

**Ann Arbor Discovering Downtown – Joint Meeting
Design Guidelines Advisory Committee
Historic Preservation Advisory Committee**

March 22nd, 2007 Meeting
6th Floor Conference Room, City Hall

DGAC Members Present: Kurt Brandle, Christine Crockett, Ron Emaus, Damian Farrell, Eric Lipson,
Joan Lowenstein, J. Bradley Moore, Alice Ralph

HPAC Members Present: Louisa Pieper, Allison Poggi, Ethel Potts, Wendy Woods

Staff Present: Kristine Kidorf, Coy Vaughn, Lindsay-Jean Hard

Guests: Ray Detter (Citizen's Advisory Council), Michael Earle (Citizen), Jim Kern (Citizen's Advisory Council),
Richard Shackson (Citizen's Advisory Council)

1. Introductions & Overview

Mr. Vaughn read the charge of the Design Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC);

The Downtown Urban Design Guidelines Advisory Committee shall provide input on development and implementation of design guidelines for downtown development and redevelopment. The committee shall:

- *Evaluate data and reports provided by staff regarding urban design principles and guidelines;*
- *Make recommendations to staff and ultimately to the A2D2 Steering Committee; and*
- *Assist with public information and outreach, including each member's constituency*

Mr. Vaughn shared with the committees that there had been a lot of talk over the last five years regarding adopting design guidelines. Currently the City does not require architectural design details, although it is always requested, it is not binding. The City's first thought was to simply require architectural details, but then moved to design guidelines, so everyone has a better idea of what to expect. Mr. Vaughn noted that an RFQ, and subsequently a RFP, went out to firms, and the team of Winter|RACESTUDIO has been selected. Mr. Vaughn added that their contract is being finalized, and he is in contact with the consultants to bring them up to speed with the committee's work to date.

A committee member added that the DGAC also had a joint meeting with the Downtown Zoning Advisory Committee (DZAC), and the committees had come up with a list of items that should be addressed and then divided it between them. The member noted that so far the DGAC had determined that every item will be important in every area.

Ms. Kidorf then shared the progress and charge of the Historic Preservation Advisory Committee (HPAC);

The Committee will provide feedback on the update of Chapter 103 (Historic Preservation Ordinance), revised downtown historic design guidelines, and identification of contributing and non-contributing buildings in downtown historic districts. The committee is charged with:

- *Evaluating data and reports provided by staff regarding historic preservation design guidelines and district designation process;*
- *Making recommendations to staff and ultimately to the A2D2 Steering Committee; and*
- *Assisting with public information and outreach, including each member's constituency*

Ms. Kidorf provided an overview of the downtown historic districts, and reviewed the rules governing historic districts.

2. Slideshow of Ann Arbor Buildings In and Near Historic Districts

Ms. Kidorf presented a slideshow of downtown buildings in and near historic district for committee members to review and discuss.

Image: Corner of Washington Street & Fifth Avenue looking west

Ms. Kidorf noted the mix of taller and shorter buildings, acknowledged a precedent for a mix of building heights, and requested input from members. One member noted that the newer and renovated buildings are not jarring. Another member noted that the taller buildings were built with the prospect for something taller to be built next to it (as there were no windows on the side of the building).

Image: William Street

This image showed a residential house next to an apartment building, and Ms. Kidorf clarified that she would be using "residential" to refer to the building's historic use, whether that house is currently being used as a residence or as an office.

Image: 150 South Fifth Avenue Building

Members noted the top floor setback, and the matching of the lower roof line to the adjacent building's roofline. One member felt that there was not a glaring difference between new and historic, and another felt it was a good example. A member commented that what was most objectionable about the building is the parking garage at the ground floor.

Image: North University, Sushi.come and shops

One member noted that the scale and size match fairly well, but that was it. Ms. Kidorf summed up the members sentiments by noting that while the massing is okay, the detail is not, and prompted members to think about how that might be addressed in the guidelines.

Image: Maynard Street, Aveda, Nickels arcade, parking structure

One member felt it was a rare example of ribbon windows that weren't boring and objectionable. One member did not mind the size of the parking structure due to the fact that it gives life to the area, and added that functionally it works well. One member felt it was a good example of where art could be used to soften. Other members suggested a curtain wall or green screen to conceal the parking structure. One member brought up the issue of light in Nickels Arcade if three stories are added to the adjacent building. Ms. Kidorf summarized that the members might like to see a requirement for disguising parking decks, and prompted members to think about how to mitigate a potential loss of light if excess height is built next to a smaller structure.

Image: South University and Church Street

One member commented on the variation in heights. A member felt the overall façade treatment and massing were okay, but noted that the streetscape had not been maintained well and felt that the pedestrian experience was disrupted. Another member agreed that there is a strange pedestrian experience on that block, and added that it seemed as if everyone on that block is scurrying to get to someplace else. A member noted that the TCF Bank used to have more windows, but they were bricked in. A DGAC member mentioned that it was a good example of their discussion regarding transparency. A member noted that Church Street has an interesting

rhythm to it. A member noted the difference between principal and side street, and added that the activity is bound to be different on each of them. One member remarked noted the service issue of dumpsters in the pedestrian pathway. Ms. Kidorf noted that members are concerned with transparency, openings, and the continuation of the pedestrian experience.

Image: Church Street and Willard Street

From the audience, Mr. Detter commented that all of those houses could be torn down and rebuilt, as this is part of the area that was recently re-zoned. One member noted that the blank parking wall could be addressed with art or a green screen. A member commented that as a result of the parking structure the neighborhood edge is being pushed back. A member added that the homes are historic, but are not designated as such. Mr. Vaughn noted that the DGAC members had talked about having ground floor retail or townhouses with parking behind and questioned whether that would have helped in this case. One member questioned why grey is so popular in Michigan, added that ivy or greenery would improve the blank wall of the parking structure, and agreed with the benefit of retail at the ground level.

Image: 322 East Liberty/Denali Building

This image produced an extreme and immediate reaction from members, and an initial flurry of comments, which included; that it was unforgivable, had too few windows, looked like a cheap hotel, and looked like half an ocean liner. Members expressed distaste regarding the use of jumbo brick, the garage door, and the parking at the ground level. Mr. Detter commented that a historic structure stood where this building now is, and added that the Historic District Commission approved this building. Mr. Vaughn noted that they had originally designed retail at the ground floor (still with the garage door), but since that is not there they are commissioning public art to go at the ground floor (where the billboards are now). One member commented that North side balconies are not very good and would not be used much. Members commented on the long boring side of the building and Ms. Kidorf suggested that perhaps design guidelines would need to address not only the front façade, but the side facades as well.

Image: Campus Inn and Harris Hall

One member commented that they'd always loved the transition between these two buildings. A member noted that there is a very large setback behind these buildings so they don't abut the Ann Street Historic District. The member stressed the importance of looking at back setbacks in order to preserve the quality of life for residents. A member noted that if you turned the corner you'd see a large blank wall just like the earlier slide of the parking structure. A member liked that the entrances of both buildings were at the same level for pedestrians. Another member was pleased with the high transparency and fountain area of the hotel. A member felt that the courtyard of the hotel was the redeeming factor. One member added that these two buildings worked next to each other because they are on such a wide street. A member commented that if the Campus Inn had a variety of materials it would seem less massive.

Image: Bead Gallery and 301 East Liberty

A member felt that this example wasn't that bad, and noted that there will always be small buildings next to larger ones. One member liked that the taller building has a variation in brick.

Image: Division Street and William Street – apartment building next to house

One member felt that this would look completely different in warmer months due to a tree and ivy which would screen the apartment building. One member felt the flat roof of the apartment building did not work well in that area.

3. Transition Areas & Design Guideline Documents

Mr. Vaughn distributed a document summarizing how other cities have handled adjacent properties with historic or architectural significance, and suggested committee members read through them in more detail at a later time.

Ms. Kidorf began a discussion of transition zones and prompted members to consider the appropriate way to regulate them. She questioned whether only the adjacent building should be regulated or should there be a transition zone, and if so, how large should that be. One member felt that the width of the transition zone didn't matter, and noted that it is the quality of design that matters. Other members agreed that it would depend on the context in each case and noted that the impact could change from place to place. A member remarked that a static number wouldn't work and that a ratio or range might work better in terms of addressing context.

After some discussion, members were given post-it notes to write down what they felt would be appropriate transition zones under the following categories, "Middle of the Block," "At the Corner," and "Across the Street." The follow table displays the number of respondents for each response:

Middle of the Block	At the Corner	Across the Street
None - 4	None - 5	None - 5
Context Dependent - 3	Context Dependent - 3	Context Dependent - 3
Graduated - 1	Graduated - 1	Graduated - 1
Whole Block - 1	Whole Block - 1	Whole Block - 1
Half Block - 2	Three Lots - 1	

After this exercise, Staff prompted members to think about whether the downtown design guidelines and the historic district design guidelines should be contained within different documents or the same document. One member noted that since historic district design guidelines are legally enforceable the two should be in separate documents. Another member agreed but felt the documents should look similar. A member agreed and noted that how the documents will be related will be an important consideration, and added that referencing each other can bring some enforceability to the design guidelines. One member felt that it would be important to maintain a common language and glossary between the two documents. A couple members noted that good design is good design, and one added that both documents can express what is desired within the City and review what the different processes are. Many members strongly agreed that the current process is an area of concern, and noted that projects need to come before the Historic Commission, the Planning Commission, and the community much earlier on in the process

4. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Design Guidelines Advisory Committee will be on April 5th, at 3:30 pm in the 6th floor conference room of City Hall. (Note: this meeting was subsequently rescheduled)

The next meeting of the Historic Preservation Advisory Committee will be on April 12th, at 5 pm in the 6th floor conference room of City Hall.

Prepared by Lindsay-Jean Hard