

**Ann Arbor Discovering Downtown -- Joint Meeting  
Downtown Zoning Advisory Committee  
Urban Design Guidelines Advisory Committee**

15<sup>th</sup> February, 2007 Meeting  
DDA Conference Room, 150 S. Fifth Avenue

Members Present: Fred Beal, Bonnie Bona, Kurt Brandle, Michael Concannon, Christine Crockett, Ron Eamus, Damian Farrell, Carol Kuhnke, Joan Lowenstein, J. Bradley Moore, Alice Ralph, Sonia Schmerl

Staff Present: Wendy Rampson, Coy Vaughn, Lindsay-Jean Hard

Guests: Ray Detter (Citizen's Advisory Council), Ethel Potts (Planning Commission), two additional guests

1) Introductions / Status and goals of each project

Committee members, staff, and guests introduced themselves, and staff began the meeting with an overview of each group's current status. Ms. Rampson explained that the Downtown Zoning Advisory Committee (DZAC) had begun by looking at the Calthorpe Report's suggestion for six character areas, each with their own overlay zoning. The group has progressed to focusing on simplifying the base zoning in the downtown, from the current ten down to two different areas, the Core and the Interface. In response to a question from a Committee member, Ms. Rampson noted that there would still be PUDs, but that if the zoning is revamped to allow for development, there would be reduced pressure to use them. Ms. Rampson explained that the DZAC members would continue to look at changing underlying zoning, what premiums should be offered, and what zoning text amendments should be made, for example, like requiring retail on the ground floor in the Core.

Mr. Vaughn reviewed the Urban Design Guidelines Advisory Committee's (UDGAC) progress towards creating a set of essential design guidelines to help guide the character of the downtown. The group began by doing research on other similarly sized cities with design guidelines, including what the guidelines cover and how they are implemented. That research has been narrowed down to four cities—Berkeley, Boulder, Scottsdale, and Seattle—which will be used as a baseline or framework for the design guidelines. The Committee will be hiring a consultant to gather public input through a charrette and to put together the final design guidelines document. This process is well underway, as a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and subsequently a Request for Proposal (RFP) went out to consultants, and three final firms were interviewed earlier in the day. Mr. Vaughn noted that due to the tight timeline of the A2D2 process, it would not be reasonable to expect a product in June if the consultant was starting from scratch, which is why the Committee is doing research on design guidelines, charrette types, and visual preference surveys (VPS), as well as providing the consultant with background materials like the Calthorpe Report and the Downtown Plan. Members have also been looking at the Calthorpe character areas from a design guideline standpoint and have been capturing pictures of areas downtown, both that members like and dislike, for potential use in a VPS.

A member questioned the basis for the tight timeline, and staff explained that the timeline was a City Council decision. The member also questioned whether progress had been made on aligning the Downtown planning area with the DDA district, expressing a belief that some areas would be left in no-man's land. Staff explained that this was not the case, as the Downtown planning area nests within the Central planning area, and added that zoning is not supportable unless there is a master plan to back it up. Staff explained that the next steps in looking at the master plan would be updates to the Downtown Plan in the next couple of years, and gave the example of DZAC members reviewing the area south of William Street, and wanting to make recommendations for that area, even though it lies outside of their charge.

Staff explained that the goal of the joint meeting was to refine each committee's scope since there is a lot of overlap between their charges. Staff guided members to brainstorm topics that are important, to see what falls to one group or the other and determine what topics overlap between the two Committees.

One member questioned how design guidelines would work and how they would be codified. Staff noted that these issues were part of the UDGAC discussions, and explained that is part of the reason they are looking at what other communities are doing, in order to help guide the creation of the guidelines, and then review different options for implementation. The member commented that items that were absolutes should go in zoning and other items should fall into design guidelines. A member responded that a follow-up phase would be beneficial to allow for tweaking of the guidelines, and the previous member added that that was the best reason to not have everything in zoning to allow greater flexibility.

2) Identify elements / Techniques common to both project

Staff began the brainstorming exercise by suggesting that a single list of topics be created which could be separated out later. The first topic proposed was setbacks, whether side, front, or rear. One member agreed that should definitely be on the list, especially when an area abuts a residential district, noting that shading affects quality of life and is unfair to residents living there. Another member questioned whether a front setback would be an example of something that could be in the design guidelines in order to not box-in the types of proposed developments received, and expressed uncertainty regarding how zoning and design guidelines would interact. Staff noted that just because something lies more on the side of zoning, it does not mean that it would not show up in the design guidelines as a best practice.

Members began suggesting topics to be listed, such as parking and green building elements, like solar access and material choice. One member noted that a great deal of attention used to be paid to the tops of buildings, and now one can often see mechanical equipment and antennas. The member added that attention should be paid to rooftops in order to keep them aesthetically pleasing, as well as with the intent to minimize decibel levels of mechanical equipment for the comfort of downtown residents.

A member stressed the importance of setbacks in order to protect the well-being and quality of life for residents as well as to define the character of an area. The member believed that setbacks should be a part of zoning as well as a part of the design guidelines. A second member felt setbacks and height could be a part of zoning, but would have to be described in design guidelines under character zones, due to the fact that they would be difficult to define under zoning as single requirements when requirements could vary in each character area. The member added that these topics could be a subset within zoning, like specifying that setbacks are x, y, and z in these specific areas.

One member mentioned that there are different neighborhoods within the downtown, so certain things would be appropriate in some areas but not in others. Another member observed that to those living outside of downtown, it is a single district; so all setbacks should be the same. A member agreed in terms of a zero setback at the ground level. Another member noted that different areas do need to be treated differently, like Interface areas, the rear setback on Huron Street, and historic districts, and stressed the need to protect property values and quality of life for residents.

Staff guided the members to identify what is most important to look at. One member expressed a desire for flexibility to be built in, to help flexibility of design. Staff noted that certainty is important too, in order for developers to know that if they do certain things their project will be approved.

The box to the right contains a list of the topics that are common to the two groups.

| <u>Areas of Overlap</u> |
|-------------------------|
| Setbacks                |
| Solar Access            |
| Building Access         |
| Parking                 |
| Open Space              |
| Balconies & Overhangs   |
| Landscape Buffers       |
| Fences & Barriers       |
| Lighting                |
| Footprints              |
| Curb-cuts & Driveways   |

3) Identify responsibility for follow-up

Staff noted that the DZAC was close to setting up public meetings, probably in early April, to present different zoning scenarios to the community. A member expressed a desire for more than the 'usual suspects' to be present at all of the A2D2 public meetings, and suggested that the meetings be advertised in the Ann Arbor Observer and the Ann Arbor News, as well as on the A2D2 website. After a question from a member, staff confirmed that the UDGAC would have two smaller task groups that will report back to the larger group. Additionally, staff noted the A2D2 Project Update Newsletter is available on the A2D2 website, and can be mailed or e-mailed out as a way to get others involved. One member suggested putting a banner up on City Hall prompting people to take a survey on the A2D2 website. After learning the public charrettes would be broadcast, another member suggested adding a banner onto the television broadcast directing people to the website. One member commented that the 'usual suspects' are such, because they are the ones who plow through meeting after meeting. Staff noted that this speaks to needing other forms of communication beyond just having meetings.

The following boxes list the topics that the group agreed each committee is responsible for:

| <u>Downtown Zoning</u>                           |
|--|
| Setbacks (overlay districts)                     |
| Height   |
| Daylight Access                                  |
| Uses   |
| Solar Access                                     |
| Building Access                                  |
| Parking (1 <sup>st</sup> – quantity)             |
| Open Space (1 <sup>st</sup> – amount, placement) |
| Balconies & Overhangs (2 <sup>nd</sup> )         |
| Landscape Buffers (1 <sup>st</sup> )             |
| Fences & Barriers (1 <sup>st</sup> )             |
| Lighting   |
| Size of Parcels                                  |
| Footprints (1 <sup>st</sup> )                    |
| Massing  |
| Curb-cuts & Driveways                            |

| <u>Design Guidelines</u>                                 |
|--|
| Setbacks (character areas)                               |
| Street Level Transparency                                |
| Fenestration (upper & street level)                      |
| Materials  |
| Solar Access   |
| Building Access  |
| Parking (2 <sup>nd</sup> – how it looks from the street) |
| Rooftop (design & mechanical)                            |
| Service Concerns (loading, garbage)                      |
| Corner   |
| Alleys & Arcades   |
| Open Space (2 <sup>nd</sup> - placement & quality)       |
| Windows  |
| Mechanical   |
| Façade Rhythm  |
| Balconies & Overhangs (1 <sup>st</sup> )                 |
| Openings   |
| Quality of Materials                                     |
| Landscape Buffers (2 <sup>nd</sup> )                     |
| Fences & Barriers (2 <sup>nd</sup> )                     |
| Lighting   |
| Footprints (2 <sup>nd</sup> )                            |
| Signage & Graphics                                       |
| Street Frontage  |
| Sidewalks  |
| Curb-cuts & Driveways                                    |

4) Public Comment

A member of the audience urged the committees to consider building heights in order to avoid wind tunnels.

Ms. Potts hoped the UDGAC would think about form-based design, as she believed other communities are using it effectively, therefore the Urban Design Guidelines Committee should at least address why it could work or why it would not for the City. Ms. Potts also suggested getting ideas out to the public faster, as her understanding was the public only sees the early version, then staff puts together an updated version to present to Council without having to go back to the public. Staff clarified that at least with zoning, everything has to go before the Planning Commission. Ms. Potts questioned if that meant if developers met set requirements they would not have to go to Planning Commission. She noted that more and more is being done administratively and stressed that having less public interaction was something to watch out for.

Mr. Detter commented that he was speaking from the perspective of the CAC, which is obviously made up of downtown residents, so they think about the downtown very differently in terms of corridors, neighborhoods, and Interface areas. He acknowledged that this is a challenging task, but believed in the long run it was possible to get something that is sensitive to the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.

Prepared by Lindsay-Jean Hard