



CITY OF ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

100 North Fifth Avenue, P.O. Box 8647, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107-8647

www.a2gov.org

Administration (734)794-6210

Community Development Services (734) 622-9025

Parks & Recreation Services (734) 794-6230

Planning & Development Services - Building (734) 794-6267

Planning & Development Services - Planning (734) 794-

Community Services Area
6265

Meeting Summary

Date: June 24, 2010

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 5

Advisory Committee – Chuck Carver, Michele Derr, Nancy Leff, Ethel Potts, Ellen Rambo, Ilene Tyler, Julie Weatherbee, Dave Merchant, Carl Luckenbach

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

Comments and Questions from the Advisory Committee:

Project Update

- Staff anticipates 2-3 more meetings of the Advisory Committee. The project schedule will be revised.
- Should we hold the community meeting? What information would we be giving to the public at a community meeting?
- No community meeting at this point, after this AC meeting staff can formulate some potential responses and then we can decide status after the next meeting.
- Community meeting should only be after we've done some more work.
- Next meeting we'll present tools about how to accomplish these goals identified at tonight's meeting.
- How will you reconcile into several principles the fact that R4 districts are different than each other?

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.

Review and Discussion of Committee Homework

- Is group housing an appropriate recommendation for Areas 16 & 17?
- That recommendation was crafted because frats and sororities had been locating in R2B (wash/hill). In the mid-80s N. Burns Park had concerns about this so there was a rezoning to R2A. CAP came on the heels of that. There was concern on part of advocates for group housing because apt buildings couldn't be converted to frats or sororities. So that recommendation is to allow for more interchangeable opportunities between multi-family and group housing (frats, sororities, co-ops, boarding houses). Tearing down houses was not the intent.
- Area Plan recommendation for Areas 16 & 17 not an appropriate goal anymore.
- What about homes that have more than 6 bedrooms (e.g. along Prospect, Packard)?
What would one have to do to change those into a group house?
 - If it's non-conforming you can't change the use.
- There's been talk about having a whole area of town being student housing (a student ghetto). The neighborhoods that still retain family homes should be protected. There are already houses that can be used for group housing; we don't need any more. If there's a lack of them then we can discuss this.
- Areas 16 & 17 are denser – they look different. This goal may not be right for these areas. Maybe we need to do outreach to the groups that originally wanted more group housing. Maybe we need to clean up zoning to make these areas more manageable. New zoning definitions are still worth exploring.
- Area 16 is already group homes; there's no single family use so it's not an issue.
- Area 17 has changed, has been in transition, has been urged away from single family because of zoning, and it is heavy with students. Having a group housing zone there seals its fate as student housing.

- There's no fundamental problem with having a zone that allows group housing. This doesn't mandate that they be built; it just gives definitions and standards that support it.
- The issue is still the lot size being defined as too large for the bulk of the properties and if we could address the lot size to bring the lots into conformance we would be dealing with different restrictions – we can deal with the issues (additions, parking, etc) in a more rational way. In making the lots non-conforming we've restricted the owners' opportunity. We should recognize that what we were thinking when we made the zoning in the 60s isn't what we like/want now.
- A huge percentage of these things are nonconforming so if the zoning matched what was there in terms of lot size the properties would become conforming. It's not that we don't want the students or density; it's that we don't want those types of big-boxes built.
- We could either downzone or create a new category to allow for the very small lots. Also, I strongly believe that houses should be able to be replaced as is if they're destroyed.
- Wendy: One of the things we're trying to get from this is your articulation of what you want to see in the future. You started to express that when you said that you don't want large buildings. So for instance, the group housing tends to be large buildings. So maybe what you're saying is that it's okay to have a mixture of uses and building types, but not the large buildings like you see on Washtenaw.
- I think the idea is to keep the scale to keep an area congruent. So if an area already has been group homes, then it's okay to put more there. But if you have single-family houses then keep the scale relative. You can then let people do whatever inside.
- In the area where large buildings and group homes are already allowed, there are already a lot of them and I wouldn't want to see more.
- It might be helpful to visualize what's consistent with scale.

Below is a list of the 'sticky' note comments (indicated by the + sign) placed on the front board during the future vision discussion and a brief summary of the discussion that followed.

Future Vision: Neighborhood Character

+ Diverse housing types

- + Encourage mixed use/ low intensity retail along some larger streets.
- + Families would like to live here but there are no houses to buy or rent.
- + Minimize incentives for aggregation of lots – existing underlying lot patterns should be respected.
- + Encourage home ownership – mixed/diversity.
- + Buildings fit size of lot and appropriate character – yards, trees, landscape.
- + Protect open front porches and front yards.
- + Mixed use. Setbacks similar. Height conform.
- + Neighborhood feel – building materials, ornamentation, porches, landscaping, parking in back.
- + Maintain character of neighborhoods – livability with porches, architectural details, greenscapes & permeable surfaces.

Discussion

- If parking shouldn't go in the front or the back where should it be?
- At some point are we going to have to decide what is appropriate to incorporate into a zoning ordinance and what is just wishful thinking?
- Wendy: Can you be more specific about what is open space? What is the most important place for open space in these areas?
 - Protect front yards.
- Maintain setbacks within reason.
- Open space is best provided in larger chunks – little bits don't do anybody a whole lot of good.
- In some neighborhoods porches work as open space. Many times there are small porches, small front yards, which is okay because you don't live in these areas to have a big yard – that's a suburban ideal.

- Green between houses is perceived open space – that is, a repetitive and consistent pattern which breaks up buildings. This also contributes to the character of the neighborhood.
- Everybody likes their own little tiny piece of open space or greenery. We shouldn't allow an entire backyard to be converted to parking.
- The reason you could tell that a house was a rental was because the backyard was all parking. This indicates that there are too many people in the house. The constraint of providing properly managed parking may dictate the number of people that should be allowed. In owner-occupied houses the backyards were actually yards.
- It's important to differentiate between providing public versus private benefits. The state shouldn't be telling people, "You ought to have some green space because it's good for you".
- If parking is in the backyard at least we don't have to look at it.
- Although the backyard isn't the best place in the world, apartment buildings with parking behind them is much better than parking in an adjacent lot.

Future Vision: New Construction

- + Restrict to same footprint as existing structures. No lot bundling.
 - + Can't handle more density – keep some houses for families.
 - + Base height limits on existing (median or average). Discourage large front setbacks – perhaps "build-to" requirements.
 - + Conform to neighborhood norms for height, massing, setbacks.
 - + Match scale and character to adjacent single family residential.
 - + Parking: Move from qualitative opinion to quantitative goal. Then develop creative solutions.
- Do we need a parking study like downtown?
- + Hide parking behind buildings. Facilitate combining rear yards for more efficient parking.
 - + Encourage use of similar forms – roof scope, ridge orientation, etc.

- + Density by bedroom not by units.
- + Articulate larger buildings similar to single family.
- + Make front door face the street – pedestrian friendly.
- + Building scale and setbacks should match existing.
- + Take a permissive approach to density.
- + Fit into character of particular neighborhood/street. Promote livable streets at a pedestrian scale. Have flexible design in transition neighborhoods.
- + Regulate bedrooms rather than unit.
- + Keep with mix of housing; don't encourage only rentals.
- + Variety of types, styles – not all faux-historic. Spread apartments around city.

Discussion

- General agreement that people would like to see some type of design guidelines for new construction.
- Design doesn't seem to be as big of an issue for new single family, mostly multi-family.
- Basement parking could be required for larger apartment buildings.
- There should be a threshold that you are worrying about – bigger apartment buildings.
- New construction in the area of R2A neighborhoods is different character (duplex versus single family) but still compatible with surrounding houses.
- Compatible is not necessarily looking alike.
- New construction should be of the time.
- Scale and character doesn't mean a duplicate – setback, front door facing the street, height, space between them.

Future Vision: Non-conforming Lots/Structures

- + If structure is destroyed, then with prior approval of planning commission and city council, it should be allowed to be rebuilt exactly the same.
- + Make zoning fit apartment (?) structure. Rebuild to same footprint.

- + Rezone so that these can become conforming.
- + Allow reconstruction of same footprint and massing.
- + Use R1D as basis for making small lots conform.
- + Be able to replace existing structure in case of fire, etc on footprint.
- + Switch zoning to reflect bedrooms instead of units.
- + Offer alternative parking options.
- + Move to bedrooms as key metric, not units.
- + Reduce lot size to bring 80% of lots into conformance.
- + Relax restricting or grandfathering them in while lot boundaries remain.

Discussion

- Support for rebuilding non-conforming structures for density and setback.
- Possible solution: Can just change R4C lot size to 5,000 instead of 8,500.

Public Comment

- One constant is change. Whatever we decide isn't going to last 50 years like the last zoning. Encourage flexibility.
- May be some inconsistency with neighborhood character within the areas. What makes landlords itchy is when we try to include R2A character into student dominated R4C area. Make character different between these two zones and provide landlords a bit of an incentive to invest in R4C areas and they would stay out of R2A.
- Concerned that you refer to student ghettos, versus rental. They could also be conforming homes and may even be owner occupied so don't over-generalized. Traditional versus nontraditional family shouldn't be differentiated. This really is an attempt to take back the neighborhood. We have traditional families invading the R2 and some of the rental areas.
- Our family definition does allow for unrelated people.
- A lot of landlords take pride in maintaining properties.

- Will you be addressing occupancy next time?
- It could be a possible topic of discussion.
- There are houses for sale right now looking for families to buy but no one is coming in yet.