

Downtown Area Citizens Advisory Council Meeting Minutes (1-31-12) and Comments to the DDA (2-1-12)

Last night, Eleanor Linn and Marc Gerstein, who live on Forest Court just south of the new 601 Forest project, joined us-- along with leaders from the North Burns Park Neighborhood Association. They filled us in on the attempt of the owners of the apartment building at 1320 S. University to have their D2 zoning changed to D1. Instead of a six-story building permitted in D2, they want to build a 15 story building on their site. Their proposal comes before the Planning Commission next Tuesday. The CAC will oppose it. D2 zoning is there to protect neighborhoods.

The Downtown Area CAC has always been committed to the careful planning of Downtown as well as more downtown housing. Our members were a part of the process of shaping the first Downtown Plan of 1988 as well as the most recent one adopted in 2010, the Central Area Plan of 1992, the DDA Development Plan of 2003 and most recently the Calthorpe Study, as well as the A2D2 Zoning process and Downtown Design Guidelines and Design Guidelines Review Board. These are all a product of community planning. The CAC also strongly supports the DDA's construction of the Library Lot underground parking as a part of a comprehensive parking/transportation management plan for the future of downtown. We also strongly support the DDA's planning /implementation process that builds on all city plans to collect a community framework for how five downtown City properties can be reused or developed for a higher/better purpose to meet community goals—the “Connecting William St.” and Outreach efforts.

The CAC is generally pleased with the results and progress of city planning—whether its 601 Forest, Zaragon I and 2, Varsity and, of course, 618 S. Main. Last Thursday we all celebrated the groundbreaking at Village Green's “City Apartments” after many years of effort. We intend to work to make downtown planning even better.

Future expectations for the downtown should always be built on adopted City plans and policies. That's why the Downtown Area CAC, along with others, will join in strongly opposing the proposal to change 1320 from D2 to D1. 618 S. Main is D2, almost all of the Kerrytown area is also D2. If we allow this S. U. change to be approved by the Planning Commission and the City Council, it would totally undermine our expectations for downtown development following carefully adopted city plans.

Last night, the CAC also heard and discussed important presentations on two other important areas of community planning. CAC member, Marsha Chamberlin—also the head of the Public Arts Committee-- filled us in on plans for developing a 3-5 year “Master Plan” for public art-- not just in the downtown, but throughout the City of Ann Arbor. Susan Pollay also presented us with a comprehensive analysis of the importance of transportation in planning and developing the area of the downtown, the City, the County and eventually the entire area of southeast Michigan.

The Downtown Area CAC position is this: Future community planning in art and transportation—Yes. Attempts to undermine our downtown development planning efforts with proposals like changing the D-2 zoning of 1320 South University—No.