

To: City of Ann Arbor Planning Commission Members
Brett Lenart, City of Ann Arbor Planning Manager
Matt Kowalski, City of Ann Arbor, City Planner

From: Theresa Angelini, Architect, Partner, Angelini & Associates Architects

Date: September 7, 2021

Re: Amendments to Chapter 55 Unified Development Code, to amend Sections 5.29.6 related to Site Plan Review and Approval Standards

I've been involved in the discussions of this ordinance revision as a Site Plan Review Stakeholder member after becoming aware of how difficult it is for small commercial properties to make improvements without setting off a chain of requirements that are disproportional to the proposed changes. The cost/benefits analysis just doesn't make sense for small projects and therefore, as one looks around the city and see many small commercial properties that are in decline, it becomes apparent as to why this occurs.

In general, the proposed ordinance revisions submitted for review at the 9/8/21 Planning Meeting will be a significant improvement in allowing small commercial sites to make improvements to their sites in a more efficient cost-effective way than what currently exists. This will benefit the City by encouraging small business owners to improve their properties to meet the building code and their needs without the burden of disproportional requirements.

There are two sticking points that need further refinement. As currently proposed, these include:

- Accessory Buildings, Structure, Canopy, Equipment or similar Structure less than 300 SF would not require Planning Manager approval – only the typical building permit requirements for zoning and code review.
- Outdoor Deck, Patio, Plaza, or combination up to 1000 SF, appears to require no Planning Manager or Planning Commission review and approval, as of the 8/3/21 PC meeting, which is raising concerns with the City staff, especially for stormwater.

In order to make an informed decision, one needs to put these square footage limitations in context.

For single family residential improvements in the City, new Impervious Areas of less than 200 SF do not require storm water mitigation. This seems fair and it seems proportional that small commercial developments should also have similar regulations. However, the 1000 SF threshold limit for Decks, Patios, etc. seems excessive.

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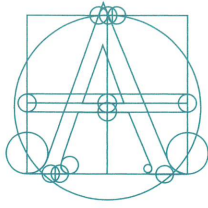
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Accessory Buildings, Structures, Canopies, Equipment, or Similar Structures

In thinking about small Accessory Buildings that benefit their site and the City, let's consider the following for scale:

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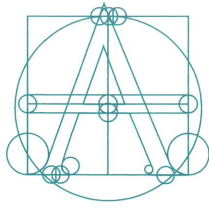
- Bill's Beer Garden Shed at 218 S. Ashley. This small building includes two restrooms and the serving bar, which has a prep counter and serving counter with circulation in the middle. The total SF is 422 SF. This is a successful small building that has made a huge impact on the west side of downtown and this type of development should be encouraged.
- If one was to add a stairway addition to a two-story building, that would be roughly 10' x 20' x 2 stores = 400 SF. The city allows for "vertical circulation square footage" to be subtracted from footprints, but if one wanted to add a stairway and infill some existing stairs elsewhere in the building, those infilled stairs would add square footage to the building. A threshold of 400 SF would allow for safe code-compliant stairways to be added and less safe stairs to be infilled.
- If one wanted to add accessible restrooms, that footprint would be approx. 7' x 8' plus wall thicknesses and a hall or vestibule. Adding two accessible restrooms with a hallway and wall thicknesses could be 180 SF. Multiplied by two floors if they were stacked would then be 360 SF.
- A minimal two car garage, per Architectural Graphic Standards is roughly 22' x 23' or 506 SF. One could consider the need for this on a site with the need for a garage for storage of landscaping or maintenance equipment.
- The size of a parking space is roughly 10' x 20' or 200 SF. You could imagine two outdoor tables fitting within that footprint. Two of these size spaces, possibly with a canopy overhead would allow at least 4 tables, maybe with 4-6 seats each, would be 400 SF.

Based on the facts above, I believe allowing Accessory Buildings, Structures, Canopies, etc. up to 400 SF would be a more appropriate size limitation that would allow adequate square footage for small improvements that would have a positive impact on small developments.

Outdoor Deck, Patio, or Plaza

In thinking about setting the size limitation for Patio's, Decks, and Plaza's etc. to 1000 SF, we could consider the following actual successful examples for scale:

- The deck seating at Jerusalem Garden at 314 E. Liberty appears to have an east deck of 220 SF plus a west deck of 321 SF, for a total of 541 SF. These decks enrich and enliven the activity on the street along Liberty.



- The Beer Grotto at 303 S. Ashley appears to be a site of 2640 SF with a building of 1228 SF, leaving 1412 SF for a 600 SF tented area, 400 SF patio seating, and circulation. (estimated)
- The former DKE Shant at 611 E. William, now Redeemer Church, includes a front courtyard of approximately 600 SF, once the building footprint and circulation are subtracted from the site. This appears to be proportional for people entering the church and circulating outside afterwards. (66' x 33' site = 2178 SF less a building footprint of 1000 SF with some extra SF around the sides and circulation up to the front porch)
- The outdoor seating area at Bills Beer Garden appears to be just over 2000 SF (6 smallish parking spaces @ maybe 9' each x 19' long plus 19' backup). This is obviously twice as large as the 1000 SF proposed limit, but it makes use of an unused parking lot at night, which is already paved and activates this area at night.
- For context of what is too large, Liberty Plaza is listed as .25 acres, which is 10,890 SF.

Based on the sizes of the successful outdoor spaces above, it appears that 1000 SF is a little large as a size limitation for lessening the Site Planning requirements associated with this size space. It would seem more reasonable to set a limitation of 600 SF at most, which would be 3 times the limit for impervious surface requirements for single family residences.

In summary, based on my experience as an architect for over 35 years and based on my review of the information available on ewashtenaw and etrakit, **setting the limit threshold (for Site Plan Review) at 400 SF for Accessory Buildings, Structures, and Canopies instead of 300 SF and setting the limit at 600 SF for Patios, Decks and Plazas, instead of 1000 SF, seems reasonable and a significant improvement to the Ordinance.**

Sincerely yours,

Theresa L. Angelini