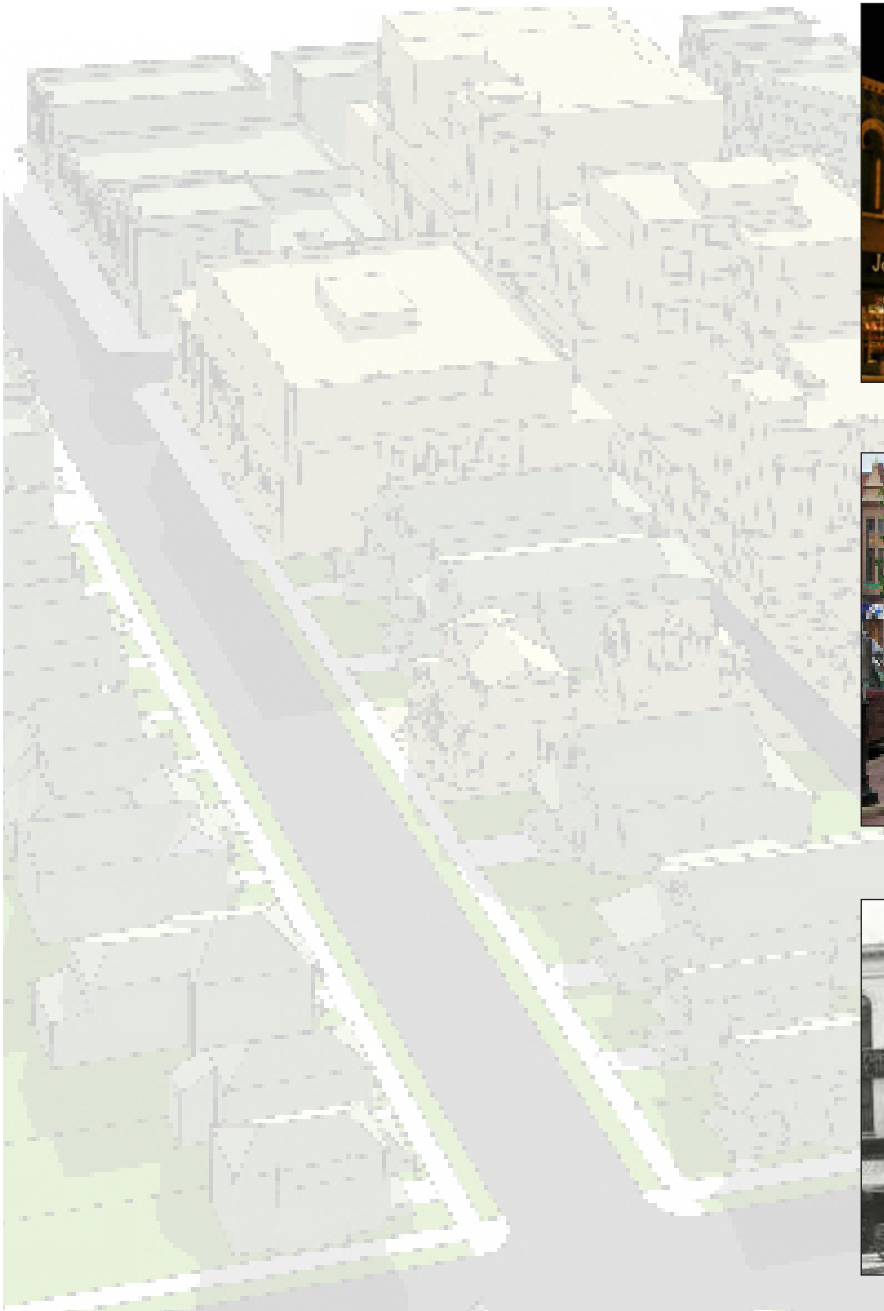


ANN ARBOR DOWNTOWN PLAN



DRAFT MAY 5 , 2008

CITY OF ANN ARBOR DOWNTOWN PLAN

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PLANNING CONTEXT

The Downtown Plan recommends policy objectives and plan concepts which will guide public and private development decision-making in the downtown area. The Downtown Plan's primary focus is Ann Arbor's 66-block Downtown Development Authority district (*Figure 1*), but it also explores the downtown's role within the Central Area and the larger city. The plan addresses a broad range of issues concerning downtown's future -- from land use priorities and parking management objectives to more detailed design guidelines for enhancing downtown's pedestrian orientation and identity as a place.

The plan was originally adopted as an element of the master plan in 1988 and updated in 1992 as part of the Central Area Plan. Building on the 1988 Downtown Plan's recommendations, a number of zoning amendments and programmatic changes were implemented by the City and the Downtown Development Authority throughout the 1990's. A renewed interest in downtown development in the early 2000's prompted a re-examination of the City's approach and resulted in this update to the plan. The planning initiatives that contribute to these revisions are summarized below.

Renewal of the Ann Arbor DDA Development Plan and Tax Increment Finance Plan (2003) – The DDA was established as a 30-year tax increment finance district in 1982. This plan lays out the DDA's goals, objectives and financing plan for the next 30 years to provide continuity in ongoing programs and long-term planning and financing of capital projects. The plan was approved by City Council in 2003.

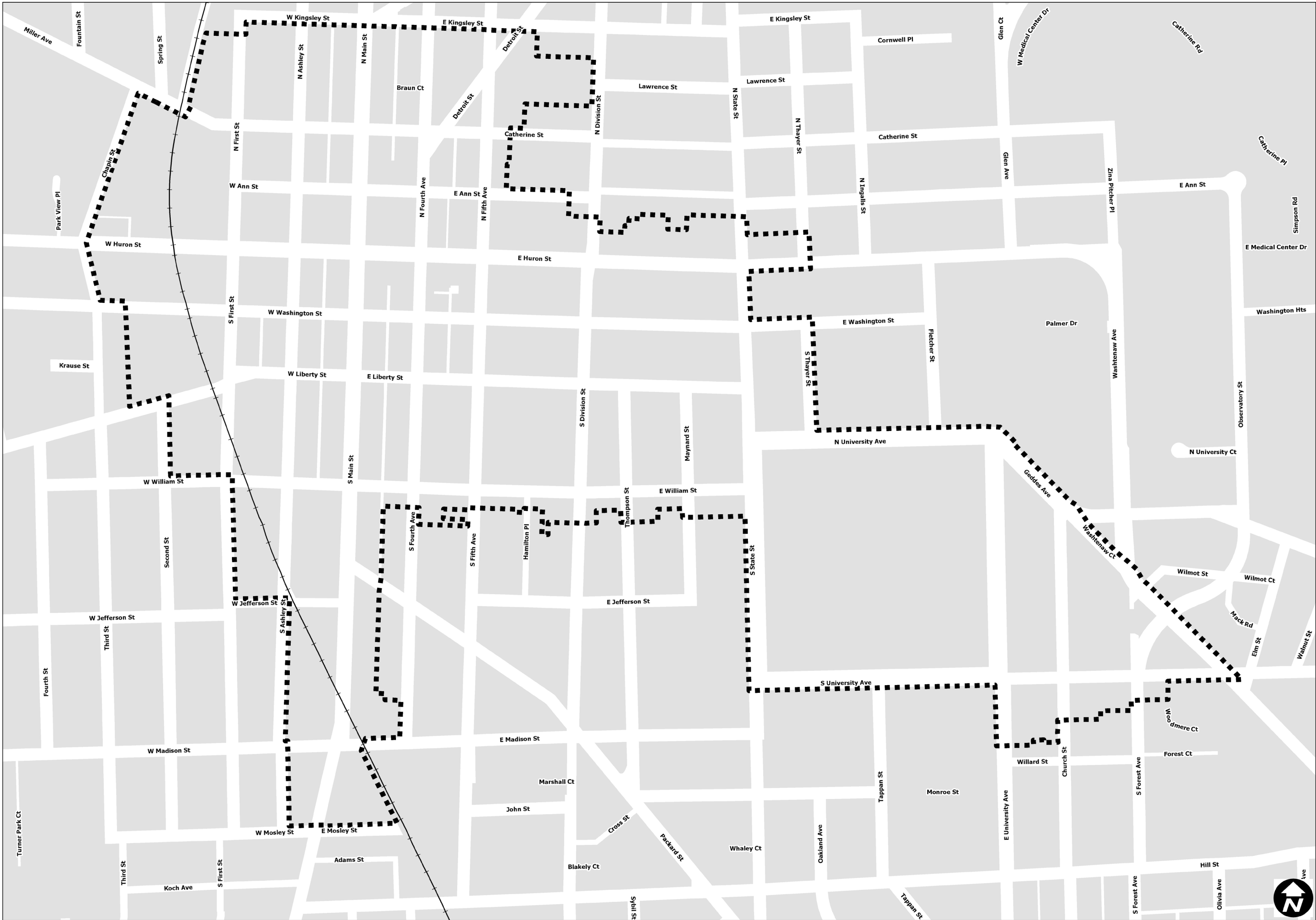
Downtown Residential Task Force Report (2004) – In 2003, City Council commissioned a task force to identify barriers to the development of residential units in the downtown and how to address these barriers. The task force's recommendations were presented to City Council in June 2004.

Downtown Development Strategies Final Report (2006) – Responding to the Downtown Residential Task Force recommendations, City Council initiated the Downtown Development Strategies Project to modify downtown zoning. In May 2005, the City hired Calthorpe Associates to work with the community in developing a vision for the downtown, as well as recommendations to realize this vision. Calthorpe Associates presented its recommendations for zoning, urban design, housing, public spaces and mobility to City Council in December 2005. City Council accepted the consultant's final report, also entitled Recommended Vision and Policy Framework for Downtown Ann Arbor, and directed staff to identify a strategy for implementing the recommendations.

Ann Arbor Discovering Downtown (2006) – Drawing from the recommendations in the Downtown Development Strategies Final Report, City Council approved an Implementation Plan and identified five high priority objectives for staff to address:

- * Create special overlay zoning for the downtown that identifies areas of similar character.
- * Streamline the development proposal process.
- * Incorporate a set of essential design guidelines.
- * Pursue a comprehensive parking strategy.
- * Work with the Historic District Commission to clarify criteria for development.

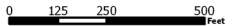
Figure 1
Downtown Development Authority Districts



Map Legend

- +— Railroads
- ■ ■ DDA

The Downtown Plan
Ann Arbor, Michigan
April 2008



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City Council approved work plans and established advisory committees for each priority projects. Recommendations and implementation schedules from all five committees were approved by City Council in 2007

Greenway Task Force Report (2007) – In 2005, City Council appointed the Allen Creek Greenway Task Force to develop recommendations for creating a new greenway to follow along the Ann Arbor Railroad right-of-way, connecting to the Huron River Greenway. The task force's report contains recommendations for the greenway and the future use of the three city-owned sites in the greenway: 415 W. Washington, 721 N. Main and the First/William parcel. The report was presented to City Council in March 2007.

Flood Mitigation Plan (2007) – In response to a recommendation in the city's Hazard Mitigation Plan, staff developed a plan for the mitigation of risks in floodplains throughout the city. The main goals of the plan are to minimize life endangerment and property damage or loss. The plan recommends that city codes be amended to limit new development in floodplains, including properties in the Allen Creek floodplain on the west edge of downtown. The plan was approved by City Council in March 2007

Affordable Housing Needs Assessment (2007) – The Office of Community Development commissioned a countywide study of affordable housing needs in 2007. The study provides data on sub-areas of the county, including Ann Arbor's downtown area. The study also includes recommendations for additional affordable units in the downtown, by type, and potential tools for accomplishing these goals. The study was presented to City Council in September 2007.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Historic Building Patterns

Downtown's identity as a place is significantly influenced by its architecture. Older commercial buildings play an especially important role in creating a positive downtown identity and in establishing the visual interest and comfortable sense of scale which help to give downtown streets a strong pedestrian orientation. A number of downtown areas, as well as two neighborhood areas edging the downtown, have been given historic designation in recognition of their special architectural and historic character (see Figure 2).

Pedestrian/Open Space System

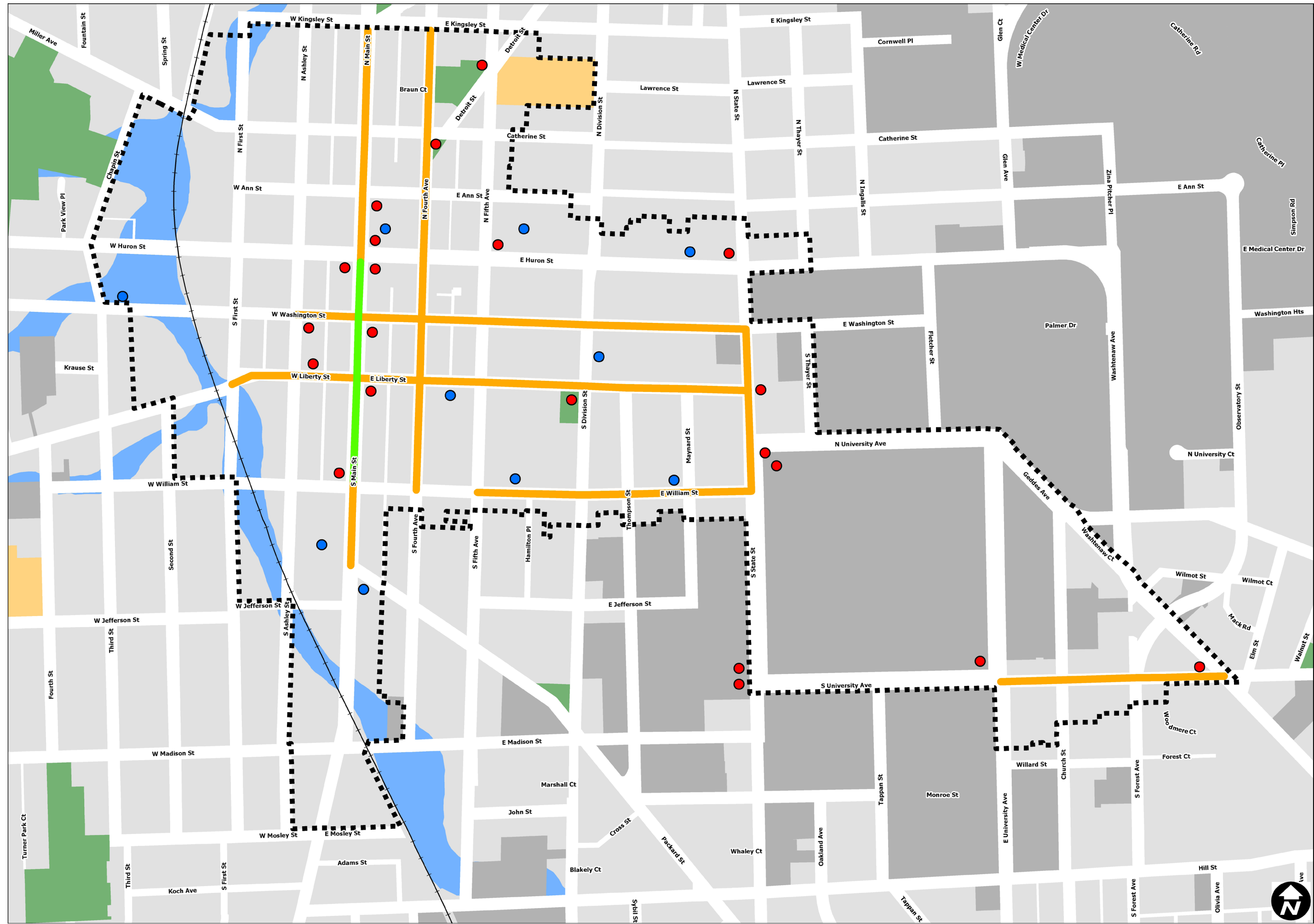
Downtown's pedestrian orientation is one of its most important assets, underlying its success as a focus of retail, entertainment, and business activity, as well as its potential to attract new residential development. The characteristics which establish this pedestrian orientation include:

- * The sense of scale established by older buildings and the traditional pattern of building to the front property line to create a continuous "wall" of development enclosing the street;
- * A continuity of storefronts and retail programming at the edge of the sidewalk;
- * The presence of open spaces and street trees which provide relief, and opportunities for relaxation, within the urban fabric;
- * A high degree of attention to the quality of the streetscape to provide a comfortable, attractive setting for people.
- * The Allen Creek valley, which provides an opportunity for linking public and private open spaces to connect to the UM Athletic Campus, West Park and the Huron River/North Main corridor.

Downtown has a number of streets, parks and plazas which share these characteristics and which form the backbone of its pedestrian/open space system (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

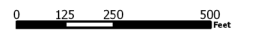
**Existing
Pedestrian/
Open Space
System**



Map Legend

- Railroads
- DDA
- Historical Street Exhibits
- Plazas
- Dean Promenade
- Streetscape Improvements
- Schools
- Parks
- University
- Floodway

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Ann Arbor, Michigan
April 2008**



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Land Use

Downtown's pattern of existing land use defines four major retail districts, each with its own special character:

- * The traditional heart of downtown retail and commercial activity in the Main/Liberty area;
- * The State Street shopping district adjacent to the UM campus;
- * The Kerrytown/Farmers Market area, with its specialty retail orientation; and
- * The campus-oriented shopping district located on South University.

Other downtown areas which have a clearly identifiable land use orientation include the UM Central Campus; the Huron corridor, characterized by larger-scale structures and government, office, and institutional uses; and the civic focus made up of the Library and Federal Building on Fifth. Just as important as these non-residential land use concentrations, are the neighborhood areas which edge the boundaries of the DDA district.

In contrast to those downtown areas in which a clear physical and functional identity already exists, the western edge of the DDA district and the Fifth/Division corridor south of Huron can be identified as areas in transition, both in terms of land use and development character. These areas include significant amounts of vacant land (in the form of surface parking lots) and a mix of light industrial, "fringe" commercial, office and residential uses (see *Figure 4*).

Existing Development Densities

By comparing existing development densities (see Figure 5) to the maximums permitted by existing zoning, it is possible to identify those areas where large disparities exist. In general, it can be anticipated that the larger the disparity, the greater the pressure for change and redevelopment will be.

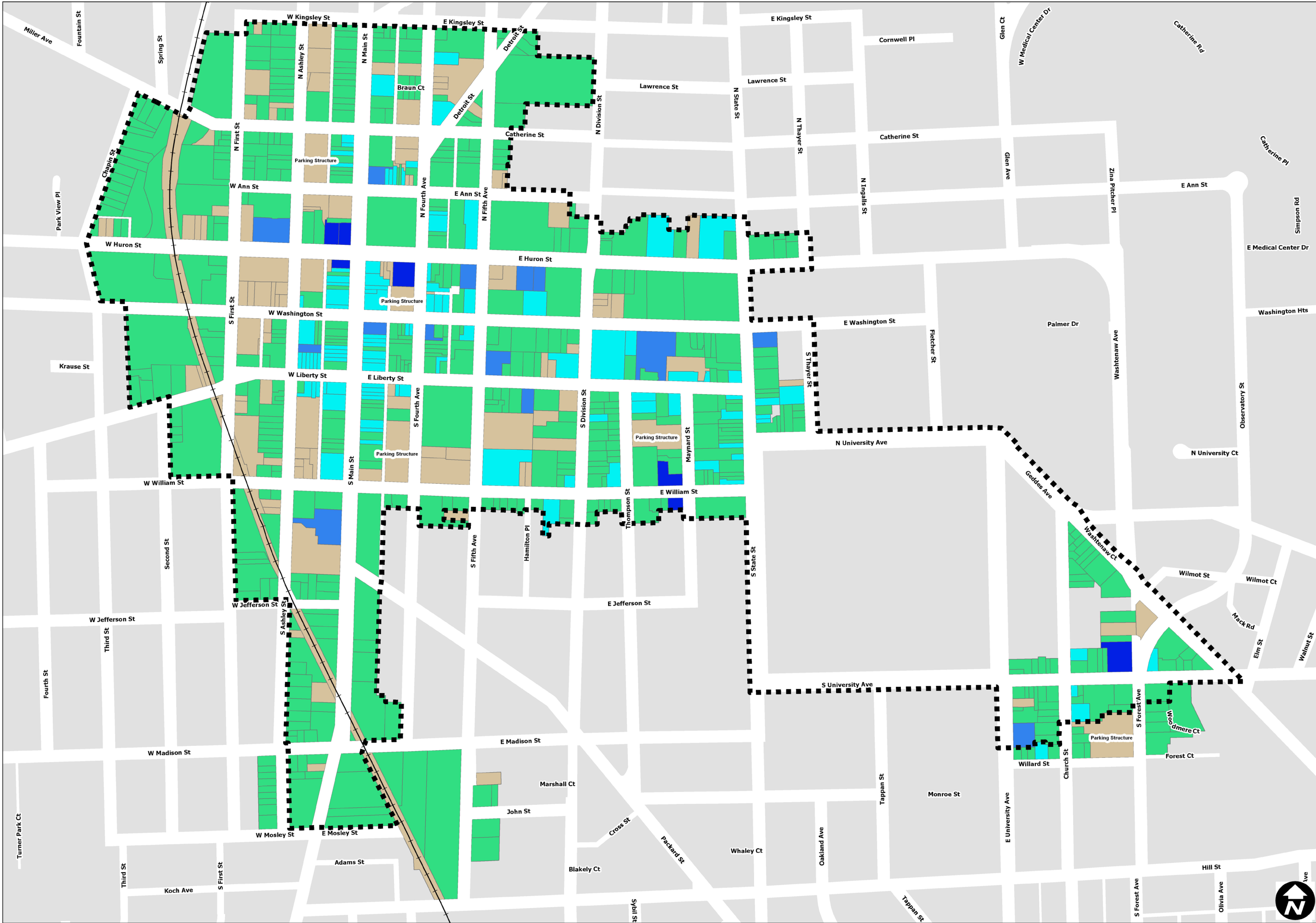
In many instances, this potential for change is positive, providing opportunities and incentives for new development which can strengthen downtown's economy and add diversity to its land use base -- as is the case along portions of downtown's west edge and on the strategically located "Library" Block. In other cases, however, where the scale, density, and character of existing development is valued by the community, this disparity opens the door to potentials for change which may be less desirable -- for example, in the Kerrytown/Farmers Market area and on other neighborhood edges.

Land Form and Building Scale

Downtown is located on a plateau defined by the Huron River Valley and its tributaries. This land form is most visible from the western edge of downtown where a significant change of elevation exists between Ashley and S. Main Streets and the Ann Arbor rail line located on the floor of the Allen Creek valley. Although few conscious efforts have yet been made to capitalize on this topographic feature, it presents an opportunity to create a positive identity for downtown and a clearer transition between the more intensively developed, commercially-oriented area to the east and the neighborhoods to the west.

The predominant scale of existing development in different downtown areas also helps to define an overall sense of urban form. In the neighborhoods which edge the DDA district, existing buildings are generally 2-3 stories in height and exhibit the smaller overall scale typical of single-family residential development. In contrast, development along downtown's Huron corridor is characterized by taller and more massive buildings interspersed with pockets of low-rise development and surface parking lots. Taller buildings are also located at the edges of the UM Central Campus (Tower Plaza and University Tower); and within the campus itself, larger institutional buildings and substantial open spaces create a distinctive scale and pattern of development.

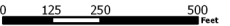
Figure 5
Existing Development Floor Area to Lot Area Ratios (FAR) 2008



Map Legend

- Railroads
- ▣ DDA
- No Building
- 1% to 200%
- 201% to 400%
- 401% to 700%
- Greater than 700%

The Downtown Plan
Ann Arbor, Michigan
April 2008



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GUIDING VALUES

The following values articulate the most fundamental elements of the downtown.

NEIGHBORHOOD, COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL FOCUS

Downtown will continue to accommodate and foster central business, government, shopping, cultural and entertainment functions within a reasonably compact, walkable area. Downtown's role as an activity center for surrounding neighborhoods, and as the social, cultural, and urban business center of the community and the region, will be strengthened.

DIVERSITY OF USE

Diversity of use is the key to unlocking downtown's potential as a focus of economic and social activity. A balanced mix of office, retail, housing, cultural, and entertainment uses will be promoted in order to draw people downtown in sufficient numbers to create a lively atmosphere and a profitable business setting. Emphasis will be placed on creating a critical mass of activity within a concentrated Core area.

DIVERSITY OF USERS

Downtown will be accessible to everyone. Special efforts will be made to accommodate use and enjoyment by people of all ages and abilities.

BALANCE

New downtown development will be encouraged; but at the same time, existing assets and valued downtown characteristics will be conserved and strengthened. This balance between conservation and change will be fostered by emphasizing the use of incentives and guidelines.

IMAGE AND IDENTITY

The preservation and rehabilitation of historic buildings will be encouraged to establish a positive image and marketable identity for downtown. Natural assets (including downtown's topography and its proximity to the Huron River), streetscape improvements, and open spaces will also be used to advantage in creating a clear development structure and a quality visual environment. Traditional land uses (including government functions and the Farmers Market) will be retained.

PEDESTRIAN ORIENTATION

Strong emphasis will be placed on downtown's quality as a place for people on foot by maintaining its sense of pedestrian scale; promoting an active street life; and providing a comfortable and convenient walking environment. Safety and security for downtown workers, residents, shoppers, and visitors will be maintained and enhanced.

QUALITY

A high level of quality will be encouraged in the design and maintenance of buildings, streetscapes, and public spaces.

INFRASTRUCTURE CAPACITY

Future growth and development will be phased to ensure that infrastructure demands to water, sanitary, storm water, open space and transportation systems do not outstrip available capacities. At the same time, maintaining and investing in these infrastructure systems is essential to downtown's ongoing stability and vitality.

SUSTAINABILITY

The downtown should be developed and maintained such that it continues to provide for future generations a viable economy, a "green" and energy-efficient built environment and social and cultural opportunities.

LAND USE

Concentrated Diversity of Activity

Goal: Encourage land use and development patterns which draw people downtown and foster an active street life and contribute to its function as an urban residential neighborhood.

A diverse and concentrated mix of land uses and activities is critical in drawing people downtown to create a lively atmosphere and a profitable business setting. If these uses are linked together by streets and open spaces which accommodate and encourage pedestrian movement, the activity generated by one use will provide support for others and downtown's street life will act as a magnet which draws more people.

An intensive pattern of development, and a concentration of pedestrian activity generators, is especially important within downtown's Core area to build the market needed to support a healthy retail sector. In turn, a strong retail component will serve as the "glue" that binds downtown together by creating the continuity of street level activity and interest which encourages people to move through the area on foot.

Recommended Action Strategies

- (1) Encourage more use diversity throughout downtown by revising the premium system to provide incentives for housing within developments.
- (2) Update zoning use regulations to incorporate new pedestrian-oriented uses, such as live-work units.
- (3) Develop standards to limit nuisance noise and lighting impacts from development.

Retail Environment

Goal: Promote downtown as the center of commerce in the community. Strengthen and expand downtown's active uses, such as shops and services, restaurants, and entertainment attractions, by providing convenient transit and parking, quality pedestrian environment, and diverse land use context needed to support a successful retail component.

Downtown's retail shops and services are the foundation of its success as a center of social activity. By making downtown's streets active, interesting places, these uses help to encourage the pedestrian flows needed to link downtown's diversity of land uses together. Restaurants and entertainment provide additional magnets for drawing people downtown, extending its cycle of activity into evening and weekend hours. It is proximity and ease of access to a broad choice of things to do, see, and buy that makes downtown a competitive location for offices, housing, hotels, and visitor attractions.

Recommended Action Strategies

- (1) Revise the zoning ordinance to require active uses such as retail sales and services at street level on key retail streets.
- (2) Continue public investments in streetscape improvements.
- (3) Encourage a balanced mix of downtown housing, visitor attractions, and office use to build market support for downtown retailing.
- (4) Undertake a market study of downtown retail potential to enhance the competitive advantages of downtown retailers; actively pursue study recommendations.
- (5) Increase capacity of existing businesses in the downtown to ensure that businesses can remain viable and take advantage of opportunities for future growth.
- (6) Attract a variety of new businesses to the downtown.

Housing

Goal: Encourage a diversity of new downtown housing opportunities and the expansion of the downtown resident population to strengthen downtown's role as an urban neighborhood. Continue to seek a range of age groups and income levels in the downtown.

Even a modest increase in housing and residents can enhance downtown's image as a safe, lively, people-oriented place, with the result that its appeal as a setting for a broad range of activities is increased. Downtown can be marketable for housing if (1) a distinctive "product" is provided and (2) downtown's amenity as a residential environment is enhanced. The City can continue to improve downtown's appeal as a residential location by protecting the stability of its neighborhood edges; continuing to invest in streetscape improvements; upgrading cleanliness; and working to enhance perceived security. Public investments in the development of open space areas can also serve as a catalyst for, and complement to, private sector residential investments.

Recommended Action Strategies

- (1) Revise existing zoning premiums, and provide premiums where not currently available, to create incentives for downtown residential use, including on-site affordable housing for lower income households.
- (2) Continue to invest in streetscape improvements and open spaces such as the Allen Creek greenway as part of the strategy for enhancing downtown's attractiveness as a residential investment location.
- (3) Remove disincentives to housing development and renovation in existing C2B and C2B/R zoning regulations.
- (4) Use DDA funds to support the development of downtown housing.
- (5) Continue to make housing a priority use of public land offered for private development.
- (6) Consider impacts on residential use in reviewing street occupancy permit applications and proposals for special outdoor events.
- (7) Streamline the development proposal process.

Office, Service and Cultural Uses

Goal: Promote a balanced mix of office, service, and cultural uses in the downtown area to complement retail and residential development and to create a diverse center of urban activity.

It is important that downtown maintain, and expand, its diversity of land uses, and office development is an important component of that mix. It contributes significantly to downtown's revenue base, as well as creating the employee population which supports retail, service, and entertainment uses and which establishes a market for downtown housing.

An important part of the strategy for tempering the impacts associated with new office development is to encourage commuters to choose alternatives to parking downtown all day to moderate the impacts of peak traffic and parking demands. In addition, guidelines and incentives must be established for encouraging new office projects which reinforce the intensive, compact pattern of development in downtown's Core; which complement the existing architectural context; and which add to downtown's pedestrian orientation.

The concentration of galleries, museums, studios, and performing arts facilities which has already begun to develop in the downtown area adds a special dimension to its image and appeal. This arts orientation distinguishes downtown from other shopping and business centers, enhancing its identity as a center of the community and the region. Additional cultural uses should be encouraged to locate downtown and these uses should be marketed in a coordinated manner as a special set of visitor attractions.

Recommended Action Strategies

- (1) Introduce incentives to choose alternatives to parking downtown all day.
- (2) Encourage office developments to incorporate mixed uses through the use of premiums.
- (3) Encourage cultural and arts-oriented uses to locate downtown.
- (4) Market cultural uses as special set of visitor attractions.

Goal: Support the private development of a downtown conference/civic center within the Core area. Further investigate the costs and benefits of public funding participation in the construction and/or operation of such a downtown visitor attraction.

A downtown conference center could have a significant, positive impact on the downtown economy, especially its retail sector. However, if a substantial amount of public financial participation is necessary for the construction and/or operation of a downtown conference center, a number of questions would require detailed evaluation, including:

- * Expected operating performance, including early deficits;
- * A comparison of direct and indirect public costs and benefits; and
- * The priority which such a project should receive in light of competing uses of public funds.

If a public commitment is to be considered, these will certainly have to be quantified under alternative participation scenarios and compared to the potential benefits which downtown might derive from a similarly-sized conference center located elsewhere in the community.

Recommended Action Strategies

- (1) Provide for the development of a conference/civic center within downtown's Core area as a special exception use.
- (2) Evaluate the costs and benefits of public financial participation in the development and/or operation of a downtown conference/civic center.
- (2) Encourage a facility design which can serve local as well as out-of-town meeting needs and which contributes to the quality of the pedestrian environment on adjacent streets.

Community Services

Goal: Maintain the downtown as a center for government, public and community service.

Government service and office uses help to make downtown a civic focus. They draw people downtown to fulfill a variety of service needs, as well as creating a significant office employee population. These government functions also help to create a market for other professional office and business service uses in the downtown area.

Recommended Action Strategies

- (1) Make a commitment to keep City office and service functions (not including equipment and vehicle storage) downtown.
- (2) Establish a liaison with the County concerning their downtown expansion plans.

DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER

Core Area

Goal: Encourage downtown's highest density development and tallest buildings to locate within the Core area (see Figure 6) to create the critical mass of activity needed to support a range of central retail, service, cultural, residential, and entertainment functions.

The Core includes downtown's largest retail areas; its highest concentration of office use; its principal civic functions (city, county, and federal government services; the central library); and major hotels. The Core also includes much of downtown's highest density development and its tallest buildings, creating a physical identity which reinforces its functional role as the center of downtown activity. It is a relatively compact area which, because of its mix of uses, concentration of activity generators, and density of development, serves as a focus of intensive pedestrian use.

Because the Core is the traditional center of downtown commercial development, it contains important retail concentrations and significant numbers of older and historic buildings which add to its special identity and visual appeal. These buildings and uses help to establish a strong pedestrian orientation in portions of the Core, defining its primary system of pedestrian connections. These qualities of identity, interest, scale, and amenity are valued assets which must be protected as new development occurs.

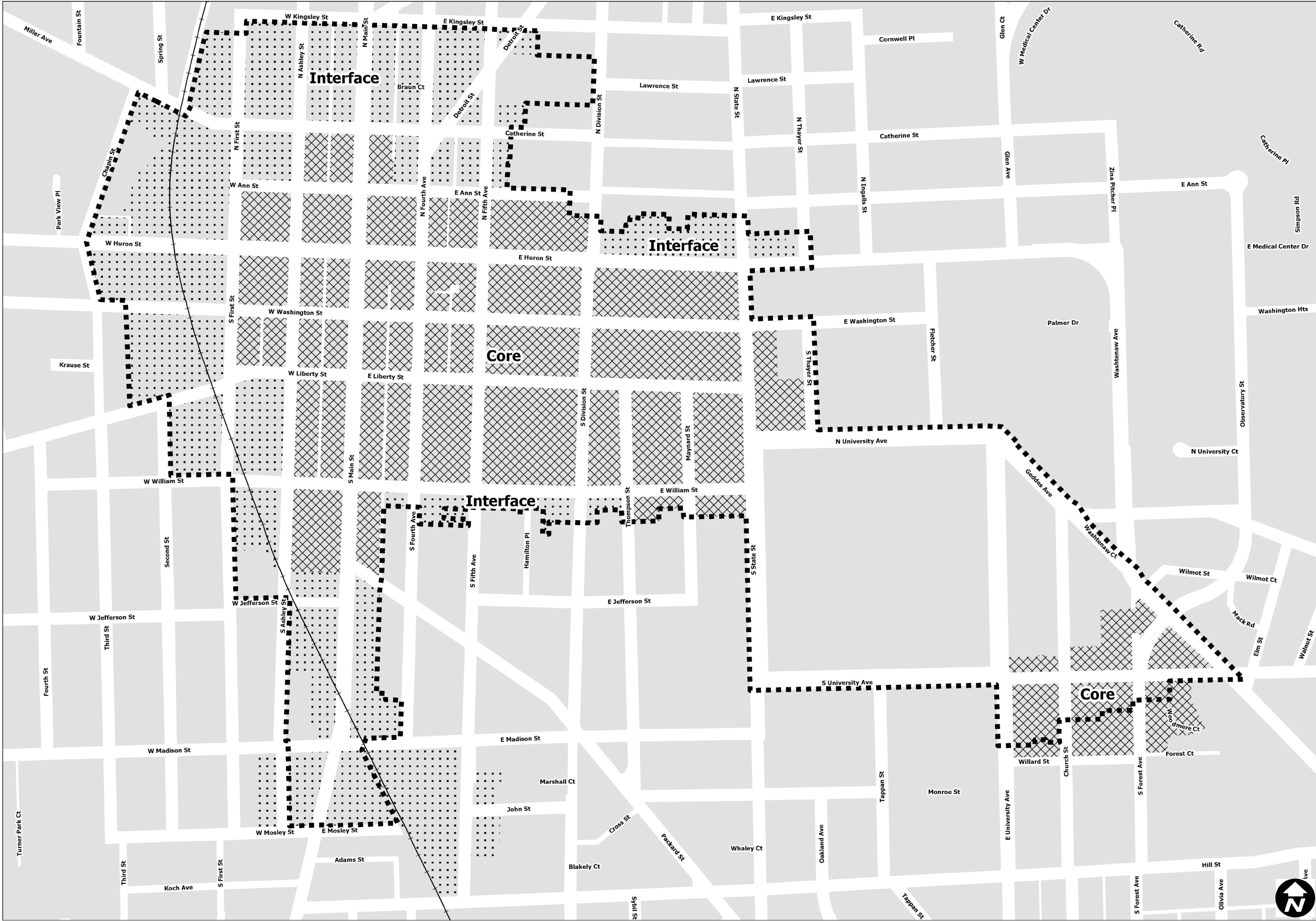
These positive characteristics can be maintained and strengthened while encouraging higher density development to concentrate in downtown's Core area. To achieve this balance, priorities for the protection of important historic structures must be established and compatibility with the existing development context must be encouraged in the design of new buildings. Guidelines will be needed to illustrate principles for designing these new buildings to (1) add to the pedestrian character of streets and sidewalks and (2) provide positive transitions in scale and height.

Recommended Action Strategies

- (1) Revise existing zoning premiums, and create premiums where not currently available, to establish incentives for achieving Core objectives: residential development, affordable housing, "green" building, historic preservation, public parking and transferred development rights.
- (2) Incorporate recommended land use and urban design objectives as standards for the review and approval of projects in the Core area.
- (3) Discourage "fringe commercial" land uses.
- (4) Encourage structured (rather than surface) parking, emphasizing underground parking construction in major projects.

Figure 6

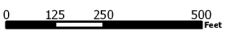
**Downtown Planning Zones:
Core and Interface**



Map Legend

- Railroads
- DDA
- ⊗ Core
- ⋯ Interface

**The Downtown Plan
Ann Arbor, Michigan
April 2008**



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Interface Area

Goal: Preserve and enhance incremental transitions in land use, density, building scale and height in the Interface areas located between downtown's neighborhood edges and the Core (see Figure 6).

Development within the DDA district, especially in the area which forms the Interface between the intensively developed Core and near-downtown neighborhoods, should reinforce the stability of these residential areas -- but without unduly limiting the potential for downtown's overall growth and continued economic vitality. Ideally, development within this portion of the DDA district should blend smoothly into the neighborhoods at one edge and into the Core at the other.

Recommended Action Strategies

- (1) Reduce maximum permitted FAR's of 600% in the Interface zone, giving special consideration to neighborhood edges.
- (2) Revise existing premiums, and provide premiums where not currently available, to create incentives for achieving Interface objectives: residential development, affordable housing, "green" building" and transferred development rights..
- (3) Incorporate recommended land use and urban design objectives as standards for the review and approval of projects in the Interface area.
- (4) Maintain height limitations in the Interface area.
- (5) Revise principal permitted land uses to encourage a shift in land use emphasis from "fringe commercial" and light industrial to residential and a mix of office, retail and business service functions.

Neighborhood Edges

Goal: Protect the livability of residentially zoned neighborhoods adjacent downtown.

The neighborhoods which edge downtown are an important factor in making it an attractive, vital center of community life. Near-downtown residents help to establish a market for retail, service, and entertainment functions, as well as extending the cycle of downtown activity into weekend and evening hours.

Definite land use boundaries, marking the outer limit of expansion for downtown-oriented commercial development, should be re-confirmed in order to reduce pressures for non-residential encroachment into neighborhoods. In addition, efforts should be made to minimize through traffic impacts on neighborhood streets and to reduce the parking pressures created by non-residents.

Recommended Action Strategies

- (1) Re-confirm residential zoning boundaries and discourage downtown commercial expansion past these limits.
- (2) Reduce parking pressures in neighborhood areas by expanding the use of resident parking permit programs and strictly limiting the addition of surface parking lots.
- (3) Minimize through traffic impacts on neighborhood streets.

Historic Preservation and Compatible Infill

Goal: Designate historic buildings to encourage their preservation. Encourage new development to reinforce these buildings' contribution to downtown's identity and pedestrian orientation.

Architecturally and historically significant buildings help to create a positive identity and special market appeal for downtown. They provide visual interest; establish a comfortable sense of scale; and maintain links to the past to give deeper meaning to the built environment. Special efforts should be made to encourage the preservation and renovation of these buildings and to promote compatibility in the design of new buildings located nearby.

Protection will continue to be afforded to buildings and districts within the DDA area which have already been designated as historic. This designation constitutes an "overlay" zone which requires Historic District Commission review and approval of applications for new construction and the alternation, repair, demolition or moving of structures.

Recommended Action Strategies

- (1) Work with the Historic District Commission to clarify criteria for development.
- (2) Develop additional guidelines for compatible infill development in areas where buildings share valued design characteristics. Evaluate the feasibility of implementing these guidelines through modifications to the premium system and/or design review.
- (3) Evaluate the need for/desirability of compensating owners of designated properties through a Transfer of Development Rights program.
- 4) Evaluate the possibility of using premiums or a transfer of development rights program to preserve historic properties that are not protected by a local ordinance.

Sensitivity to Context

Goal: Encourage articulation in the massing of larger new buildings to fit sensitively into the existing development context. Encourage design approaches which minimize the extent to which high-rise buildings create negative impacts in terms of scale, shading, and blocking views.

The most fundamental recommendations for the design of new downtown buildings are to (1) complement the scale and character of the existing development context; (2) reinforce the clarity of the overall urban form; and (3) add to the area's identity as a special place. This will require that harmony be encouraged in overall visual relationships, while still fostering design excellence and the diversity which adds richness and interest to the cityscape.

In the final analysis, the degree of success which is achieved in creating a coherent and satisfying set of visual relationships will depend on the sensitivity, skill, and creativity of individual developers and their design teams. These qualities cannot be legislated into existence; nor is it possible to define a strict set of requirements that can be universally applied to prevent "mistakes" from happening. But it is possible, and worthwhile, to define a number of important architectural design considerations and to provide related guidelines and incentives to which all new development projects are asked to respond.

Recommended Action Strategies

- (1) Create special overlay zoning that identifies areas of similar character.
- (2) Incorporate a set of essential design guidelines for the review and approval of projects in downtown character districts. These guidelines should encourage the following elements:
 - * Variations in building height, roof lines, minor facade setbacks and architectural detailing to break larger new buildings into smaller scale components which fit more sensitively into the existing development context.
 - * Incremental transitions in building height to tie taller building elements into the surrounding development context.
 - * Techniques to minimize the impact of tall buildings in blocking views, shading sidewalks and public spaces.
- (3) Identify those downtown areas with the highest potential for growth and develop Area Urban Design Plans as advisory, site-specific development guidelines.

PEDESTRIAN AND OPEN SPACE SYSTEM

Streetscape Improvements

Goal: Improve and extend downtown's system of pedestrian connections through public and private streetscape improvements.

The program of streetscape improvements already being implemented by the Downtown Development Authority has helped to enhance the quality of the downtown pedestrian experience, as well as the area's overall visual character.

In setting future implementation priorities, greater emphasis might also be given to improvements on streets which link downtown to adjacent neighborhoods.

Within the Core area, greater emphasis might also be given to the development of improved pedestrian crossings on major arterial streets to overcome the physical and psychological barriers which these trafficways create between downtown's retail districts.

Downtown's appeal as a shopping and service center could also be significantly enhanced by providing attractive "short-cuts" through development blocks -- in the form of open-air walkways, retail arcades, and atrium spaces -- to increase the convenience of walking between parking structures and shopping frontages

The design character and level of maintenance in downtown's alleyways must also be considered as an integral part of any strategy for developing more attractive and convenient through-block connections.

Recommended Action Strategies

- (1) Prepare a downtown streetscape improvement program that integrates with capital improvement projects.
- (2) Re-evaluate investment priorities considering the importance of improved pedestrian crosswalks; through-block connections linking parking to retail frontages; alley improvements; and links to neighborhoods.
- (3) Plan for long-term maintenance and repair of streetscape improvements; explore alternative funding sources.
- (4) Institute a process to work with property owners/developers to implement streetscape and building façade improvements.

Development Guidelines

Goal: Encourage both rehabilitation and new development projects to enhance the pedestrian scale and orientation of streets which serve as downtown's primary pedestrian connections. Ensure that all other downtown streets also provide attractive and comfortable environments for people on foot.

While all of downtown's streets should accommodate pedestrian activity, some will be particularly important in determining the quality of the pedestrian experience because of the volume of use they attract. Three primary factors influence pedestrian use levels, in large part by defining the extent to which a given street provides an interesting and attractive setting for people on foot. This sense of pedestrian orientation is determined by:

- * The street's functional role in the vehicular circulation system; including driveway access across sidewalks.
- * The scale and character of buildings which edge the street; and
- * The uses and activities which those buildings accommodate.

Downtown's streets can be categorized according to the role they play as pedestrian connections. Guidelines for future development along streets in each of these three classifications can help to ensure that all streets contribute to the quality of downtown's pedestrian environment, while focusing special attention on the primary elements of the pedestrian system.

Recommended Action Strategies

- (1) Adopt standards for new development and rehabilitation projects on based on the character of the adjoining streets.

Open Space Incentives and Guidelines

Goal: Encourage the development of parks, plazas, through-block arcades and atrium spaces, emphasizing small open spaces distributed throughout downtown.

While downtown's streets and sidewalks are the foundation of its open space system, other types of public spaces -- including parks, plazas, arcades, and atriums -- expand the variety of the pedestrian experience which downtown offers. These public spaces play an important role in structuring the "image of the city" by creating focal points -- or landmarks -- which punctuate the urban fabric and provide relief to the hard surfaces of the built environment. They also create opportunities for social interaction; if they are located and designed to attract use, they can add substantially to the vitality of downtown's street life. These spaces are most meaningful when they reinforce locations of special visual significance (such as downtown entry points and civic buildings) and functional importance (such as major "crossroads" of pedestrian movement).

Recommended Action Strategies

- (1) Re-evaluate existing zoning premiums to provide incentives for the private development of desired downtown open spaces.
- (2) Establish design guidelines for public open spaces.

Public Sector Open Space Development

Encourage the creation of new public spaces within the downtown and rehabilitation of existing spaces, including indoor public meeting and performing arts space.

The City must also consider downtown open space objectives in the course of making decisions on the future development of publicly owned parcels. Of particular importance are the opportunities for (1) using a portion of the strategically located "Library" parking lot as an open space and activity focus; (2) the preservation and improvement of the Community High open space area on Fifth Avenue; and (3) creating a greenway in the Allen Creek valley on downtown's west edge (see Objective 6 below). In addition, the Plan supports the development of improved open space areas at City Hall, as part of its possible future expansion.

The Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan identifies more specific, detailed information for downtown park plazas.

Recommended Action Strategies

- (1) Encourage the creation of active, accessible and programmed public spaces within the downtown.
- (2) Encourage the rehabilitation of existing spaces, including indoor public meeting and performing arts space.
- (3) Encourage the preservation and improvement of the Community High open space area on Fifth.
- (4) Incorporate art into public spaces.

Allen Creek "Greenway"

Goal: Foster the development of a system of linked open spaces on the floor of the Allen Creek valley to create an amenity which encourages residential investment and provides an improved transition between the downtown Core and west side neighborhoods.

The presence of a number of vacant parcels and potential redevelopment sites within the Allen Creek valley creates the opportunity to plan for the future development of greenway along the west edge of downtown. In defining a workable implementation strategy, it is important to recognize that this valley open space system is not likely to take the form of a continuous, uniformly-dimensioned corridor. Instead, it will consist of a series of relatively small landscaped spaces and setbacks which are developed over time and are linked by walkways.

A combination of public sector investment and private sector cooperation will be required for implementation.

Recommended Action Strategies

- (1) Dedicate portions of publicly owned sites within the Allen Creek valley for open space use as part of any development agreement.
- (2) Promote the development of an Allen Creek valley "greenway" as part of new development proposals in the valley.

- (3) Develop design guidelines for the Allen Creek greenway, including guidelines for safety and security.

Entrance Corridors

Goal: Improve the visual quality of major downtown entrance corridors.

Downtown's entrance corridors parallel the major arterial streets which radiate from the Core. These streets pass through areas which vary in land use and development character; as a result, the degree to which they provide a positive entry experience varies. Outside the DDA district, the N. Main/Huron River corridor represents the greatest potential for improvement and a study of alternatives for its future development has been undertaken.

Within the DDA district, it is the character of development in the Interface area (located between the Core and neighborhoods which edge downtown) which determines the quality of the immediate downtown entry experience. Here a gradual progression in development scale and density is desirable -- not only to protect downtown's neighborhood edges, but also to create a heightened sense of arrival as the center of activity in the Core is approached.

Recommended Action Strategies

- (1) Use the interface zone to encourage a gradual increase in scale and density between the downtown's neighborhood edges and the Core.

TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING

Vehicular Travel

Goal: Ensure that the traffic increases generated by future growth can be accommodated without jeopardizing the quality of the pedestrian environment; overtaxing the capacity of the existing street network; or channeling significantly increased traffic through neighborhoods.

Establishing an appropriate balance between competing objectives for pedestrian and vehicular use of downtown streets has traditionally been Ann Arbor's traffic management goal. The Plan endorses this policy and recommends that the existing street network be managed to maximize its capacity to meet the needs of future downtown development, without sacrificing the pedestrian orientation of important shopping streets or encouraging neighborhood through traffic.

Recommended Action Strategies

- (1) Enforce lower traffic speed limits and maintain some on-street parking to protect the pedestrian orientation of major shopping streets.
- (2) Use operational changes, rather than street widening, to accommodate increased traffic demand on Shared and Vehicular Streets, consistent with objectives for pedestrian orientation and the protection of residential neighborhoods.
- 3) Locate and limit vehicle access driveways across sidewalks to minimize conflicts with pedestrians.
- 4) Encourage shared vehicular access to parking and building service between adjacent lots and, for properties within the same block through public and private alleys and easements.

Non-motorized Travel

Goal: Establish a physical and cultural environment that supports and encourages safe, comfortable and convenient ways for pedestrians and bicyclists to travel throughout the downtown and into the surrounding city.

The design of the downtown pedestrian environment has a direct effect on the degree to which people enjoy the walking experience. If designed appropriately, the walking environment serves not only the people who currently walk but also entices those who don't. When considering appropriate design of a certain location, designers should consider not only existing pedestrian use, but how the design will influence and increase walking in the future.

Recommended Action Strategies

- (1) Establish bicycle and pedestrian ways in new construction and reconstruction projects on both sides of a street.
- (2) Apply the design guidelines from the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan Section 2.9 (Pedestrian Travel Downtown) for public improvements in Sidewalk Corridors.
- (3) Address the need for bicyclists and pedestrians to cross streets as well as travel along them.
- (4) Provide bicycle parking on sidewalks and in parking lots and structures.
- (5) Provide appropriate parking options for small motorized vehicles, such as scooters, mopeds and motorcycles.

Transit

Goal: Improve transit service within the downtown connecting existing and regional transit facilities.

Commuter trips, and overall peak traffic volumes, will certainly increase as growth occurs in the downtown area; however, if a portion of this increase is accommodated by a shift to alternative forms of commuting, such as walking, bicycling, car-pooling, transit use and commuter rail, the potential for congestion on downtown streets can be reduced.

To successfully encourage such a shift away from low-occupancy vehicle commuting, policies for managing downtown's parking supply must be considered in concert with transit initiatives. In addition, the active cooperation of major downtown employers (including the County, City, and UM) will be needed to encourage a change in commuting patterns -- for example, by subsidizing the cost of transit passes and by making car-pooling a prerequisite for the use of employer-paid parking spaces.

AATA efforts to develop park-and-ride lots outside of the downtown area, and commuter rail on the Ann Arbor Railroad right-of-way should be pursued. The success of such a program will depend on the existence of substantial cost and time savings to users as compared to driving and parking downtown all day.

Recommended Action Strategies

- 1) Reduce future increases in peak traffic and parking demand by adopting parking pricing and enforcement policies which enhance the competitiveness of transit, bicycle commuting and car-pool alternatives.
- (2) Support AATA efforts to provide satellite park-and-ride lots with downtown shuttle connections.
- (3) Encourage companies and the University of Michigan to reduce the number of employees arriving in downtown by automobile by offering go!passes and supporting a wide array of commuter choices.
- (4) Work with appropriate agencies to implement rail service along the Ann Arbor Railroad right-of-way.
- (5) Work with AATA to study connections between downtown and the potential future rail station.

Parking Principles

Goal: The following eight principles comprise a comprehensive Parking Policy for Downtown. The principles are ordered by level of priority, beginning with a general principle/policy statement, then proceeding through four demand-related principles, before addressing the recommended supply management approach. This intentionally reflects an emphasis on the high level of multi-modal assets within the Downtown community, and the value of capitalizing on these assets to reduce parking demand prior to taking supply-oriented actions.

FIRST PRINCIPLE

* Parking is one part of a multi-modal transportation approach to providing Downtown access and mobility.

DEMAND PRINCIPLES

* Seek to accommodate all Downtown parking activity within the DDA parking system.

* Seek the most cost effective means for providing Downtown accessibility.

* Support modes of access that promote efficient land use patterns, environmental sensitivity, non-motorized mobility options, and the community's overall quality of life.

* The City administration will assume a leading role in defining preferred commuter transportation patterns within Downtown by encouraging alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle commuting among its elected officials and employees.

SUPPLY PRINCIPLES

* Maintain sufficient parking supply to allow purchase of monthly parking access instrument on demand, or following a waiting period of no more than 30 days.

* Maintain a formalized process for funding new parking.

* Maintain a formalized process for determining when new supply is needed.

Recommended Action Strategies

Refer to the Ann Arbor Discovering Downtown Recommended Parking Policies and Actions (June 2007).

Neighborhood Parking Pressures

Goal: Reduce parking pressures on neighborhood streets and discourage the encroachment of off-street parking into residential areas.

In considering modifications in the supply, location, and pricing of long-term parking it is important to anticipate potential impacts on near-downtown neighborhoods, as well. These areas already carry a heavy burden of non-resident, on- and off-street parking serving the downtown and campus areas.

Resident parking permit programs should be introduced in these areas, and their success monitored, to determine whether or not they can be effective in reducing parking pressures. In addition, current zoning language must be carefully evaluated, and modified if necessary, to prevent the spread of non-accessory/non-resident surface parking lots into residential areas.

Recommended Action Strategies

- (1) Expand the use of residential permit parking programs in near-downtown neighborhoods.
- (2) Prohibit the spread of non-resident surface parking lots in neighborhood areas.

Structured and Underground Parking

Goal: Encourage the development of structured (rather than surface) parking to serve new downtown development, giving special emphasis to the construction of underground parking in all major projects.

Especially within the downtown Core, it is important to minimize the amount of land area which must be devoted to parking if development potential and intensity of pedestrian are to be maximized. Structured parking will be the preferable downtown parking format. However, large, above-grade parking structures that have no active uses at the street level have a significant negative impact on the visual character, sense of scale, and continuity of pedestrian activity on downtown streets.

Recommended Action Strategies

- (1) Adopt strict controls on surface parking within the DDA district and adjacent neighborhoods.
- (2) Encourage the construction of underground parking by defraying the higher costs.
- (3) Take advantage of the change in elevation on west edge of Core to develop underground parking cost-effectively.

Improved Design

Goal: Promote the development of public parking as part of larger private projects rather than free-standing structures. Develop guidelines for better parking facility design, including the use of ground level retail frontages; landscaped setbacks; and through-block connections.

Even with priority given to the construction of underground parking, it is likely that additional above-grade parking structures will also be needed. However, if this above-grade parking is designed and constructed as a part of a larger development -- rather than as a free-standing structure -- it will be possible to integrate it more effectively into the downtown fabric by incorporating ground level and upper story spaces which are programmed for active (non-parking) use. The architectural design of such "mixed-use" projects -- in terms of massing, exterior finish materials, and detailing -- can also offer expanded opportunities for reducing the visual impact of structured parking.

Recommended Action Strategies

- (1) Avoid the future development of monolithic, free-standing parking structures.
- (2) Adopt recommended parking design guidelines.

IMPLEMENTATION

Intergovernmental Coordination

Goal: Encourage improved cooperation between the City and the County, University of Michigan, public schools, and State and Federal agencies in exchanging information; formulating planning policies; and evaluating development initiatives.

Recommended Action Strategies

(1) Establish routine lines of communication and cooperative agreements concerning information exchange with the UM, County, and state and federal agencies.

(2) Encourage the UM administration to address needs for additional student housing in the downtown area.

Development Review

Goal: Streamline the development proposal process.

Recommended Action Strategies

(1) Develop process mapping and technology improvements.

Maintenance of Public Spaces

Goal: Improve the quality of maintenance on downtown streets, sidewalks, alleys, and public spaces.

The issue of cleanliness is one which affects the image and pedestrian appeal of the downtown area. This is a problem area which presents the potential for significant improvements over the short-term.

It is entirely possible that the desired level of service, and the scope of improvement priorities, which are defined will require funding beyond available City sources. As a result, it is important that a mutual agreement be reached on the basic level of maintenance which should be provided by the public sector; once this has been established, merchants and property owners will have to decide whether, and how, they can pool their resources to provide any additional services which are desired.

Recommended Action Strategies

- (1) Upgrade maintenance by developing guidelines for trash storage, cleaning streets on a regular basis, increasing enforcement of the snow removal ordinance and encouraging participation in adopt-a-tree or adopt-a-park programs.
- (2) Encourage improved private property maintenance by updating and enforcing ordinance standards and establishing recognition programs.

Maintenance of Private Property

Goal: Encourage pride of ownership and the achievement of a consistently high standard of exterior building and site maintenance.

The level of private property maintenance provided in the downtown area also influences its image and appeal. While most buildings and sites are well-maintained, others would benefit from concentrated improvement efforts. Property owners, merchants associations, and the Chamber could play an important role in inspiring a more consistent level of maintenance by helping to establish standards and by using peer pressure and promotional programs to urge compliance. The standards established by the downtown business community might also be used as a basis for reviewing and updating existing ordinance requirements for private property maintenance, with the City giving enforcement of those requirements a higher priority.

Recommended Action Strategies

- (1) Work to resolve security and safety problems by expanding the community-oriented policing approach through bicycle and foot patrols, strengthening cooperative efforts between City and University police, and establishing a downtown Neighborhood Watch program.