

**From:** Raymond Detter <rdetter@umich.edu>

**Subject:** R4C/R2A Zoning Advisory Report

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Mayor Hieftje, City Council Members, and Members of the Planning Commission:

Two weeks ago, fourteen representatives from the eight near-downtown residential associations met to evaluate the R4C/R2A Zoning District Study Advisory Committee Recommendations Report of May 4, 2012. We are the same group that met with the Mayor and every member of City Council to support the creation of a Design Guidelines Task Force that led to the unanimous decision by the Planning Commission and City Council to adopt a set of Downtown Design Guidelines and to create a Design Review Board for development proposals in the Downtown area. We are proud of the efforts that you and all of us played in creating Ann Arbor's downtown design review process.

Now, we members of the Near Downtown Neighborhood Group ask you to support the Report Recommendations of the R4C/R2A Zoning District Study Advisory Committee and we urge you to move forward as quickly as possible to adopt ordinance changes to support those recommendations. We are looking forward to our active involvement in the public discussions that will take place in the adoption and legal processes.

The R4C Committee recommendations are the product of more than two years of comprehensive research, discussion and analysis by the committee and city staff. Following the direction of the City Council Resolution, the committee's recommendations reduce nonconformities in area, height and placement. They seek to develop standards that encourage creative design while maintaining sensitivity for existing neighborhood character. In doing so, they reaffirm the Downtown and Central Area sections of the Master Plan that include commitment to "protect the livability of residentially-zoned areas adjacent to downtown".

Some representatives from our eight neighborhood associations were present at every one of the eleven meetings that took place over the course of 2 ½ years. Discussions were often complex, sometimes intense. There was extensive public involvement of resident owners, renters, rental property owners, neighborhood associations, and developers, including an electronic survey of students. All interested parties were heard.

We were pleased that the meetings made very clear that the Ann Arbor community wants to maintain the scale and character of near downtown, one-house, one-lot Central Area neighborhoods. The Advisory Report recognizes that "Overwhelming public feedback indicated a strong desire to keep the existing streetscape and development pattern of R2A and R4C neighborhoods, including size and massing of existing structures." The committee wisely and logically recommended permitting reconstruction of non-conforming structures in R2A and R4C districts when construction meets identified standards.

Although only limited changes are proposed to the regulations of the R2A district, we urge you to support the recommendation that select areas should be rezoned from R4C to R2A. That recommendation has been approved in the past as a part of Ann Arbor's adopted Central Area Plan.

In its discussions, a majority of the Advisory Committee was clearly interested in developing ways of limiting the density of use in R4C districts through a number of possible ways: reduction of number and occupants in units, adopting a graduated scale of parking spaces, or other means that were not fully developed in the recommendations.

Of particular importance to us was the recommendation for "a limit on lot combinations within the R4C District . . . in order

to prevent the construction of large buildings that could disrupt the existing scale of the streetscapes.” With the limit on lot combination, the entire community will be assured that a project like City Place will never come before you again for by right approval.

We believe it is essential that the Planning Commission and City Council move forward with the adoption of these R4C Committee recommendations and put them into ordinance changes as swiftly as possible.

As the public process moves forward, we have a few further recommendations for your consideration:

1. We strongly support limiting lot combinations within the near downtown Central Area neighborhoods. Therefore we support the proposed maximum lot size restriction on lot combinations. We would also support an alternative proposal for the imposition of a maximum R4C lot size, where that maximum is based on the original platted lot size, with a fixed maximum for un-platted lots.
2. The advisory Committee voted to recommend a graduated scale of required parking. It did not approve the specific scale described in the Report. We support a graduated scale of required parking spaces based on the intensity of use of an R4C property. We feel the language in the current report may discourage 5 and 6 bedroom apartments, which we support. It does not, however, provide any graduated parking requirement for multi-unit 3 and 4-bedroom properties, which could have the same occupancy as the 5 or 6 bedroom apartments. There needs to be a more graduated parking requirement that recognizes a property’s potential maximum occupancy.
3. On page 7, second paragraph of the R4C Report, we would like to see further study removed from the Density Calculation recommendation. The committee’s actual recommendation did not include a desire for further study of this and we would like this recommendation removed.
4. We also support adoption of the revised Summary circulated with the Report rather than the summary paragraph that appears on page 10 of the report.

We appreciate your consideration.

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