

Downtown Area Citizens Advisory Council Meeting Minutes April 1, 2014
City Council Work Room, 2nd. Floor, City Hall, October 1, 2013, 7:00 pm.

Members present: Marsha Chamberlin, Joan French, Jim Kern, Ray Detter
Members absent: John Chamberlin, Herb Kaufer, Sue Kern, Kathleen Nolan
Visitors: Felicia Flores, Steve Kaplan, Stephan Trendov

At last night's CAC meeting we were pleased to have a potential new member, Felicia Flores, a new and very pleased resident of City Apartments as well as being the manager of Sava's Restaurant on State Street. And let me say again that if anyone knows of someone who lives in the DDA area and has an interest in being involved in helping to shape the developments in the Downtown Area, please let them know that we would welcome them as new members—meet the first Tuesday of every month, 7:00 pm. in City Council Work Room. Last night was an appropriate time to review some of our positions on current issues that affect the downtown.

First of all, we unanimously support expansion of public transit services in Ann Arbor and passage of the 0.7 –mill transit tax proposal on the May 6 ballot. We want better bus service on nights and weekends, redesigned routes reaching more destinations and more frequent trips. This will result in improved quality of life for all of us by reducing traffic congestion, protecting the environment and sparking economic opportunity—and maybe we won't have to build any more huge public parking structures in downtown Ann Arbor.

Secondly, we continue to support the City Council's wise decision in January to make changes in D1 Downtown zoning that will eliminate the mistakes that were made in the past. The Planning Commission has been instructed to provide recommendations to do that, and we are in very strong support of hiring a competent urban planning consultant firm to advise Council in ways to do that. In relation to that goal, we also intend to continue to advocate for strengthening the power of our Design Review Board, Planning Commission and City Council to produce better designed buildings that do not have negative impacts upon their neighbors—particularly in scale and massing.

We spent a lot of time last night discussing recent decisions of City Council that reduce the ability of the Public Arts Commission to carry out its mission. The public art program will have to be reshaped. But we downtown residents wish to say that we appreciate the Art Commission's efforts over the years. Its members have made valuable contributions to Ann Arbor and the arts community. We will continue to support all efforts of the city, individuals, groups and organizations to make sure that commitment to more public art installations remains an important community goal.

Finally, we continue to strongly support the development of a significantly-sized public plaza on the Fifth Avenue side of the Library Lot site as well as the use of a major part of Library Lane for scheduled community activities. We also support pedestrian walkways to Liberty Plaza and an additional Plaza development that is sensitive to the needs of the Public Library and possible connections to the Blake Transit Center and nearby historical properties and districts

But we also believe that any planning for that Library site must include the possibility of a new, tax producing, private development on the major part of the property. We also believe that any future development should be encouraged to work cooperatively to integrate itself with, and complement, the adjoining public plaza and spaces.