

Downtown Area Citizens Advisory Council Meeting Minutes February 3, 2015
City Council Work Room, 2nd. Floor, City Hall, 6:30 pm.

Members Present: Ray Detter, John Chamberlin, Joan French

Visitors: Cy Hufano, Tom Stulberg, Christine Crockett, Jeff Crockett, Steve Kaplan

Members Absent: Marsha Chamberlin, Jim Kern, Sue Kern, Hugh Sonk, Kathleen Nolan

Last night, members and guests of the Downtown Area CAC followed their meeting by speaking to the City Planning Commission on proposed changes to the Zoning Map and Zoning Ordinance relating to 336 E. Ann, properties on N. Fifth, and the East Huron 1 character overlay district on the north side of E. Huron from State to N. Fourth.

This is part of a long and rigorous effort to correct mistakes made in the downtown A2D2 zoning amendments approved in 2009. It was in October of 2013 that the Perdue Consulting firm made its report to City Council after months of extensive community input. And it was just over a year ago that City Council gave directions to the Planning Commission to review certain aspects of the 2009 Downtown A2D2 zoning amendments.

Some of us have been pleased with the thoughtfulness of the process—including City Council’s recent unanimous vote to change the zoning at 425 N. Main. Not everyone was totally happy with the results. But we appreciated the concern about lack of an interface zone between the D1 base zoning districts and nearby residentially-zoned properties. The Planning Commission and Staff now regularly expresses its support of Perdue consultants and City Council’s recognition of the need “to help articulate the massing of larger new buildings to fit sensitively into the existing development context and encourage design approaches which minimize the extent to which high-rise buildings create negative impacts in terms of scale, shading and blocking views.” Many of us in the community can’t hear the word “context” enough-- a consideration clearly identified with the goals and recommendations of our Downtown Plan.

Last night, CAC members and guests stressed two specific changes that need to be made in currently proposed zoning amendments—both examples of the importance of context.

1. In the Amendment to “Rezone the base zoning district of 336 East Ann Street from D1 (Downtown Core-180 ft.) to D2 (Downtown Interface base zoning district (60 ft.),” much is made of the uniqueness of this site. “The property faces Ann Street and the multi-family residences to the north and is adjacent to small offices to the east.” Planning proposes to rezone it to D2 with a 60 foot maximum height. But the current proposal is to provide “no minimum and a 10-foot maximum front setback.” The other side of Ann Street is lined with historical and residential properties—all with setbacks exceeding ten feet.. On the same side of the street to the east—are two historically designated houses—one office, and the other residential. Both have large green setbacks. Clearly, new zoning should call for a 10 ft **minimum, not maximum** front set back as is currently proposed.

2. Also, Planning supports lowering the height from 150 to 120 feet for properties on the north side of E. Huron Street and requiring a maximum 130 foot tower diagonal. We strongly support an additional provision to guarantee that any building constructed on the Campus Inn parking site should provide at least a 25 foot separation from the east side of Sloan Plaza .

Let's make sure that no more mistakes are made. Context is important!