

Central Area Plan and R4C Zoning Districts- Issues and Conflicts *(updated: 12-01-09)*

I. A Preliminary list of issues with the R4C zoning districts in the Central Area

1. The high numbers of non-conforming lots, landowners need to combine lots to attain land area to build multiple-family structures.
2. Maximum 6 bedrooms per unit and only 1.5 parking spaces required per unit.
3. Need creative ways to address parking- not more parking, but different.
4. Not a uniform district (student districts, owner-occupied, transition areas) and some areas have different levels of protection (For example, Old Fourth Ward, Washtenaw Hill Historic Districts)
5. There are many neighborhood specific issues. One zoning district does not necessarily 'fit' all.
6. Aging housing stock and no room to modernize or grow with most lots in a district. Lot sizes are too small (nonconforming) and, as a result, most student rentals cannot make additions.
7. Different levels of approval may be necessary for modifying nonconforming structures: Housing Board of Appeals, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Building Board of Appeals.
8. Building additions to multiple-family structures trigger the need for a site plan for the whole site. Chapter 57 of City Code requires site plans for the addition to structures other than single or two-family. When a site plan is submitted, it requires the entire parcel to comply with existing city codes, such as landscaping, storm water detention, and parking.
9. Houses built as single-family are now often used as student rentals. These houses are often not equipped to handle preferences and demands of modern students. Today's students often want different living arrangements and amenities such as high tech digital connections, common study areas, exercise rooms, covered bike parking, etc.
10. Multiple-unit buildings cannot switch to group housing or add units without site planning and bringing the entire site into compliance. As a result, to gain income, landlords would rather add bedrooms then add units to avoid the time and expense required for site planning.
11. If a parcel is nonconforming because of the total lot area, once the number of units in a structure is reduced, it can never be increased.

12. Neighborhood residents did not anticipate large-scale teardowns and replacements of infill projects. These types of projects often result in out of scale construction because developers need to combine lots in order to make the project cost-effective.
13. The market place had made many of these properties more lucrative to buy as student rentals than for single-family. As the student population at U of M increased, no new dormitories were being built and there was a growing need for increased student housing.
14. Since the Central Area Plan was written, the distance of student rentals from campus has increased, the student wave has moved south into previously owner-occupied areas.
15. Students prefer living off-campus in houses and not large apartment complexes. Better services available in close proximity to housing may discourage students from bringing cars.
16. Economics determine where students live.
17. Cultural 'richness' in neighborhoods where populations of students, homeowners, renters mix, this is not available in other University areas, like North Campus.
18. Enforcement of over-occupancy, illegal parking and minimal standards of living with these districts. Lack of enforcement makes it difficult for all residents.
19. No control over demolition of structures not located in Historic Districts.