

Downtown Area Citizens Advisory Council Comments to the DDA—December 1, 2010

Every year the CAC has a holiday party/meeting for food/drink and discussion of our goals for the downtown in the coming year. Last night about 25 members and guests gathered at my house to discuss where we want to go in 2011.

As you know, the CAC has been a major supporter of the 1992 as well as the new Downtown Plan. We also participated in the newly adopted A2D2 zoning and work on the emerging A2D2 Downtown Design guidelines. We support increased downtown density. Last night we reaffirmed our commitment to more residents, more families, more grocery stores, and more amenities in the downtown -- as well as underground parking and mixed use development of the Library Lot in cooperation with the District Library.

Last night, our commitment to downtown and near downtown green space was a significant part of our discussion. We reaffirmed our commitment to the Allen Creek Greenway—a commitment we have had ever since our members helped to create the Downtown Plan of 1988—with its emphasis upon downtown pocket parks. Since our involvement in 1991 with the Luckenbach/Ziegelman plan we have been committed to a public plaza on a portion of the Library Lot--along with mixed use development above it. In near-Downtown Areas, we are delighted with the nearby, newly designed West Park, (Central Park West) the beautiful park to the east of the new North Dorm, and the preservation of Argo Pond and the Millrace.

Support for improved and alternative Transportation was another commitment we reaffirmed last night. Again, the emphasis was upon “more” and better –whether for walkers, cyclists, bus riders—or future downtown and connector transients. One of our members just returned from two years in Dubai. (Kathleen Nolan/Doug Kelbaugh). She was impressed with the increased numbers of bicycles in Ann Arbor—something Mayor Hieftje as well as the DDA can take pride in. But she and her husband stressed the need for more safety features for cyclists throughout the city—both day and night. We are all impressed with the new HAWK beacon device on Chapin and West Huron to help pedestrians safely cross busy streets. There may be other locations where it is needed.

Downtown safety was also a major concern of last night’s meeting as it relates to our downtown sidewalks and parks. The CAC strongly support the efforts of the Downtown Outreach and Panhandling Task Force, chaired by 1st Ward Council Member Sabra Briere, to deal with the perception that problems have increased in the Downtown over the last year. So far, the Outreach Task Force has met three times and its members agree that our future actions should include multiple efforts. We must educate the public and the student population on the problem and possible solutions, we must increase and improve outreach programs to help those who are really in need, and we may need to make improvements in the loitering and panhandling ordinances to reduce unacceptable behavior.

A lot more was discussed last night, but this is a sampling of our 2011 downtown concerns and commitments.