

# Chapter Seven



## CENTRAL AREA

---

### I. Introduction

The Central Area of the City includes a wide diversity of land uses including Ann Arbor's downtown, the University of Michigan's central campus, retail and office areas and some of the oldest neighborhoods in the City. It is an area characterized by mixed uses, high non-motorized activity, vital commercial districts, a high concentration of employment uses (downtown, central campus and the University's medical campus) town-gown interaction, and a large student population. This chapter includes goals and objectives that should be used when considering proposed land use changes in this area as well as site specific land use recommendations.

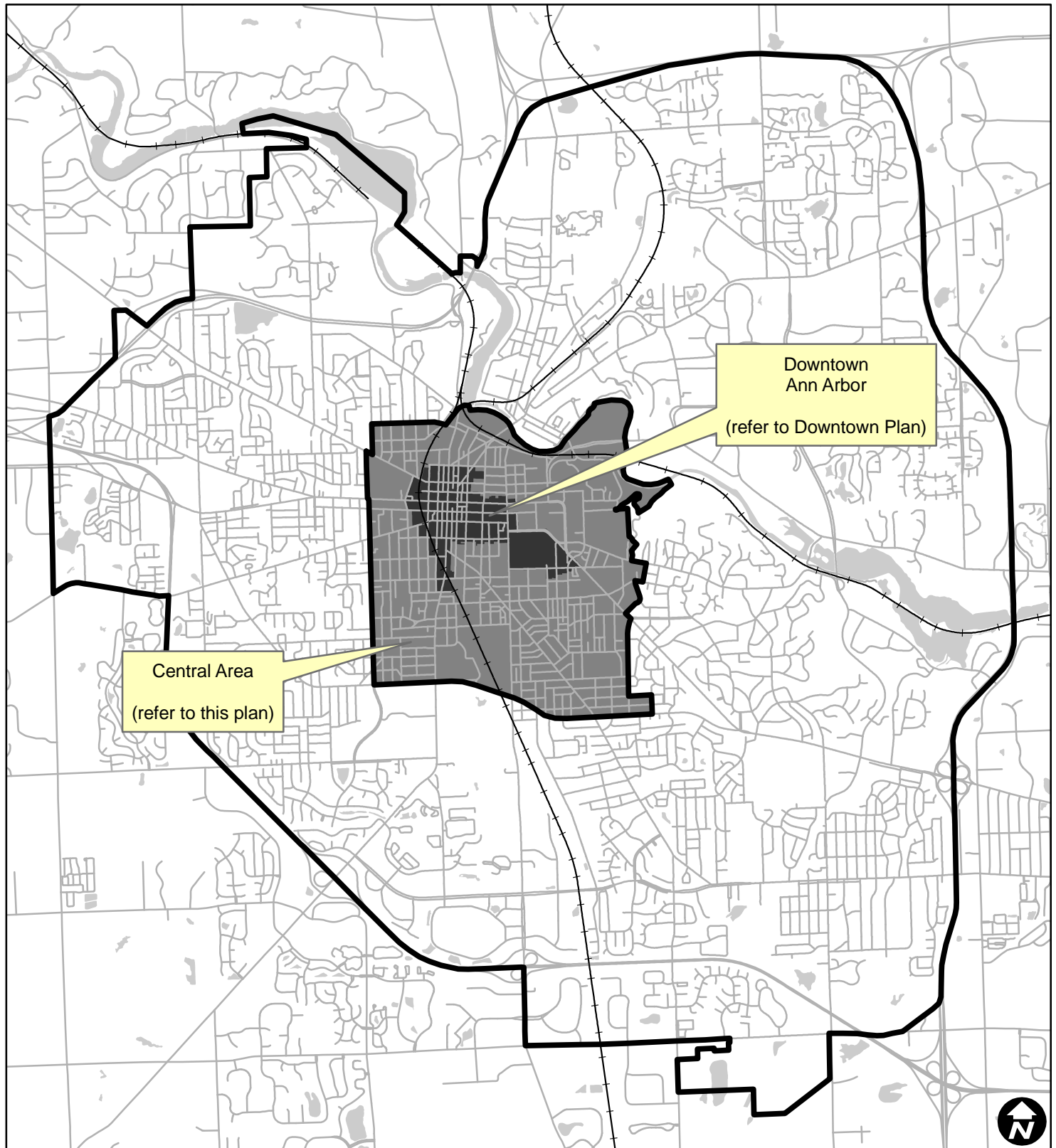
Downtown Plan - On April 6, 2009, City Council adopted a resolution stating that, "City Council adopt the Downtown Plan, as amended, as a subplan of the City Master Plan and incorporate the Future Land Use Map and Zoning Plan for the downtown into the Central Area Plan." Proposed development in downtown Ann Arbor (boundaries as defined in the Downtown Plan), should consider the recommendations of the Downtown Plan. This chapter applies to those portions of the Central Area outside of downtown.

### II. Issues

#### A. Background

Residential density problems today often result from past zoning practices. The Central Area for many years predominantly has been zoned and, in many cases, used for multiple-family dwellings. Ann Arbor's first zoning ordinance placed much of the Central Area, with the exception of the extreme northwest and southeast parts, in the "B" Residential district. This zoning district was intended for multiple family dwellings, boarding houses and lodging quarters. Housing density and building height were unlimited. Several years later, height in this zone was restricted to three stories or 35 feet, and each structure was required to have 1,000 square feet of lot area for each family. This early zoning pattern changed relatively little through the years until 1963, when the current zoning ordinance was adopted. Then, many of the "B" areas became the "R4C" multiple-family zone. Some parts of the Central Area were rezoned for lower densities such as the Old West Side. This reflected more clearly the actual densities and character in that area. This did not happen in the North Central Area. While this area remained basically a low density residential neighborhood, the zoning was changed to allow other uses. By 1950 much of this area was zoned for commercial and industrial uses, as were sites along the east side of the railroad tracks, although each of these areas continued to be used primarily for residential purposes. All other

# Central Area



land was zoned generally for higher density residential (R4C).

The 1963 ordinance increased the allowable densities in the multiple-family districts within the Central Area. At that time, the prevailing planning philosophy was that the private sector would assemble, clear and redevelop vast areas, and allowing the higher densities would encourage this. This however, did not happen, nor is it likely to happen now. Yet, many existing land use controls are still designed to encourage and accommodate this type of development.

Since its adoption, the 1963 ordinance has been amended frequently to reduce densities by increase minimum lot size and setback requirements in multiple-family districts. While these changes effected the desired results, they have created many non-conformities. In some cases, neighborhoods have been downzoned. In 1987, parts of North Burns Park were rezoned from R2B to R2A, to no longer allow group quarters such as fraternities, sororities and student cooperatives; multiple-family dwellings were never permitted in these areas.

Due to this early ordinance, there is a preponderance of multiple-family zoning allowed in areas where it may no longer be appropriate. The densities which are allowed by the zoning ordinance often conflict with the densities which actually exist on residential parcels. For example, areas which now are very low in density generally should have zoning which more clearly reflects and protects this low density character. Conversely, there area areas where high density development already exits, and new higher density development would be compatible in character and scale with present development.

## **B. Neighborhood Preservation**

The proximity of the Central Area neighborhoods to downtown commercial areas and the University may make them vulnerable to commercial and institutional expansion. In addition, the transitory nature of the residents of student neighborhoods may contribute to conflict relating to lifestyle differences between students and other residents. Given the diversity of residents, it is difficult to develop a cohesiveness among neighbors. One of the most common problems is parking, and the congestion on the streets where residents compete with student commuters, University faculty and staff for the limited supply of on-street spaces. This competition results in insufficient off-street parking for residents. This is especially true around fraternities and sororities and where single-family homes have been converted to apartments or rooming houses without adequate parking. These problems have escalated in recent years as more students move out of the central campus area and rent apartments on the periphery of the City, to in turn drive to campus for class. These parking and traffic impacts significantly detract from the quiet residential character of this area. Other University-related impacts include lifestyle differences between students and other residents. Often on their own for the first time in their lives, young students are not always aware that the effect of their noise, parties or behavior creates conflicts with other residents.

## **C. Development/Redevelopment in the Central Area**

There are many concerns associated with development or redevelopment in the Central Area, including the location of new development and its impact on surrounding land uses, impacts of higher density multiple-family uses on adjacent lower density neighborhoods, disparity of scale, and conflicting land use in or transition areas between downtown and Central Area neighborhoods. It is useful to identify those problems which uniquely influence development, and to define their parameters such that the action strategies of the plan specifically can address those details relevant to this topic.

The Central Area is composed of three very different kinds of areas. First, there are the stable

residential neighborhoods where there are virtually no commercial uses. Second are those transition areas that fall between the downtown and the neighborhoods. Here, there may be no sharp contrast or dividing line between commercial and residential, but rather a gradual transition. Houses are turned into small shops, small offices are built among groups of residences, and surface parking lots tend to be widespread. In other places, the contrasts are extreme, where one side of the street is commercial or institutional and the other residential, which can sharply divide a neighborhood.

These transition areas include an excessive amount of vacant land, parking structures and surface lots, out-of-scale buildings, run-down rental property, and busy car traffic and intersections. These areas may contain a mixture of commercial, industrial and residential uses, but they are not necessarily in the process of change from one land use to another. These situations can create a barrier around the City core that makes it less appealing for pedestrians and cyclists to come downtown. These areas are not now a positive, attractive experience, and neither buffer the residential areas from downtown nor signal the proximity of the lively commercial core.

Conflicts arise in these areas as commercial encroachment makes residences seem less stable and desirable, and the neighborhoods tend to become neglected.

This situation holds true for the University as well, where institutional uses abut multiple-family student areas. As the commercial and institutional uses push further out, residential uses are displaced and people are forced to move further from the downtown and campus areas. A concentration of people living in the downtown and in the close-in neighborhoods helps to establish a market for retail, services and entertainment, as well as extend the cycle of downtown activity into weekend and evening hours.

In various locations, houses are overshadowed by larger commercial, residential or institutional buildings that are out of scale with existing surrounding development. In addition to being aesthetically displeasing, out-of-scale construction alters the quality of living conditions in adjacent structures. Often it is not so much the use that impacts negatively on the neighborhoods, but the massing of the new buildings.

## **D. Tension Between Commercial/Residential Uses**

The transition from commercial to residential is often characterized by conflicting uses and competition for limited space. As the business community expands it either displaces residential uses, or the new use is not necessarily compatible with the old. In some areas, business uses are locating in areas that previously had been primarily residential, causing residential displacement. These areas often are viewed as a source of cheap retail and office space relative to the established commercial areas. This makes downtown less active and pushes residential uses further away from the central core. There are several areas where the predominant use is residential but the zoning is commercial. This situation is frustrating to those who live in the area, as commercial uses are allowed even though they are incongruous with the existing land use pattern.

## **E. Out-of-Scale Construction**

In various locations around Ann Arbor, houses are overshadowed by larger commercial, residential or institutional buildings that are out of scale with existing surrounding development. In addition to being aesthetically displeasing, out-of-scale construction alters the quality of living conditions in adjacent structures by blocking air and light and by covering open green space with excessive building mass.

### III. Goals in the Central Area

**Goal A - To promote sound and attractive residential neighborhoods which meet the housing needs of the current and future population, which are adequately served by urban services, infrastructure and facilities and which conserve environmental quality.**

**Objective 1: To protect, preserve and enhance the character, scale and integrity of existing housing in established residential areas, recognizing the distinctive qualities of each neighborhood.**

**Action Statements:**

- a) Establish and maintain neighborhood organizations and involve residents in the implementation of the plan.
- b) Revise current planning neighborhood boundaries to reflect residential areas for use in City planning activities. Residents' perceptions should be used in the identification of their neighborhood areas.
- c) Establish a neighborhood identification system of signage, including such identifiers as sidewalk imprint signs, street signs, entryway ground signs.

**Objective 2: To encourage the preservation of existing small neighborhood grocery stores and the re-establishment of vacated neighborhood grocery stores.**

**Action Statements:**

- a) Revise parking and zoning requirements to accommodate small scale existing stores that serve the needs of the immediate neighborhood.
- b) Draft and adopt ordinance language that specifies what a neighborhood grocery is, where they are allowed and any special conditions needed for the use.
- c) Make available community resources, such as small business low-interest loans, to support continuation of these uses.

**Objective 3: To minimize the displacement of residential uses by commercial and institutional uses.**

**Action Statement:**

- a) Identify "fragile" corridors and adopt policy against rezoning for conversion (Huron Street, Packard Road, etc.)

**Objective 4: To encourage the development of new architecture, and modifications to existing architecture, that complements the scale and character of the neighborhood.**

**Action Statements:**

- a) Develop pamphlet on design considerations for owners of single and two-family dwellings to be distributed with permit information by the Planning and Development Services Unit. Information on setbacks, massing, natural features and architectural styles could be incorporated into this handout.
- b) Work with interested neighborhood groups to develop architectural design guidelines that define and articulate the unique character of individual neighborhoods. This document could graphically illustrate characteristic forms for the improvement of private and public property while still allowing diversity and flexibility within the general character of the neighborhood.

**Objective 5: To develop density thresholds for each neighborhood that are appropriate in relation to the character, available services and infrastructure of the neighborhood, and in accordance with the norms of that neighborhood, resulting in improved quality of life for all residents.**



**Action Statement:**

- a) Create a data base for these and other targeted neighborhoods to include lot size, building size, persons per household and persons per dwelling unit.

**Objective 6: To protect and maintain the diversity of people and housing by promoting a stable balance among the various interests.**

**Action Statements:**

- a) Encourage participation of students and renters in neighborhood associations.
- b) Educate real estate agents about zoning limitations to reduce unrealistic expectations about income-producing property.

**Objective 7: To protect and expand the supply of housing to meet the needs of a variety of individual lifestyles and incomes while seeking a stable balance between owner occupied and renter occupied units.**

**Action Statement:**

- a) Encourage development of affordable housing, including new single-family infill, single room occupancy, transitional housing for the homeless, and mixed income rental.

**Objective 8: To educate the public about the placement, location and function of affordable housing in order to minimize neighborhood resistance.**

**Action Statements:**

- a) Create a video for Community Access Television and/or develop a brochure for distribution, stressing the importance of including affordable housing in the community and highlighting the minimum impact it can cause when suitable standards are applied.
- b) Utilize the Planning Commission and the Housing and Human Services Advisory Board, in conjunction with the housing analysis required for housing development, to reinforce the City Housing Policy.
- c) Establish an awards program for low, moderate and middle income housing construction and rehabilitation.

**Objective 9: To increase home ownership and rental opportunities for low income persons and provide permanent housing opportunities for homeless individuals and families.**

**Action Statements:**

- a) Provide adequate housing, including transitional housing, for homeless persons.
- b) Identify all vacant City-owned property in residential neighborhoods and determine the feasibility of disposition to non-profit organizations to create affordable housing.
- c) Support the development of cooperative housing.
- d) Encourage the identification of family housing opportunities (i.e. three bedroom homes) in Central Area neighborhoods.

**Objective 10: To facilitate public/private initiatives to develop affordable housing.**

**Action Statements:**

- a) Create zoning provisions to encourage the development of new multiple-family housing in vacant, commercial or industrial areas directly adjacent to the downtown and campus.
- b) Review and revise the existing density bonuses (premiums) to encourage new residential projects and the incorporation of residential units into mixed use developments.
- c) Consider reducing parking requirements for developments which are well-served by public transportation, or commit spaces in the City parking system to satisfy parking requirements.
- d) Implement low interest loan programs to encourage the development of downtown housing.

- e) Use City-owned parcels in the Central Area to leverage residential investment by making housing a required, or priority use in negotiating sales or transfer agreements.
- f) "Write down" land values in exchange for a commitment for affordable residential redevelopment.
- g) Encourage an increased role of non-profit groups and cooperatives in the development, management and ownership of affordable housing.
- h) Respect the character and architectural style of the neighborhood in the development of new affordable housing units.
- i) Care should be taken in the consideration of large-scale low-income developments.
- j) Coordinate with local lenders under the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) to promote the development of affordable housing.

**Objective 11: To improve the appearance of buildings and grounds to enhance the neighborhoods, encouraging property maintenance and improvement to promote pride in the community.**

**Action Statements:**

- a) Institute a program to identify dilapidated buildings that should be targeted for enforcement, assistance, receivership or referrals to the Community Services Area.
- b) Improve coordination with existing outreach program to senior citizens to provide volunteer assistance in maintenance of their homes and yards.
- c) Initiate clean-up/fix-up/paint-up week (spring and fall), special trash pick-up in student rental neighborhoods during spring and summer move-out weeks, and a City-wide Curb Flea Market day.
- d) Identify areas with trash and front yard parking problems and target enforcement, beginning with letters to property owners and residents and following up with ticketing, then with towing or trash removal by the City with costs added to the property owner's tax bill.
- e) Target residential areas along major streets (e.g. Huron, State) for pilot improvement program to increase livability, including landscape, facade, and lawn extension improvements, and identify incentives for property owner and City participation.
- f) Develop design guidelines for improving existing buildings or facades that are not in keeping with the character of the neighborhood. Box apartment buildings can be transformed with the creative use of entry canopies, decorative lighting, fencing and landscaping, and in some cases roof lines can be altered and balconies added to improve the building's compatibility with its surroundings.
- g) Develop regulations which address the exterior appearance of dwellings such as: revised standards for the placement of trash dumpsters, receptacles and recycling containers, outdoor storage, and enforcement of resurfacing or drainage improvements to driveways and parking areas as part of housing inspections.

**Objective 12: To provide an efficient and consistent building, housing and zoning code compliance program that facilitates housing improvements rather than impedes them.**

**Action Statements:**

- a) Evaluate housing regulations to determine if the stricter standards applied to group housing can be relaxed without risking safety.
- b) Establish a periodic administrative review of housing inspections to encourage uniformity in inspections.
- c) Develop a procedure to notify rental property owners prior to making changes to the housing or building codes to provide an opportunity for input on the changes.

**Objective 13: To ensure that new infill development is consistent with the scale and character of existing neighborhoods, both commercial and residential.**

**Action Statements:**

- a) Identify sites where the compilation of small parcels for larger developments is appropriate, otherwise, the combining of smaller parcels in subdivided residential areas is considered inappropriate.
- b) Draft and adopt guidelines for infill development (e.g. single structure on a lot, facing public street, site coverage etc.). These guidelines may vary from neighborhood to neighborhood.

**Objective 14: To protect the safety and security of residents and property.****Action Statements:**

- a) Conduct inventory to determine lighting-deficient areas and develop a program for improvement.
- b) Use police crime data to identify problem areas and target enforcement, for example increasing patrols of campus neighborhoods during University breaks, or increasing patrol of alleys.
- c) Shift to a community-oriented policing approach in Central Area neighborhoods, with those closest to commercial and campus areas being the first priority.
- d) Publicize and expand the Neighborhood Watch program.
- e) Conduct home and personal safety seminars, and other educational programs. To reach student residents, this will require coordination with The University of Michigan campus police.
- f) Amend the Housing Code to require multiple-family and group housing to have a secured entry system, phased in over 2 to 5 years (self locking front doors).
- g) Explore cooperative fencing of back yard areas in Central Area neighborhoods to reduce criminal access to the rear of buildings.

**Objective 15: To protect and improve the quality of neighborhoods by encouraging public institutions such as the University, City, Schools and County to consider the character and scale of neighborhoods in their expansion and development plans.****Action Statements:**

- a) Develop agreements with the above institutions that specify protocol for informing the City about new development plans.
- b) Encourage the University, City, Schools and County to conform to City standards, policies and ordinances in new construction.

**Objective 16: To encourage amicable coexistence within neighborhoods between students and other residents of the community, while maintaining the diversity of all residents and their different lifestyles.****Action Statements:**

- a) Encourage The University of Michigan to increase its mediating role in off-campus housing beyond tenant/landlord disputes.
- b) Strengthen neighborhood identity through signage, events in local parks, or other means.
- c) Encourage the establishment of neighborhood associations and provide City support in problem-solving.
- d) Encourage student/property owner communication by encouraging student participation in neighborhood associations and resident participation on group housing boards.

**Objective 17: To encourage sound management in order to lower vacancy rates.****Action Statements:**

- a) Coordinate with merchant and property owner groups to improve Central area living.
- b) Provide assistance to neighborhood groups wishing to compile property information for



potential renters or buyers.

**Goal B: To encourage sensitive, attractive, and innovative development and renovation in downtown Ann Arbor and in adjacent neighborhoods.**

**Objective 1: To pay special attention to the interface zones between downtown Ann Arbor and Central Area residential neighborhoods; and to insure that projects in these areas both contribute to downtown liveliness and help buffer established neighborhoods from further erosion.**

**Objective 2: To promote compatible development of sites now vacant, underutilized or uninviting, wherever this would help achieve the plan's overall goals.**

**Action Statements:**

- a) Create detailed urban area design plans for those areas identified as having development potential in the near future (an example of a complete plan is the Library Block; examples of current studies include the City Garage sites).
- b) Create concept plans for possible future redevelopment of existing built up sites such as Fingerle Lumber and the Allen Creek Drain, so that if the existing uses vacate premises, new development can be guided by the City.
- c) Establish development guidelines for all City-owned parcels in the interface zones, including interface parking lots, and identify conditions necessary to develop an RFP.
- d) Encourage the long-term conversion of surface parking lots to uses that maintain or improve the physical urban environment, and develop criteria that support the interim or short-term use of parking lots as seasonal or annual public activity areas.

**Objective 3: To identify appropriate locations for compatible and well-designed multiple-family residential development, or mixed use development, particularly near campus and downtown.**

**Action Statements:**

- a) Identify priority sites for multiple-family or mixed use development in the interface areas of the downtown and Central Campus (the "interface" areas of the Downtown Plan) such as the City Garage sites, and various surface parking lots along the Allen Creek valley at the west end of downtown.
- b) Develop site-specific density plans.

**Objective 4: To protect housing stock from demolition or conversion to business use, and to retain the residential character of established, sometimes fragile, neighborhoods adjacent to commercial or institutional uses.**

**Action Statements:**

- a) Review the landscape ordinance relating to conflicting use buffers to determine if the existing regulations function as intended, and make recommendations to improve as needed.
- b) Draft and adopt an ordinance for an overlay zone that addresses changes of intensity of use or scale to reduce tensions between sometimes conflicting uses. The ordinance should address items that would reduce disparities of scale such as height limits, open space, massing, setbacks, and percentage of development that should be used residentially. Identify sites where housing should be required as a percentage of the development, and create regulations to apply to these properties. Among other things, the regulations should differentiate between existing structures and new construction, as well as the development of alternatives whereby funds could be placed in a housing trust fund in place of housing development.

**Objective 5: To encourage housing and neighborhood-oriented businesses in the downtown interface area zones that will improve quality of life in the nearby neighborhoods.**

**Action Statements:**

- a) Identify areas where new neighborhood commercial uses are desirable to service new and existing housing developments, and encourage the success of the business by locating them in areas that are accessible to pedestrians, as well as auto travelers.
- b) To encourage continued use of existing businesses, provide short-term, on-street parking or parking waivers for businesses in existing buildings where the sites are too small to provide adequate parking.
- c) Encourage multiple-family and mixed use housing development in the downtown interface area by rezoning select sites and by using such incentives as outlined in the housing actions.
- d) Develop design guidelines for the Allen Creek Floodway that complement those established for the downtown design guidelines.

**Objective 6: To create inviting streetscape corridors and improve the links between commercial and residential areas, encouraging access between the nearby neighborhoods and downtown.**

**Action Statements:**

- a) Identify and fund pedestrian and bike "collector" routes between the Central Area, the Downtown Business District and the University, and create a corridor design plan. The plan should address public and private improvements such as pedestrian-friendly lighting, street tree location, limited driveways, banners, signs, flower planting areas, etc.
- b) Evaluate the feasibility of, and prepare a plan for, a bikeway/pedestrian walkway to link downtown and neighborhoods along the existing railroad right-of-way.

**Objective 7: To encourage the construction of buildings whose scale and detailing is appropriate to their surroundings.**

**Action Statements:**

- a) Review and revise zoning regulations for interface areas (C1A/R, C2B, C2B/R) to be consistent with the Downtown Plan recommendations.
- b) Review and revise the PUD regulations to better achieve development of appropriate scale and character, and to prevent the circumvention of zoning ordinance standards merely for convenience.
- c) Publicize and encourage the use of the existing Downtown Design Guidelines.

**Objective 8: To soften the contrast of scale where inappropriate disparities now exist, such as height and massing and the barren expanse of parking lots.**

**Action Statements:**

- a) Develop and enforce an ordinance that brings nonconforming parking lots into conformance through site plan review.
- b) Identify jarring transitions in scale and concentrate City tree plantings and landscaping in these interface zones.
- c) Create incentives for private property owners to renovate facades to break up large, blank walls, particularly on major pedestrian corridors.
- d) Incorporate murals and other art on blank walls to lessen the sterile impact and break up the monotonous expanse of building.

**Objective 9: To ensure that the pedestrian environment is protected and enhanced.**

**Action Statements:**

- a) Coordinate DDA activities with the Non-Motorized Plan (2007) and with the overall goals of this chapter.
- b) Utilize DDA and/or private sector funds to create a low interest loan pool or other financial incentives for projects that will improve the pedestrian environment and street life.

**Objective 10: To coordinate improved interfaces with institutional uses and discourage erosion of adjacent neighborhoods.****Action Statement:**

- a) Establish specific mechanisms whereby the City and County can consider jointly with The University of Michigan those planning decisions affecting both the City and the University.

**Objective 11: To support low intensity industrial and warehousing uses while allowing for innovative future uses.****Action Statements:**

- a) Examples of adaptive reuse include artist's studios, artist live/work space, condominiums, or any use that will promote continued vitality of the area.
- b) Explore an Art/Craftperson zoning district designation to allow living areas and work/studio space.

**Objective 12: To improve visual attractiveness and buffering around the industrial/railroad corridor.****Action Statements:**

- a) Create an ordinance to require screening of outdoor storage areas from street and adjacent residences.
- b) Improve the aesthetics of the Ann Arbor Railroad by removing trash from the right-of-way, painting overpasses on regular basis, and keeping brush and bushes trimmed.
- c) Encourage establishment of industrial area "neighborhood groups".

## **IV. Historic Preservation Goals of the Central Area**

*Goal A - To encourage the preservation, restoration or rehabilitation of historically and culturally significant properties, as well as contributing or complimentary structures, streetscapes, groups of buildings and neighborhoods. To preserve the historic character of Ann Arbor's Central Area. To enforce existing historic district ordinances through City staff, the Historic District Commission and neighborhood monitoring programs. To designate historic buildings to encourage their preservation.*

**Objective 1: To encourage preservation, restoration or rehabilitation while allowing for technological advances in building materials and techniques that may encourage preservation by making it more affordable without forsaking historical integrity.****Action Statements**

- a) Develop building code amendments to authorize building officials to waive regulations or to consider alternative ways for historic buildings to comply with code requirements. Examples of code items to consider include sprinkler systems, fire separation, etc.
- b) Review and recommend any amendments to the building regulations necessary to preserve the architectural and historical integrity and authenticity of structures.
- c) Develop a list of alternative building materials and techniques, and a set of criteria for their use, that provides the HDC with some discretion in their decision making, and reduces the cost of preservation.

- d) Monitor the reasonableness/efficacy of historic district regulations, and the consistency of the preservation standards for the individual districts. Recommend revisions where necessary.
- e) Develop specifications and design guidelines for making historic buildings comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act provisions.

**Objective 2: To increase public awareness and understanding of the designation and project approval processes.**

**Action Statements:**

- a) Develop an informational video with CTN reviewing the importance of preservation and outlining the process for using the system.
- b) Create handbooks that walk the public through the steps needed to accomplish property designation or project approval, with copies kept on file in the Planning and Development Services Unit, as well as the Public Library.
- c) Conduct a follow-up survey of those who have gone through the Historic District Commission approval process to get suggestions for improvements, and provide case studies of persons who have successfully completed the process.
- d) Coordinate efforts between the Historic District Commission and the Board of Realtors to advise and educate the public about historic properties.
- e) Provide Realtors with information to give to purchasers about what it means to own a building in an historic district.
- f) Establish real estate listing service for historic properties or work with the Board of Realtors to determine the feasibility of amending the Multi list book to include a category for historic properties or properties located in historic districts.

**Objective 3: To educate the public and make them aware of the value of the built environment to foster an appreciation of our heritage, and to support proposals and programs concerned with historic preservation.**

**Action Statements:**

- a) Coordinate educational efforts of historical organizations and commissions with volunteer support.
- b) Develop a comprehensive, community historic program and integrate it into the school curriculum, including coloring book, games, tours, etc.
- c) Establish and publicize a regular walking tour program which is made available to residents, conventions and tourists, including guided tours and self-guided tours with written and possibly audio material.
- d) Publicize the Kempf House Center for Local History as the central distribution system, or clearing house, for information.
- e) Develop and install an historical street exhibit program in the downtown.
- f) Use the media to publicize important preservation projects, both large and small.
- g) Coordinate the development of a private non-profit preservation organization to facilitate public support for preservation.
- h) Develop site design standards that encourage creative design while maintaining sensitivity for existing neighborhood character.

**Objective 4: To encourage governmental entities that are exempt from historic preservation regulations and ordinances to actively support historic preservation.**

**Action Statements:**

- a) In coordination with the University, schools, County and other exempt entities, develop protocol for compliance with historic preservation regulations addressing house moving, demolitions, removing additions and new construction.
- b) Develop notification procedures so that the City is informed of projects undertaken by exempt entities.

- c) Support State regulations that will require exempt entities to be subject to local historic preservation ordinances.

**Objective 5: Where new buildings are desirable, the character of historic buildings, neighborhoods and streetscapes should be respectfully considered so that new buildings will complement the historic, architectural and environmental character of the neighborhood.**

**Action Statements:**

- a) Develop site design techniques that encourage creative design while maintaining sensitivity for existing neighborhood character.
- b) Apply the recommendations of the Downtown Plan and the Downtown Design Guidelines when considering plans for new development in the downtown area.
- c) Explore the use of density bonus incentives (premiums) to encourage conformance with architectural design and site planning guidelines. Adjust the Old West Side new construction standards such that they can be applied to new construction in any residential district.

**Objective 6: To encourage the economic feasibility of preservation, restoration or rehabilitation of historic structures so that they can be fully utilized, especially for housing.**

**Action Statements**

- a) Seek local incentives for restoration of buildings that are historically qualified. This could include: 1) a grant or low interest loan program involving the City, the DDA, preservation groups and local commercial lenders (as required by the Community Reinvestment Act) for the rehabilitation of historic properties, particularly those providing affordable housing opportunities; 2) an incentive plan for property owners who could not preserve an historic property without facing economic hardship. This could include loans or grants, building and safety code modifications to reduce the cost, changes in zoning regulations or a relaxation of other ordinance provisions.
- b) Establish a relationship with agencies that provide home repairs for senior citizens (Neighborhood Senior Services) and encourage them to incorporate historic preservation elements into their guidelines.

**Objective 7: To encourage the adaptive reuse of wholly or partially vacant historically significant buildings.**

**Action Statements**

- a) Encourage the use of the PUD and Planned Project alternatives to provide flexibility in redevelopments.
- b) Study and make recommendations on building code amendments needed to allow safe, cost-effective creation of loft housing.

## **V. Additional Actions**

**Action A - Where surface parking lots must remain, improve the aesthetics for parking and driveway areas using low walls, trees, planter perimeters and other human scale features, and create safe connecting pedestrian corridors through and around the parking lots.**

The areas immediately outside of the commercial downtown, which used to contain businesses or residences, now are filled with surface parking lots. This barren expanse of parking lot is uninviting and perceived as unsafe. Often these lots are the first thing encountered when one approaches the central business district for shopping or entertainment. The whole experience of coming downtown should be positive, from the approach via car, to parking, to destination. Well-lit and aesthetically pleasing lots are important elements of the overall downtown experience.



**Action B - Develop zoning or a zoning overlay that allows for the continuance of industrial or warehousing activities in M1 (Limited Industrial) districts, such as are located in the railroad corridor, but that also allows compatible reuse of buildings in the event that present activity ceases and no suitable limited industrial/warehouse use takes its place. Examples of adaptive reuse include artist's studios, artist live/work space, residential units, or any use that will promote continued vitality of the area.**

The railroad/industrial corridor, west of downtown and running parallel to the Allen Creek Drain, cuts a north-south swath across the Central Area, effectively separating the downtown commercial areas from west and near north side neighborhoods. The corridor contains many industrial/warehousing buildings, some vacant, some appropriately used for their intended purpose. Historically, the railroad corridor has housed the City's industrial and warehousing uses, but as the railroad becomes less important to industry, these uses no longer are tied to this location. Today, while this area still is home to many industrial businesses, many are moving to industrial parks or otherwise to the outskirts of the City, leaving vacant buildings. Rather than encouraging blight and allowing structures to remain vacant in the hope that another industry will move in, it is recommended that the adaptive reuse of these buildings be encouraged, sometimes with uses that might not be considered compatible with industry. It should be noted that few if any of the existing industries are "smokestack" industries and should not negatively affect the suggested new uses. In fact, the conversion of industrial buildings and warehouses have been completed in many other cities with a great deal of success.

**Action C - Analyze zoning nonconformities related to area, height and placement regulations for Central Area neighborhoods and determine if amendments are needed to make the regulations more consistent with established development patterns.**

Over the years, the zoning code has been changed to make multiple-family residential regulations more restrictive. As the code has been changed, more and more structures have been rendered nonconforming. Entire neighborhoods that were subdivided at the turn of the century are nonconforming due to things such as inadequate lot width or density limits which exceed the current ordinance standards. Problem areas must be identified and targeted for amendments when the zoning code is not consistent with the development pattern, assuming the development pattern is considered to be appropriate or not contributing to diminished health, safety or welfare of the citizens.

**Action D - Draft and adopt a new Residential-Office (R-O) district to address those areas which are primarily zoned for office or commercial, but contain primarily residential structures located in existing neighborhoods. The purpose is to preserve the existing housing stock and to limit conversion of residential structures to non-residential uses that would have a negative impact on the neighborhood or lead to the demolition of residential structures.**

The proposed Residential-Office (R-O) district is designed for those areas which currently are zoned office or commercial, but which consist largely of older houses converted for use as apartments and small offices. Commercial infill development may also have occurred in these neighborhoods. The purpose of the (R-O) zoning district is to preserve the residential character or streetscape by preventing construction of larger commercial buildings; support continuing residential use; and discourage higher intensity commercial uses which would have a negative impact on surrounding residences. It would be difficult, due to the higher percentage of existing commercial and office uses in the neighborhoods, to rezone these areas exclusively for residential uses. The new zoning would preclude the demolition of residential structures for new commercial or office uses and would preserve housing use, while allowing some low intensity office uses. The new R-O district would contain such standards as a requirement that some portion of the structure be used for residential purposes, that adjacent structures not be demolished to provide parking for a proposed use, that parking be in the backyard and properly screened from view, that only uses with low parking needs be considered, and other standards as needed to protect the integrity of the neighborhood. The following areas currently are

zoned for office or commercial use, and the zoning should be changed to the new Residential-Office district to preserve residential use:

1. West side of Ingalls between Ann and Lawrence
2. Willard/Church

**Action E - Amend the zoning ordinance and map to clearly identify areas to be maintained or encouraged as housing.**

**a. Identify areas where higher density residential zoning is in place, but lower density uses prevail.**

**b. Identify areas where commercial zoning is in place, but which remains primarily residential, and rezone these sites for residential use to preserve housing stock.**

**c. Establish appropriate densities based on neighborhood characteristics and homes and rezone these sites for lower density residential use.**

Occurring throughout the Central Area are areas where the use is different than the way it is zoned. Several of these areas have been identified and recommendations offered to bring the zoning into conformity with the use, where there has been a clear priority to maintain the residential use.

The following areas should be rezoned for lower density residential use:

1. Portions of the Old West Side
2. Hoover/Davis
3. Dewey/Packard/Brookwood
4. Prospect/Wells
5. Krause/Third Street

The following areas should be rezoned from office or commercial to residential:

6. Felch/North Main
7. Southwest corner of William and First Street
8. Southeast corner of William and Second Street
9. Northeast corner of William and Fourth Street
10. Southeast corner of Main and Hoover
11. West side of Ashley between Mosley and Madison, not including the corner lots
12. State/Packard/Arch
13. West side of Greene between Hill and Davis

**Action F - Reinforce residential neighborhoods in the area south and west of Central Campus by developing new zoning definitions and standards that support organized group housing opportunities. Examples of ordinance revisions include amendments to reduce nonconformities, elimination of special exception use approvals and minimum house size in some areas. Additional buffer areas between single-family and student areas may be needed. Off-street parking requirements and density limitations, however, should not be reduced in these areas.**

New development standards for student areas are necessary for a number of reasons. Regulations for group housing, in particular, are too restrictive. For example, fraternities, sororities and cooperatives are not allowed by right in any zoning district; special exception uses are always required. Cooperatives are challenged by existing regulations relating to house size and cooking ability. Kitchen privileges might be considered, under certain conditions, for cooperatives or rooming houses with less square footage than currently required by the ordinance. It is better to utilize existing structures when possible, rather than encouraging the expansion, when there are many houses appropriate for cooperative living which do not meet the minimum house size requirements. Adjacent neighborhoods feel pressure from group housing residents. While houses are often large enough to accommodate more occupants, lot size and parking requirements often prohibit higher occupancy.

**Action G - Develop a down payment/security deposit program for low income families.**

Due to the high cost of housing in Ann Arbor, and the increasing number of lower paid service workers who are employed in the City, home ownership is becoming increasingly cost-prohibitive for lower income families. Many families also find it difficult to come up with a security deposit to get into an apartment, although they could afford the monthly rent. To achieve the goal of providing housing for persons of all income levels in the City, assistance should be provided.

**Action H - Provide information about City services and regulations (e.g. trash pick-up, recycling, front yard parking, crime reporting, noisy parties, etc.) at the beginning of each academic year and to all newcomers to the City through mailings, leaflets, advertisements or a column in local publications.**

Ann Arbor has an unusually high transient population, resulting in many newcomers to the community who are not aware of the many City services available. Provision of such information would make new citizens and students feel welcome, as well as provide specific information regarding services. A packet of helpful information or a booklet could be developed for distribution.

**Action I - Update the traffic signal system to improve traffic flow on arterial streets.**

**Action J - Develop programs which encourage employers to institute flexible working hours and provide incentives to use transit, promote the use of park and ride lots at the perimeter of the City, encourage carpooling and vanpooling, and improve transit service to provide more frequent buses and more direct routes consistent with the transportation demand management strategies described in the city's Transportation Plan (2009).**

**Action K - Develop a revised residential permit parking program which addresses the specific needs of the downtown and Central Area neighborhoods.**

**Action L - Investigate the possibility of using portions of the Ann Arbor Railroad and Conrail rights-of-way to provide pedestrian/bicycle paths to the Huron River park system.**

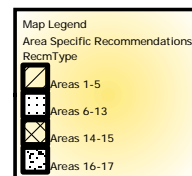
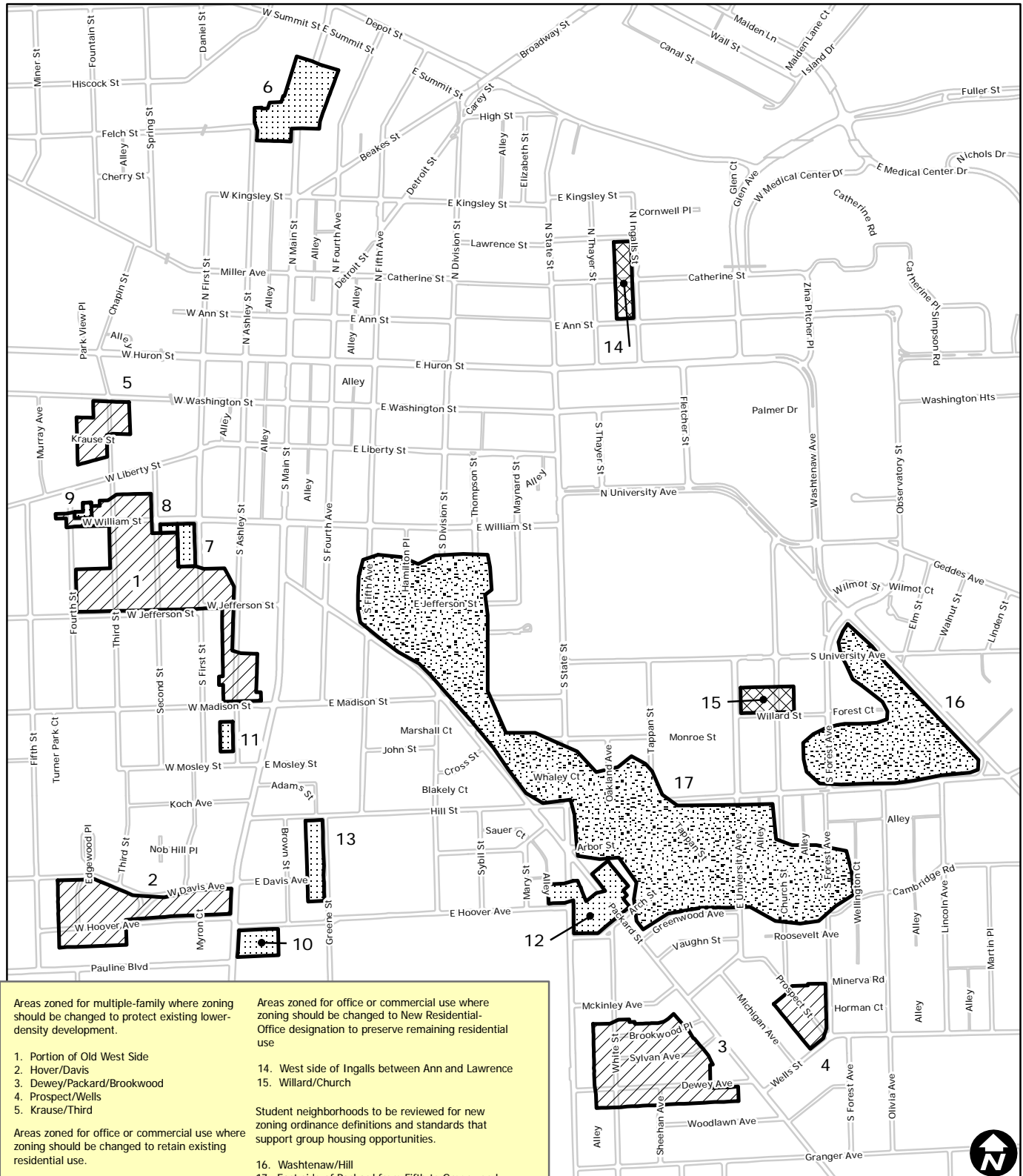
**Action M - Allow for uses such as temporary markets or commercial landscaping displays on vacant land in the downtown to provide financial alternatives to the development of rental parking.**

**Action N - Review the "greenway" corridor plan from the 1970's to determine if any of the recommendations for linking west side parks, schools and ravines along old drainage ways are feasible.**

**Action O - Explore the redevelopment of city-owned parcels for park/open space use and the implications of reimbursing older City departments for those parcel lots to anchor the Allen Creek Greenway.**

**Action P - Investigate the possibility of using portions of the Ann Arbor Railroad and Conrail rights-of-way to provide pedestrian/bicycle paths to the Huron River Park System.**

# Housing and Neighborhood Area-Specific Recommendations



0 500 1,000 2,000 Feet

Copyright 2009 City of Ann Arbor, Michigan

No part of this product shall be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, for any purpose, without prior written permission from the City of Ann Arbor.

This map complies with National Map Accuracy Standards for mapping at 1 inch = 100 Feet. The City of Ann Arbor and its mapping contractors assume no legal representation for the content and/or inappropriate use of information on this map.

Maps available online:  
<http://gisweb.ewashtenaw.org/website/mapwashtenaw/>