

Downtown Area Citizens Advisory Council Meeting Minutes June 5, 2012 and
Comments to the DDA June 6, 2012

Again, I want to invite all members of the DDA to our Annual Downtown Potluck Party on Thursday, June 7—Don't miss it. It's lots of fun.

The CAC discussed a wide range of items last night—including N. Main and Fuller Road—outside the downtown, but very important for its future. I will deal with two others we discussed, one inside and one outside the downtown and the DDA area.

We want to congratulate the DDA's Partnership Committee on the very careful way in which they have drafted a "DDA Policy Regarding Grant Requests for Brownfield or other State of Michigan Programs Requiring a Local Match." We think it's guidelines are balanced and well designed and move us in the direction of a consistent policy that will be fair to all future applicants and actually stimulate other private tax-generating new developments in the downtown. We make no secret of our support for the residential project at 618 North Main which we feel is an excellent first application of this new DDA Brownfield Grant policy. The fact that a portion of the grant will help finance the construction of street improvements from Mosely to Ashley Mews will truly assist 618 N. Main in being a "Gateway" project for the Downtown.

Downtown, we are also pleased with the progress of the DDA initiated "Connecting William Street" Study Group. We are looking forward to the public participation.

This is what we should be doing in the downtown—within the new A2D2 Downtown zoning. But in the near-downtown neighborhood something else is happening that we believe also strengthens the downtown and the entire Ann Arbor community.

Two weeks ago, fourteen representatives from the eight near-downtown residential associations met to evaluate the R4C/R2A Zoning District Study Advisory Committee Recommendations Report of May 4, 2012. That was the same group that met with the Mayor and every member of City Council to support the creation of a Design Guidelines Task Force that led to the unanimous decision by the Planning Commission and City Council to adopt a set of Downtown Design Guidelines and to create a Design Review Board for development proposals in the Downtown area. We are proud of the role that all of us played in creating Ann Arbor's downtown design review process. It's working!

This week, members of the "Near Downtown Neighborhood Group" wrote the Mayor, City Council and the Planning Commission asking them to support the Report Recommendations of the R4C/R2A Zoning District Study Advisory Committee. We also urged them to move forward as quickly as possible to adopt ordinance changes to support those recommendations.

We were pleased that the R4C/R2A Advisory meetings made very clear that the Ann Arbor community wants to maintain the scale and character of near downtown, one-house, one-lot Central Area neighborhoods. The Advisory Report recognized that

“Overwhelming public feedback indicated a strong desire to keep the existing streetscape and development pattern of R2A and R4C neighborhoods, including size and massing of existing structures.”

Of particular importance to us was the recommendation for “a limit on lot combinations within the R4C District . . . in order to prevent the construction of large buildings that could disrupt the existing scale of the streetscapes.” With the limit on lot combination, the entire community will be assured that a project like City Place will never come before City Council again for by-right approval.

We believe it is essential that the Planning Commission and City Council move forward with the adoption of these R4C Committee recommendations and put them into ordinance changes as swiftly as possible.