

Interview Executive Summary

Who was interviewed?

- 7 Developers or Downtown Real Estate Professionals – All are local, gave input during the A2D2 zoning development process, and either manage, own or have developed property in the Downtown
- 1 concerned citizen – Became involved with 413 Huron Street approval process
- 2 DDA representatives – staff and board member

Process Note: More developers and DDA representatives were interviewed than concerned citizens because focus groups were conducted concurrently with the interviews to gather information from the public.

What was said?

- Most (3 of the 5 interviews – please note 3 of the interviews were with groups of 2) felt the zoning was meeting its intent. A group of developers and the DDA representatives said there were still limitations to fully developing the downtown, in their view.
- Positive aspects cited by two groups interviewed included density (more downtown), process (better than before), and mixed use (mixed use projects were built). Other positive aspects related to process (predictability and common vocabulary) while others had to do with the zoning districts themselves and the height and massing regulations.
- Negative aspects cited by two or more groups were the process (still not predictable and streamlined), historic neighborhoods and districts (too much limitations on redevelopment according to developers but the district is too small for the concerned citizen), premiums (not achieving a diverse group of residents and too much student housing), and design (across the board they are not strict enough). The concerned citizen's negative aspects were different from the rest of the interviews – impact on landmark trees, need for more D2 zoning and protection of historic neighborhoods. The DDA felt the cap on height, which was not there before in their understanding, was a negative aspect.
- In terms of priorities, there was little agreement across the board (see interview summary sheet). The only priority that was cited in more than one interview was maintaining the density allowed by the zoning (one developer and DDA interviews).
- Almost none of the interviews cited specific ordinances from other communities. The DDA interview did cite Ypsilanti's allowance of residential on the first floor as a recommendation. One group of developers felt the A2D2 zoning should be a model for other communities.
- In terms of other comments, the subjects brought up in the interviews were scattered. The concerned citizen's comments focused on 413 Huron. The developers' comments varied from broad to specific, technical items.

Tensions

- Developers and the DDA want the same level of density currently allowed under the A2D2 zoning to remain or to be greater while the concerned citizen wanted areas to be downzoned from D1 to D2.
- The role of the historic district, historic neighborhoods and their residents is a source of tension. The developers felt that the process was unpredictable due to the influence of the neighborhoods. DDA representatives and developers felt the regulations of the historic district limited the growth of the downtown. The concerned citizen wanted more protection of historic resources.

Areas of Agreement

- The premiums are not delivering projects that meet the range of desires of the community.
- Design guidelines should be more strictly enforced.
- The approval process could be improved, although the interviewees disagreed on how.