

Downtown Area Citizens Advisory Council Meeting Minutes (3-6-12) and Comments to the DDA (3-7-12)

The Downtown Area CAC was very pleased that the Ann Arbor Planning Department and the entire Planning Commission last month unanimously rejected the development proposal to change the zoning of 1320 South University from D2 to D1. We are disappointed, however, that the developer has nonetheless submitted the proposal to City Council for approval in April. The CAC will join others to once again oppose it.

This will be a test of every member of City Council. If we allow this S. U. zoning change to be approved, it will undermine community expectations for downtown development following the plans we have carefully adopted over many years—and it will surely encourage future developers to also try to get around our adopted community plans.

The CAC always supports, and respects, careful community planning. Last night, we joined others in participating in the downtown “Connecting William Street” survey. This process is dedicated to crafting and implementing a vision for transforming five downtown city-owned parking areas into uses that will better serve the Ann Arbor community. We were joined by students from Skyline High School, and we devoted much of our meeting to filling out and discussing the survey items which will help shape a vision for this area of downtown. The CAC is very pleased that the committee working on this task is committed to basing future public meetings upon knowledge of already existing City Plans, as well as the items encouraged by this survey. Not surprisingly, the Skyline students who participated with us last night made a plea for more stuff for youth in the downtown area—including something to eat that was very-very-very inexpensive.

I reported last night on the opportunity I had a week ago to visit the lower parking levels of the new underground parking structure. The DDA, the architects, the consultants, and the construction staff and crew are to be congratulated on this impressive structure. Many of the interior perspectives and design elements can only be described as awesome. We are all looking forward to it’s opening very soon.

CAC members were also pleased to hear that plans for future building on the top of the underground parking structure still include the possibility of a public patio and the capacity to construct a pedestrian connection from that Library patio to the park at Liberty Plaza. Those items are essential.

I also communicated to CAC members the very positive information that I learned at your last Transportation Committee meeting. Your discussion at that meeting demonstrated the careful planning you are engaged in to make sure that parking structure is successful. Following your Downtown Parking/Transportation Management Plans, a combination of carrots as well as sticks will insure that the new parking structure will be fully used as soon as possible. This will be a part of an overall Parking/Transportation Plan that will benefit State Street/Main Street and the entire downtown area.