

**Ann Arbor Discovering Downtown
Urban Design Guidelines Advisory Committee**

December 14th, 2006 Meeting
4th Floor Conference Room, City Hall

Members Present: Kurt Brandle, Ron Eamus, Damian Farrell, Eric Lipson, Joan Lowenstein, J. Bradley Moore, Alice Ralph

Staff Present: Coy Vaughn, Lindsay-Jean Hard

Guests: Ethel Potts (Planning Commission), Kirk Westphal (Planning Commission)

1. Request for Qualifications (RFQ)—Interview and selection process

An RFQ was sent out to 18 firms with experience in public process and charrettes, most of these firms are in the mid-west region. This was done with the intent of keeping the process local, although Ann Arbor firms were avoided to prevent a possible conflict of interest. The RFQ was also sent to the National Charrette Institute to post to its members. Responses are due January 5th, 2007 after which staff will review all responses and narrow down the number of firms. At this point a representative from the A2D2 Steering Committee and a representative from this committee will join staff for the interview process.

There was some surprise among the committee at this agenda item, as it was not discussed in length at the first meeting. A suggestion was made to meet with city officials from the communities represented in the third session of the A2D2 Public Lecture Series on Urban Design Guidelines as they have already gone through the process of implementing design guidelines and have dealt with the consequences of them. Two committee members expressed interest in participating in the interview process.

2. Scope of Work for Selected Firm

Currently the funding for this implementation area will support a consultant for assistance with the charrette process and the designing of graphics for the urban design guidelines. Ideally one firm would be hired to facilitate the public workshops and draft the urban design guidelines, but due to budget constraints this might not be possible.

3. Public Input and Design Charrettes/ Public Workshops

The type of public input to be used was left open to be either a public workshop or a charrette depending on what the committee determines will be most beneficial to the community. Committee discussion gravitated towards charrettes and what could be included. Suggestions included reviewing what design guidelines are, in order for the community to get a practical idea of how they function and how the city would work with them, as well as presenting a mock-up of a project, having it go before a mock review board, and discussing the results, such as how the project complied (or didn't) and what the consequences of the project could be.

Committee members discussed the multiple forms urban design guidelines could take, including: form-based codes, performance-based guidelines, mandatory review with voluntary compliance, and having a mixture of some points being mandatory while others remain voluntary. Staff clarified that it was also acceptable to go through the process and end up determining that it would be best to not have urban design guidelines.

Another topic touched on was the complexity of seemingly straightforward goals, such as the percent transparency at the first floor. The committee gave examples of projects that did not fulfill that goal in an ideal way, for example, a project which has windows at ground level but has parking rather than retail, a project with opaque glass, and a project with transparent glass that is then blocked by a second wall. Discussion then turned to determining what the goal of the committee is, in order to have a basis to work from. The resulting mission and objection statement for the committee is, **"Propose the means to achieve desirable placemaking through predictable process that results in consistently high-quality outcomes."**

4. Exercises

Staff presented two exercises for committee members to participate in, if their time permits. The first exercise involves defining character areas, similar to what the Calthorpe process did. Each area could have different guidelines, in order to promote the characteristics that make it unique. This will be done on a base map of the city, and can overlap with Calthorpe's areas, the City's current areas (Main Street, Kerrytown, etc), or they can be completely different.

The second exercise is a visual preference project, for which committee members will take photographs of downtown locations. These can be specific (like a building) or broader (like an area) and can include both locations that the members like as well as dislike. Committee members will include attributes for each photograph to help define the qualities that make some locations more desirable than others.

5. Project Timeline

The work plan for this committee consists of the following tasks:

- a. RFQ sent to 18 firms (responses due on January 5th, 2007)
- b. Review qualifications—set up interviews (January 2007)
- c. Draft Contract (December 2006—January 2007)
- d. Plan and organize charrettes/publics workshops (January 2007—April 2007)
- e. Hold charrettes/public workshops (April 2007)
- f. Prepare Urban Design Guidelines (December 2006—May 2007)
- g. Present Final Draft to City Council (May 2007—June 2007)

6. Next Meeting

The next meeting was shifted from Thursday, January 11th, 2007 to Thursday, January 18th, 2007 to accommodate members' schedules. This will be held in the conference room on the 6th floor of City Hall.

Prepared by Lindsay-Jean Hard