

### Draft design guidelines currently under review

In April, the advisory committee finished reviewing the draft historic district design guidelines. This document is intended to be a resource for property owners and the Historic District Commission in determining whether proposed alterations and new construction are consistent with the Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation.

The document includes recommendations for residential and commercial building elements, site and landscaping, and new construction. Illustrations of appropriate and inappropriate features are provided.

**Next steps:** The draft guidelines are available at [www.a2gov.org/a2d2](http://www.a2gov.org/a2d2)

and in the Planning & Development Unit (6th Floor, City Hall).

At the May public meetings, staff will provide a brief overview of the design guidelines, and the public will be given an opportunity to present their comments and ask questions. City Council will be asked to review and give preliminary approval to the draft design guidelines in June.

Final approval of the design guidelines will be coordinated with the urban design effort to ensure consistency.

For information, call **Kristine Kidorf** at 734.996.3008 or [kmkidorf@a2gov.org](mailto:kmkidorf@a2gov.org).

## Comprehensive Parking Strategy

### Parking principles developed

Nelson/Nygaard Associates, the consultants for the parking strategy project, documented and analyzed input received from the March public meetings and focus groups. After meeting with the Steering Committee, the consultant team spent the month developing a series of parking principles and an array of tools that would support these principles.

The draft parking policy report was presented to policymakers and the public in meetings and focus groups during the week of May 7. A public open house on the recommendations was held on May 10. The A2D2 Steering Committee reviewed the report and public input at its meeting of May 11. The report is posted on [www.a2gov.org/a2d2](http://www.a2gov.org/a2d2) for additional review and comment by the public.

Next steps: The consultants will revise the report and present it to City Council for action at its June 18 meeting.

To learn more, contact **Eli Cooper** at 734.996-3026 or e-mail [ecooper@a2gov.org](mailto:ecooper@a2gov.org).

## Streamline Development Process

### Software vendor to be presented to Council in June

The Development Process Advisory Committee met in April to finalize a set of goals and objectives for improving the development process, including procedural and policy improvements.

One of the areas identified for improvement is the need for a software package to support the development process. After review by City staff and the advisory committee, a preferred software vendor has been selected. The software package will provide IVR phone access and wireless tablet technologies, among other innovations. It is flexible enough to be adapted to the City's workflow process, which will facilitate quick implementation.

**Next Steps:** A complete report of the goals, objectives and recommendations will be forwarded to the City Council for action on June 18. At that meeting, City Council will be asked to approve the contract with the development software vendor. After contract approval, software implementation is expected to take six months.

For information, contact **Mark Lloyd** at 734.994.2800 or [mlloyd@a2gov.org](mailto:mlloyd@a2gov.org).