

**Ann Arbor Discovering Downtown
Downtown Zoning Advisory Committee**

December 13th, 2006 Meeting
6th Floor Conference Room, City Hall

Members Present: Fred Beal, Bonnie Bona, Michael Concannon, Bob Johnson, Carol Kuhnke, Brad Moore, Sonia Schmerl

Staff Present: Wendy Rampson, Lindsay-Jean Hard

Guests: Ethel Potts (Planning Commission)

1. Review of Downtown Zoning District Descriptions

The committee reviewed a summary of all of the zoning districts in the downtown, taken from the zoning ordinance intent statements. The committee went over a matrix of the downtown zoning districts' area, height, and placement characteristics, as well as a map with the downtown zoning and historic districts.

Staff went over definitions for "overlay zones," and indicated the first priority is to look at the underlying zoning, and then if necessary, overlay zoning can be addressed. An additional definition from the University of Wisconsin was suggested. These definitions are the initial entries in the committee's Glossary of Zoning Terms, which is anticipated to grow over time.

2. Plan Recommendations related to Downtown Zoning

The Committee was provided excerpts from the following plans and studies as background material.

- a. Downtown Plan (1988)
- b. Downtown Residential Task Force (2004)
- c. Downtown Development Strategies Report (2006)

The Downtown Development Strategies Report, more commonly referred to as the Calthorpe Report, is not an adopted plan. However, the work that this committee does in response to this report will result in amendments to the Downtown Plan, which currently is the adopted master plan for downtown. The Committee reviewed the planning areas and development character recommendations from the Downtown Plan. "Core" refers to the central area of downtown with the most development and greatest mixture of uses. "Interface" is a transitional area between uses, such as between the core and residential areas. The Committee reviewed a map comparing the planning areas of the Downtown Plan with the six character areas identified in the Downtown Development Strategies Report.

3. Proposed Changes to Underlying Zoning in "Core"

Staff indicated that the first step in evaluating the underlying zoning was to explore the boundaries of the Core area. The committee expressed differing opinions as to whether the Core should be extended in the area north of Ann Street and west of Main Street. It was noted that this area contains a mixture of scales; from newly approved high-density projects, to retail and offices in converted houses, to a variety of lower-density residential uses. It was noted that this area serves as a transitional area between the core and residential neighborhoods to the north and west, and that transitional areas aren't just about use, but also density and the size of structures. Committee members acknowledged the importance of an interface area or a buffer, although it was viewed in different ways. The committee also recognized the North Main Street corridor as a special area that

might be appropriate for an overlay zone. The presence of the floodplain along the west edge of the Core area and the potential for using transfer of development rights—both for use in this area and in historic districts—were mentioned. It was also suggested that fringe commercial districts in this area should be rezoned to C2A.

- In general, the Committee agreed that the western edge of the Core should end just short of the railroad tracks, roughly at First Street. The Committee also agreed that an L-shaped extension of the Core area along both faces of North Main Street was worth exploring further.

The Committee reviewed a map detailing the current zoning within downtown's core area. Primarily, the core is zoned C2A on the edges and C2A/R in the central portion. This was originally done with the intention that the central portion would be high-rise residential in between two commercial districts. Staff also pointed out the handful of C2B/R parcels, which all used to be auto-oriented uses. Most of these could be rezoned to C2A, and only one location would be negatively impacted from this change.

- The Committee agreed that rezoning of the C2B/R parcels in the Core area to C2A was acceptable.

Another area of discussion was the parking structures, as they also have their own zoning: "P" Parking District. One of the premises of the Committee is the aim of simplifying existing zoning, and rezoning the public parking structures to C2A would accomplish this.

- There was general agreement among the Committee that future projects with parking should encourage retail or other similar uses at the main level to create a pedestrian-friendly environment, and that rezoning existing P districts to C2A would support this concept.

The Committee also touched on the areas which will likely overlap with other committees, such as the treatment of historic districts, how zoning and incentives translate into architectural design, setbacks, building massing, and neighborhood areas which would risk being shadowed by the construction of a tower in their area. It was suggested that there be a joint meeting with the Design Guidelines Committee to coordinate efforts.

The Committee discussed the impact of zoning changes on historic districts in the downtown. A question was raised as to whether there needed to be buffers between new development in the Core and historic districts. It was noted that in the case of properties along Huron that backed up to the Ann Street District, there may need to be an overlay zone to require additional setbacks. Where historic properties/districts are commercial in character, there may not be a need for a buffer. The orientation of buildings that would result in shadowing was also mentioned as a concern.

A question came up regarding whether the committee is rezoning areas or changing what the zoning means. Staff clarified that the committee may be making recommendations for both approaches. Staff also indicated that the Committee will be discussing the role of floor area incentives as part of this process. At the next meeting, the discussion will focus on the Kerrytown area and the question of height limitations.

4. Public Comment

Ms. Potts reminded the committee of the Downtown Residential Task Force's report and mentioned that there might be helpful information and maps contained within this document. She also noted displeasure with the recent South University area rezoning for not matching with the DDA boundaries.

5. Next Meeting

The committee's next meeting will be Wednesday, January 10th at 4:30 pm in the 4th Floor Conference Room.

Prepared by Lindsay-Jean Hard