

Downtown Area Citizens Advisory Council Comments to the DDA—May 3, 2011

The Downtown Area CAC met at my home a day after the rescheduled meeting of the DDA on Monday, May 2. This was an unusual location. Apparently, the City has been forced by construction of the Justice Building and the reconfiguring of the City Hall to limit evening meetings of boards and commissions above the second floor of City Hall. The building is locked after 5:30 and one needs a key to enter. The scheduling of future meetings of all groups in City Hall has to be reorganized. I have spoken to 1st Ward Council Member Sandi Smith about this problem and she is looking into ways of solving it.

At our meeting, members recommitted our group to supporting DDA and AATA efforts to combine improvements in Transportation and Area Planning in the downtown. Our members will be attending the AATA “Smart Growth” Transit Master Plan public meeting that will be held at the Ann Arbor District Library Multipurpose Room on May 11.

In the downtown, we intend to strongly support broad planning for the area that includes the Library, the top of the underground parking structure, the Blake Transit Center, and the old YMCA site. The members attending our May meeting engaged in an in-depth discussion of the various possibilities for the Library Lot location itself. Those present were unanimous in agreeing that the Library Lot site should be more than a park. Instead, they unanimously supported the idea of a mixed-use development on the Library site that might include office, residential, and retail as well as a plaza--as green as possible-- that connected pedestrians to the existing Liberty Plaza Park on Liberty and Division. That new plaza space should be available, and connected to the future Library Lane site, as a location for future large programmed downtown gatherings. Whatever is approved on the Library Lot site should significantly add to the City’s tax base as well as the ongoing vitality of the downtown area.

CAC members were also made aware of the success of the Downtown Ann Arbor Historical Street Exhibit Program in bringing 400 Skyline High School students to the downtown on the mornings of May 2 and May 3. Ten volunteer guides joined Skyline High School Junior Guides in leading students on ten different guided tours of the downtown historic exhibits. We take pride in the fact that this Exhibit Program had its start among CAC members over twenty years ago.

Our meeting ended with a reminder—also extended to all members and staff of the DDA-- to attend the Annual Downtown Potluck Party which will be held at 120 and 126 North Division on Thursday, June 9, starting at 6:30 p.m.