

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

January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2007 Meeting  
6<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room, City Hall

Members Present: Kurt Brandle, Christine Crockett, 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)

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

1. Consultant Update

Staff noted that as mentioned during the last committee meeting, an RFQ was sent out to 18 firms with experience in public process and charrettes, and responses were due January 5<sup>th</sup>. Most of these firms are in the mid-west region, with the exception of Bruce Race, who was a recent participant in the A2D2 Public Lecture Series on Urban Design Guidelines. A total of five responses to the RFQ were received, Staff reviewed all responses and narrowed down the number of firms to be considered.

Staff explained that the next step will be to send out an RFP to the remaining firms and set-up interviews with selected firms during the week of February 12<sup>th</sup>. Staff also clarified the distinction between an RFP and an RFQ, and noted that the RFP will narrow the scope of what is being asked of the firms and what the end result will be. Committee members requested copies of the original RFQ as well as the matrix used to evaluate the responses.

One Committee member mentioned that the public involvement still seemed slightly unclear and questioned whether the public would wonder how this implementation plan is different from Calthorpe. Staff clarified that the Calthorpe report set the framework to be carried out in the five implementation areas, but did not do the work currently being undertaken by the Committees.

2. Design Guidelines

Staff shared that a sub-group of the Committee selected design guidelines from the cities of Berkley, Boulder, Seattle, and Scottsdale as case studies to be used for further review. Copies of each set of design guidelines were distributed to Committee members. Members suggested additionally looking at Pittsburgh's guidelines and Ketchum, Idaho's design checklist.

Some committee members expressed an interest in having developers and/or members of the real estate community represented within this committee. One member noted that they would like developer input to see whether suggested design guidelines would be implementable or how hard it would be to develop within them. Another member expressed a preference to hear from developers what they would be able to develop within the constraints of the design guidelines, rather than what would be implementable. This member added that design guidelines reflect the will of the community as well as a desire for the community to look a certain way, and stressed that developers need to determine how they can please the community.

A committee member brought up the ecological issue of dumping materials into landfills rather than trying to reuse materials or rehabilitate existing structures, and that too often it seems projects are built just to be demolished. Another member added that if it was a group consensus, then energy conservation and sustainability could be one aspect of the guidelines. One member mentioned the overlap with the Downtown Zoning Advisory Committee, commenting that that committee has discussed using sustainable design as a premium, adding that both committees were discussing many of the same issues from different perspectives. A member clarified for the group that incentives would be the only way to achieve this, as zoning cannot require anything more stringent than the building code. Staff noted that these topics might fall more in line with the work of the Downtown Zoning Advisory Committee, but added that sustainable design could also be addressed within design guidelines, as some factions of the community might not be used to seeing sustainable building elements like turbines or solar panels.

One committee member reinforced that while guidelines may not have legal strength, they will have political strength, and guidelines can ask that certain elements are considered. Another member stressed the importance of determining the committee's goal, adding that design guidelines should not just be developed for the downtown. Staff clarified that this committee's work and the A2D2 implementation effort is only for the downtown, but that elements of the guidelines could be modified and adapted for other areas later on.

### 3. Reference File

During November's meeting, Committee members expressed a desire to create a reference file of pertinent design guideline materials. Staff readdressed this issue, and it was determined that as much information as possible would be uploaded onto the Committee's website, the website would direct people to the library for other types of information, and that as larger or more visual documents were produced they would become available at the library as well.

### 4. Exercises

Staff reviewed the visual preference project given to the Committee last month, for which Committee members were to take photographs of downtown locations. This exercise was extended through the next month as not all Committee members were able to complete the project. Staff explained that the next step would be to use these images to create an on-line visual preference survey (VPS) that could be accessed through the City's website. Committee members then expressed their preference that the VPS include photographs of Ann Arbor as well as of other locations.

Staff reviewed the second exercise, which involves defining character areas, and distributed base maps to the Committee. The character areas defined by Committee members can overlap with Calthorpe's areas, the City's current areas (Main Street, Kerrytown, etc), or they can be completely different. Each character area could have different guidelines, in order to promote the characteristics that make it unique.

### 5. Joint Meetings

Staff noted that the Committee will have a joint meeting with the Downtown Zoning Advisory Committee in February as well as one with the Historic Preservation Advisory Committee in March. Staff reiterated the need for the resulting design guidelines to reflect and support the work the other Committees are doing.

## 6. Public Participation

Mr. Westphal asked that the committee consider the timeline, whether they are planning for 20 years or 50 years, and questioned how developers would react to the knowledge that the community potentially wants to be building for the long term.

Ms. Potts questioned whether this Committee and the Downtown Zoning Advisory Committee have enough material to warrant a joint meeting and challenged the Committee to really think about what information they hope to gather from such a meeting. She also acknowledged the Committee's desire for developer input, and noted that she felt the Committee has a fair level of expertise and already has a good idea of developer's issues.

## 7. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be a joint meeting with the Downtown Zoning Advisory Committee on February 15<sup>th</sup>. This will be held from 4 to 6pm in the DDA meeting room at 301 S. Fifth Avenue, Suite 301.

Prepared by Lindsay-Jean Hard