

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

21<sup>st</sup> March, 2007 Meeting  
6<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room, City Hall

Members Present: Michael Concannon, Bob Johnson, Carol Kuhnke, J. Bradley Moore, Sonia Schmerl

Staff Present: Wendy Rampson, Lindsay-Jean Hard

Guests: Christine Crockett (Design Guidelines Advisory Council), Ray Detter (Citizen's Advisory Council), Joan French (Citizen's Advisory Council), Ray Fullerton (Citizen's Advisory Council), Ethel Potts (Planning Commission), Alice Ralph (Design Guidelines Advisory Committee)

1) Meeting Notes and Updates

A committee member questioned why members' comments are not identified by name within the meeting notes. Staff explained that the Steering Committee had requested that meeting notes focus on content, thus notes had initially started out shorter and more content focused, with no individual comments, but they have gradually expanded to include more detail. Staff added that since the meeting notes are available to anyone via the Internet, it also helps to allow members to speak freely within the committee. Staff reminded guests and committee members that meeting notes are always available on the City's A2D2 website ([www.a2gov.org/a2d2](http://www.a2gov.org/a2d2)).

Ms. Ralph from the audience provided an update on the work of the Design Guidelines Advisory Committee, and explained their work filling in a matrix of character area design guideline content, which was begun last meeting with a discussion of the Huron Street corridor. Ms. Ralph noted that Huron was chosen as a starting point for discussion due to its mix of uses and its connection between downtown and campus. One committee member noted that it was also selected because the DDA had commissioned studies of this corridor.

Staff added that information regarding drive-thrus would be e-mailed out to committee members, this will go before Council in April, and would make any type of drive-thru a conditional use.

2) Setback/Form Requirements for Core/ Interface Areas

Staff referred members to a Zoning Framework Core Area worksheet, which laid out zoning elements and possible scenarios that the committee had discussed. The possible scenario within the worksheet's Scale and Massing section maintained the current by right Floor Area Ratio (FAR), rather than a reduction, to maintain support from property owners. Staff moved on to the Premiums section and noted that premiums can be set for the entire downtown, or they can be set differently for different areas. Staff added that the scenario for a residential premium was reduced from the current premium, as this premium might need to be reduced if a number of other premiums are added.

A member asked for clarification regarding what a unit of transferred development right (TDR) would be. Staff explained that a unit could be a set number of square feet, but it could also be a conversion or value. Staff provided an example of using TDR in the floodplain, noting that it would be more valuable to get rid of development in higher risk areas than lower risk areas, and added that it is important to keep the conversion simple and easy to use.

One member referenced the possible parking premium and expressed the assumption that the goal is to encourage whatever premiums are given for. The member noted that right now above-grade parking is counted

as FAR, so it is a disincentive to build above grade, and added that this needs to be addressed if members want to promote parking on-site for new developments. One member questioned whether a parking premium should just be given for below-grade parking. Another member noted that below-grade parking already gets a premium as it does not count as FAR. A member referred to the comment regarding above-grade parking counting as FAR, and questioned whether that is policy or code. Staff clarified that it is an interpretation of the code, as the zoning ordinance clearly says underground parking does not count as FAR, which assumes that above-grade does.

Staff continued to move through the Zoning Framework worksheet and directed members' attention to green space and public art as possible amenities. Staff added that the "Nearby Nature in the City" article posted on the A2D2 website makes an argument for preserving fragments of nature in the city, and remarked that perhaps the Design Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC) is already addressing public art. Ms. Crockett from the audience noted that the DGAC is indeed talking about public art, and was pleased to see art being discussed in two of the committees.

One member revisited a discussion from previous meetings regarding requiring projects to be energy efficient as a prerequisite to premiums. Staff noted that this could be accomplished by using a checklist and requiring a certain number of points to qualify for premiums. Two committee members felt that to get any premium, a property owner would have to make the project energy efficient. One member agreed, with the stipulation that the City commits to having municipal buildings be green and/or energy efficient. Several members noted that it would be expensive to retrofit City buildings and would be easier to accomplish with any new City buildings. One member questioned whether some of the premiums should then be made more generous if being energy efficient is a prerequisite to accessing them. Another member noted that the project cost shouldn't be more than an additional 1-2% to be energy-efficient.

One member felt it was a disincentive to reduce the residential premium, adding that residential units are still desirable and the premium should be kept as it is. A member commented on the worksheet's listing of required ground-floor commercial, and noted that last meeting, one member has suggested requiring retail. The member added a preference to require 'commercial' in order to be more flexible, but still desired the appearance of retail. A member noted that it would not be feasible to have retail over the entire downtown. The previous member agreed and indicated requiring 'commercial' was more realistic. One member commented that at one point members had talked about a transparency requirement, as the point is not to have retail in every space, rather to have a pedestrian-friendly environment. The member added that mandating transparency will result in the right use finding the space. Staff added that having a street be pedestrian-friendly due to transparent windows isn't the only goal, variety and a mixture of uses is important too, as no one will walk down a street comprised of only banks and brokers. A member questioned if it would be easier to prohibit what is undesirable. One member noted that transparency goes a long way towards getting what they want.

- Committee members were in agreement that recommending or requiring either retail or commercial uses at the ground-floor would be beneficial in certain areas of the downtown.

One member suggested restricting residential from the ground floor. Another member disagreed, noting that the Ashley Mews townhouses were nicely done. The previous member disagreed, adding that the blinds are always closed as they are too close to the street. Another member did not object to ground-floor residential in the core, noting that if the units are set-back, the brownstone concept would work. The original member conceded that it would not be necessary to prohibit this use.

Staff revisited the discussion of FAR, noted that the maximum will be really critical, and prompted members to consider this. Staff commented that it might be too early on for this discussion, but remarked that if a developer can only get between 400-600% FAR, they are not going to think that is great. A member commented that it might not even be possible to build a point tower with a max FAR of 800%. The member shared an impression

that the Calthorpe report had recommended this added FAR to allow for flexibility. Staff noted that the Calthorpe report recommended using tower design as a premium.

The discussion turned to affordable housing, and one member noted that the range of 60-80% AMI seemed too high. Staff noted that this is based on what is known as “workforce housing.” Staff explained that units aren’t being built for the 60-80% AMI level, and added that it is easier to build affordable housing for under 60% AMI with the help of subsidies. Staff described the affordable housing units built as part of Ashley Mews. With home ownership, there is only a certain amount of appreciation the owners can get, but the developer is able to spread the additional costs to other units by getting premiums. From the audience, Mr. Detter noted that the Downtown Area Citizen’s Advisory Committee desires a more affordable downtown, and that their goal is housing for people within the 60-80% AMI as well. He added that the proposed Village Green development (First & Washington) will have some affordable units, but they will only be studios, which limits who is able to live there.

Staff moved the discussion to the second Zoning Framework worksheet which looks at the Interface area. Staff noted that the East William interface area would probably look a lot like it does now, as it is zoned C2A/R and is within a historic district with existing buildings. Staff questioned members whether the Kerrytown, West Downtown, and South Main Interface areas of downtown should all be treated the same, or differently. One member asked for clarification on what the “outdoor storage” use is. Staff clarified that it is literally outdoor storage, like Fingerle Lumber. One member did not want to restrict any use that would drive Fingerle out of the downtown. Staff noted that Central Area Plan accepts industrial use, but is in favor of adaptive reuse when those uses leave, such as the Eaton plant, which converted into the Liberty Lofts development.

One member suggested an overlay zone on the Main Street corridor to allow for greater height. Another member noted that there will probably have to be overlays on different sections of the Interface. Staff prompted members to review the Calthorpe Report to see if they agree with the suggested segmenting. Members discussed premiums in the Interface zone, and one member clarified that the TDR would be within the downtown only. A member suggested that the Interface could be the sending zone for the transferred development right.

### 3) Public Engagement Strategy

Staff reviewed a public participation strategy document and a timeline for bringing possible zoning scenarios to the public, ideally in April. One member noted that the committee seemed to agree on a lot of items, and suggested that members vote during the next meeting, in order to see what members really agree on. Staff added that the DGAC’s design charrette would be in mid to late May, and noted that it would be good for this committee to have their public meetings before that time.

### 4) Public Comment

Mr. Detter was concerned with the idea of any movement of the Core into the Interface area, and remarked that the committee would need a clear reason to do that. Mr. Detter questioned where that idea is coming from, and noted that it would not be supported as it is not in the Central Area Plan or the Downtown Plan. Mr. Detter also expressed concern with setbacks and corners, particularly near Huron and Division, as it is in a historic district and is a sensitive area.

Ms. Crockett had talked to the DGAC about the same block (Huron Street between State and Division), as it abuts a residential district. She noted that it needs to be treated in a special way as it affects the quality of life for those residents in the historic district to the north.

Ms. Potts commented on affordable housing, and urged to the committee member to think carefully about this potential premium, as currently it isn’t being provided downtown since developers can pay-in-lieu. She also questioned the residential premium, noting that it is already being built. Ms. Potts also was concerned with

potentially removing open space and green space as even little spots can make a difference. Staff clarified that the suggestion is for it to become a requirement, not to remove it.

Ms. Ralph followed-up with the discussion on energy-efficiency and noted that she is quite familiar with the LEED rating system. She felt the use of the LEED system would relieve the City of monitoring, whereas if the City used a point system, a new program would have to be created. Ms. Ralph saw greater value in using an established program, in order to not spend unnecessary time or money.

5) Next Meeting

The committee's next meeting will be Wednesday, April 11<sup>th</sup> at 4:30 in the conference room on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of City Hall.

Prepared by Lindsay-Jean Hard