

# Developer Workgroup report for 11/6/2019

The work group exists to explore how the art commission can encourage private developers to incorporate or otherwise support public art. The group consists of: John Kotarski, Jonah Copi, Mary Thiefels, and David Esau.

On recommendation of the developer workgroup and forwarded to Council by resolution of the Ann Arbor Public Art Commission, the City Council amended the Ann Arbor Design Review Board ordinance on October 21, 2019 to include an art commission liaison:

*(c) The Ann Arbor Public Art Commission may appoint one of its members to serve as a nonvoting liaison to the Design Review Board for the purpose of providing comments to petitioners regarding the potential for incorporating private artwork into projects under review by the Design Review Board. The Ann Arbor Public Art Commission liaison shall continue to serve until they are no longer members of the Ann Arbor Public Art Commission or until the Ann Arbor Public Art Commission appoints a different member.*

## **Background**

The Ann Arbor Design Review Board was created in 2011 to foster excellence in design of the built environment of the downtown (generally DDA district excluding historic districts). The Board represents design professionals who give collegial advice to developers before plans are submitted to the Planning Commission. At this stage the plans are intentionally sketchy so that recommendations from the Design Review Board can be more easily included. The review of plans by the Design Review Board is mandatory but inclusion of the recommendations is voluntary. Developers can come back for review more than once and several do take advantage of this collegial design discussion. A record of recommendations is memorialized and kept with the project file.

The Board meets monthly as needed usually 5-6 times each year. The meetings are held at 3pm, second Wednesdays of the month in Council Chambers.

## **Design Review Guidelines**

The Design Review Board uses its design guidelines as reference for recommendations. The guidelines focus on three areas.

1. Site: urban pattern and form, natural systems, open space, parking and service areas, cycling and transit.
2. Building: building mass, scale and alignment, street level, roof line
3. Building Elements: street edge, entries, windows, awnings, material, sustainability.

The design guidelines specifically mention public art in both the Site and Building Elements areas.

The zoning ordinance also identifies nine Character Overlay Zoning Districts that reflect the historical and built environments within the downtown (South University, State

Street, Liberty/Division, East Huron 1&2, Midtown, Main Street, Kerrytown, First Street). The Design Review Board takes these character descriptions into account when offering advice.

### **Art Commission Liaison**

We have reviewed the guidelines, the application, several of the taped meetings and our workgroup chair has met with the chair of the Design Review Board, Dick Mitchell. Mr. Mitchell was warm and inviting and is willing to mentor the art commission liaison to make the appointment as productive as possible.

This appointment furthers our efforts to increase consideration for public art in both public and private development. We will also have a chance to present our ideas for placemaking and better understand the challenges to expanding Ann Arbor's collection of public art.

### **Recommendations:**

- We recommend the appointment be made for one year with annual renewals as appropriate. However, continuity will be important.
- We recommend the art commission liaison develop a way for submissions to the Design Review Board be shared with other art commissioners so that our collective insights can be offered to developers by our liaison.
- We recommend John Kotarski be appointed as the inaugural liaison.