



# CITY OF ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

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Community Services Area

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## Meeting Summary

Date: January 21, 2009

Time: 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Location: City Center Building, 220 East Huron Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Re: R4C/R2A Zoning Study – Advisory Committee Meeting 3

Attendees: (see attached sign in sheets)

Focus Group – Jean Carlberg, Wendy Carman, Chuck Carver, Anya Dale, Tony Derezinski, Michele Derr, Nancy Leff, Ethel Potts, Ellen Rambo, Ilene Tyler, Julie Weatherbee

Public Audience – Alex DeParry, Jim Kaercher, Alice Ehn, Chris Varlamos  
Laura Strowe, Jay Holland, Jennifer Langenburg, Faramarz Farahanchi, Douglas Turner, Betsy Price, Ray Detter

City of Ann Arbor—Matt Kowalski, Connie Pulcipher, Chelsea Burket (intern)

*Comments and Questions from the Advisory Committee:*

### Survey of Students

- Somebody from University Housing Office may have a means of distributing a survey through dorms.
- Online surveys (SurveyMonkey) are better than paper. Offering food or compensation will also encourage students to respond.
- Can't be long ~ 10 questions.
- Survey is important to clarify assumptions we're making about students.
- Should also ask demographic info.
- Students who are only here temporarily versus students who want to stay here.
  - Even if people don't plan to stay here, they could still provide valid input. And while they're here they could be contributing to the vitality of the city.
  - Students are a constant population, even though they're different people. We can't ignore that thousands of them are going to need housing every year.
  - Even if they are only here for four years they have very definite opinions about what they like, what they didn't like last year, what they're looking for, etc.

*If this summary does not agree with your records or understanding of this meeting please advise the City of Ann Arbor in writing within seven days of issuance; otherwise, we will assume this document is accurate.*

- A lot of what is built in this city is aimed at students, so we have no choice but to be involved with them.
- Could we reach student landlords?
- If you look at the change in what's happening in successful communities – whatever students tend to want, also brings young professionals and allows people to age in place.
- What we're doing is not representative – it's just a way to get a list of topics to discuss. The results of surveys won't necessarily be representative. Could call it a questionnaire or feedback form.
- Get University to focus on surveying their own people.
- What info we want to gather:
  - First question has to engage and provoke
  - Who should be your neighbors?
  - What's your motivation for housing? (price, location, etc.)
  - How many units are in your structure?
  - How many people do you want to live with?
  - Where do you want to live, i.e. in what type of structure?
  - Ask in terms of current situation and theoretical/preferences for next year
  - What should be allowed to happen on site outside the unit? (beer pong, parking, open space)
  - What would incentivize you to live further from campus?
  - How many people to a bedroom? How many people to a unit?
  - Do you have a car? Do you feel a need for a car? What do you use your car for?
  - What are the aesthetic features that you find attractive in a house? (separate entrance, porches, other things that get at CAP)
  - What features, amenities, and facilities do you want where you live?
  - What amenities do you need near where you live? (groceries, drugstore)
    - How far will you walk to feel that that's still part of your neighborhood?
  - What have your experiences been in the places you have lived – what was good about the good and bad about the bad?
  - If they are from the area or plan on settling here after graduation?

#### Landlords and Other Stakeholders

- Have we looked at downtown/university employees? Many people live in R4C neighborhoods who are professionals and want to live downtown, but maybe aren't living there now. Could reach out to these people through DDA, Chamber, Citizens Advisory Committee, Main Street Area Association, and University Committees.
  - Could also reach out to professionals who live/rent downtown.
- We could give renters a summary of meeting so far, have focus groups, send out surveys.
- Questions that we ask tenants could also be asked of landlords.
- Focus groups would be first means of reaching out to tenants and landlords and then if there's a real gap in attendance we could find another way to reach out.
- Everyone agrees on a focus group meeting with landlords.

- Most landlords are members of Off-Campus Housing. Ann Arbor Area Apartment Association could also be a resource.
- Once property owners are involved, maybe they could help out by sending the survey out to their renters.
- Include Assessor's Office in process as well, because reducing occupancy from 6 to 4 could decrease value and then property taxes.

## Discussion of Focus Group Summary

### *Central Area Plan*

- Inspections and Enforcement were often brought up in focus groups – 3/4 rental housing inspectors showed up to meeting with additional input later.
  - Considering how often inspections and enforcement were mentioned – maybe we need more than 4 inspectors.
  - Enforcement is also a responsibility of zoning. This is being analyzed internally currently.
  - One of the historic problems was that there was no mesh between zoning and enforcement – this is probably still a problem regardless of our new technological capabilities. What can be done to make that more efficient?
    - Inspectors do now know zoning, restrictions, etc, but it still needs work.
- Where does the issue of non-conforming size get appropriately dealt with? We don't have zoning that matches the size of these lots, which puts restrictions on what can be done to the property and leaves no choices for owners; seems we need to address that. We don't want to rezone to something that still doesn't fit.
  - Default is that every lot can be used for single family. If we don't want them to be used for anything else, we should limit it to that.
- Regarding the matter of non-conformance – it's part of what exists; many of the plats were done so long ago. I for one am not troubled by it – there's a limit to what you can do but that's exactly what's described in the CAP and what makes the neighborhood what it is. The fact that non-conformance puts limitations on lots is desirable.
- How easy or difficult would it be to bring the CAP into conformity – how do we visualize that? The CAP is thick – how do you go through and say what kind of zoning should be applied to each area? What do the recommendations look like specifically?
- On page 67, HN8 (Action D) refers to a new residential office district that hasn't been developed. We should look at those streets and properties to find out what they're zoned now and if that fits.
  - The question may be whether it needs new zoning or whether the mixed-use needs to be redefined to allow more flexibility.
- Comments that showed up regarding the CAP are valuable and things we should work on.
- How will grandfathering figure into all of this?
- Clarification - Originally there was an expectation that these properties would be accumulated and big multi-family houses would go where the single-family houses were . This didn't happen and the single-family houses are still there, but the zoning still

reflects this original assumption. The people that live there in the single-families feel burdened by the neighboring properties actually or potentially being converted into multi-family.

- We have to look at this bit by bit to determine what's there, what should be there – it's going to be a minute effort – we'll have to take a look at a map to really figure this out.
- We don't have enough maps yet. When we do it, we need to overlay other things like historic district and DDA boundaries, university-owned properties (these have different goals) to understand where we can bring things more in conformance.
- We want to look at things on a site or neighborhood scale so we don't blanket downzone. Areas downtown should still allow for multi-family.

#### *Design and Redevelopment*

- There won't be a net gain of new university housing.
- Where do student co-ops fit? We'll bring manager of Inter-cooperative Council in.
  - Some people chose to live in them for financial reasons.
- What the difference between a conservation district and a PUD? If we're talking about buildings being preserved, we should be careful with our language and use preservation or retaining instead of conservation. In considering demolition, take quality of property into consideration.
- The idea of design review could be looked at or tested. It doesn't have to be limited to downtown. There could be some criteria when it's implemented. We'd have to get people comfortable with it without being onerous. The idea of design review brings concerns to the fore before it gets up the chain to where it's already approved. It could come out of zoning and building.
- The point regarding maximum building size – I think what we're talking about is transitions, so that a project, if it replaces existing buildings, is complimentary to adjacent scale and character – not necessarily that there needs to be a max building size, but that it needs to be similar to adjacent properties. But there shouldn't be blanket permission to put a maximum height.
  - Transition/Adjacent scale and character should apply to most of the points under Design. What's a good transition for one area won't be for another.
  - "Context" – nothing in code says that new or additional building has to suit the context around it. But that's what we're striving for. Could be similar to average front set back.
- There's a need to present preservation as a public benefit, but not always in such absolute terms – rather it CAN be a public benefit. Preserving an area that is not necessarily historic can also do damage. Find the middle line between preserving and redeveloping. This could also go into the mapping exercise. Where are the areas where preservation would be a public benefit?
- D2 is intended as transitional zoning. We should know where it is adjacent to the other areas we're looking at.
- We could also consider cost, i.e. how much a house or a building sold for or rental rates. That way we're not making assumptions about what areas are cheap or expensive to

inform our process. Then we could look for trends to indicate where downzoning could take place.

- A lot of properties were changing hands when credit was more available. Now a lot of landlords in outlying areas are trying to sell their properties . . . The market has changed so much and is shifting so that data might not be helpful.
- Then caution against making assumptions about cost.
- We want a certain amount of stability to the neighborhood. There's an expectation that there's a certain kind of stability – how do we define what that means? How do we make that happen? That expectation keeps people coming to an area and encourages people to move to or invest in an area. How can stability be quantifiable in zoning?