



CITY OF ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

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Meeting Summary

Date: April 21, 2010

Time: 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Location: Washtenaw County Building, 200 North Main Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Re: R4C/R2A Zoning Study – Advisory Committee Meeting 4

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

City of Ann Arbor—Matt Kowalski, Wendy Rampson, Chelsea Burket (intern)

Comments and Questions from the Advisory Committee:

Project Status Update

- Community workshop bumped back because of additional focus group; when to reschedule? Decision was to postpone this meeting indefinitely.
- Get work done before having public meeting so that people can react to committees work and recommendations versus reacting to stakeholder input
- Need more discussion among ourselves. At present we have nothing to give the public. It would be open ended and not constructive.

Student Questionnaire Update

- Going out in university wide end-of-the-year email (courtesy Jim Kosteva)
- Inter-cooperative council (Eric Lipson) will also distribute to about 300 – 400 members
- Aaron Miller, student liaison to MSA will distribute it to listservs

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.

How to move forward

- Need to evaluate zoning ordinance so that we can organize our response, instead of rehashing issues
- Rather than examining the entire zoning ordinance, we could take the major issues that have come up and find relevant pieces of zoning and master plan to dissect. We could look at how the ordinance defines the issue, what restrictions exist, and what possibilities exist for changing it.
- We also have to understand the implications of any proposed changes.
- If the master plan is going to be changing, maybe we don't want to match the zoning to these action statements. Maybe the plan needs to be changed first.
- The recommendations that this committee comes up with could be incorporated into master plan update.
- We need a better understanding of the basics of the zoning ordinance and what the implications of all the different issues are (e.g. lot width, lot size, non-conformance).
- We have to be aware that we can't just make suggestions for zoning changes that will impact people financially, have to understand that there will have to be grandfathering.
- It may not be appropriate for us to start out with discussing policy change/master plan. Instead take a concrete issue and move forward. As a group, we aren't going to agree on a policy we support.

Discussion of Action C

- Over 90% of properties are non-conforming in R4C in area, lot width, and/or setback requirements
- Has there been analysis of existing normal area, width, and setback? We could make the ordinance fit the norm so that more properties would be conforming.
- Given the front setback averaging, that shouldn't be as big an issue. We already have a tool that helps to deal with that.

- We planned a zoning which would in effect replace single family houses with high density apartment buildings, which didn't happen, though many of the houses are broken into apartments. The reason things are non-conforming is that that didn't happen. The question is – do we still want the standards in the zoning or, since these neighborhoods persisted, should we therefore in effect protect them? Not as individual buildings, but as a whole plan. The CAP gives recognition to that. The crucial question is do we think that R4C zoning which encourages apartment buildings is appropriate? Or do we want the CAP?
- Are we interested in finding a number for lot area which would make a greater percentage of homes conforming? What % is our goal? What are the unintended implications?
- What would it take to make them conforming? The fabric of the area – how they sit on the lot – has some value. Give people more security that the value of their property isn't going to be hampered by non-conforming zoning.
- If we're going to try and come up with a number, there will still be some nonconforming, which seems subjective. We have to have a good legitimate reason for coming up with a new number. We could consider instead a process to allow people to rebuild if their home burns down. Smaller lots could have other implications for parking and buffering.
- Clarify the issue of a single-family home in an R4C zone – under what conditions does it/does it not have to conform to R1C? How does this change what is or isn't non-conforming?
- Another problem with nonconformities is that you can't make additions/improvements. So changing area and width requirements to make lots conforming could allow them to make improvements.
- What improvements are restricted for a non-conforming? Can't add on or make more units.

- The 90% is based on the lot size meeting 8500 sq ft. We could do a finer grain of analysis.
- What would be the effect of decreasing lot size? Still 2175/unit required. . . Could look at a combination of reducing min lot area but keeping that the same. . .
- How would defining things by bedroom instead of unit affect things?
- Too many things are tied together (including unit standard) that just changing the lot size is not going to fix things. We should talk about making zoning to protect what's there and allowing things that don't severely impact the buildings.
- If we were to investigate what would happen if we were to decrease lot size, I think you would find that it doesn't help the people who would like to see more density. Still would only allow two units.
- Number of units may be restricting what can happen to existing building stock.
- Also have to think about accessory dwellings – does that have any bearing on R4C? Those might be the areas where you might want to have those.
- Can't you already have an accessory dwelling in R4C? Needs clarification.
- If you decrease lot size, it could bring some houses into conformity. They could add a third unit, but that would trigger a site plan which has more detailed requirements. . . The structure may still be nonconforming for other things, such as setbacks, which would still require ZBA action.
- One of the issues is what is it that people need in this neighborhood. What is it in the R4C that you aspire to? Variety of units and types? Preserve single family look and feel? You have gotten already into the nitty gritty but you may want to take a few steps back. Then how do you structure the zoning to make that happen?
- A tool for a mix of apartments and single family and divided houses – differential min lot size for the types of uses, require more lot size for number of bedrooms (i.e. smaller unit has lesser lot size requirement) equates number of people with lot size, could do min lot

- I worry that what we decide will have unintended consequences like previous changes.

How to move forward Part II

- What things can we and can we not agree on? Everyone is talking about fixing this in a different way. How do we get to the point of deciding what we want as a community?
Voting versus consensus?
- We could come to agreement where we can. Where we can't we can give council two different paths.
- One challenge is that a lot of the issues on the list are conflicting.
- The list of issues is all over the map and not focused on the structure of the zoning ordinance. They don't really give me direction on how to modify the zoning ordinance. The list of issues is questions more than answers.
- Maybe we could meet more often. We're talking about where people live and their livelihood – we need more in depth discussion.
- More leadership would be good, but we have to be able to take action ourselves. Maybe we just need to go back to the goals, decide if we agree on it through a vote, and then go from there.
- Maybe each person should also make a small list of what we want to talk about at the next meeting and give to Matt to help prepare.
- Would it be easier to divide our group into four groups and have each group take a goal, put together necessary information, and come up with some presentation of issues, implications, options, etc. This could help find where cross-over between points exists and what issues are unique to each goal.

Public Input

- Dan got information from public sources and would like to make it all available to the committee. If anyone wants to talk with them, they are open to meeting and talking.
- The point that really struck me is the one that asks what are we trying to accomplish here? What does making properties conforming really do? They could submit ideas about what they think the implications of making properties conformities would do. If they could figure that out the rest might fall into place.
- How can you change R2A without changing R2B?
- Public notice needs to go out earlier.
- One thing that is consistent is people asking why you are doing this. There's a sense that people want to protect what they have and the neighborhoods that they have and they don't want rights taken away. We're trying to adjust the zoning to what we think is true with regard to the central area – keeping height and scale consistent. We don't want to go in the direction of high density around downtown.