

Capitol Neighborhoods Inc
Downtown Plan Committee Meetings
January 21, 2008, 5:15pm & February 4, 2008 5:15pm
Barriques Coffee House, 127 W. Washington Ave.

*These are combined Minutes for Downtown Plan Committee meetings that took place on 1/21/08 and 2/4/08. In the prior meeting, the group decided to start going through the Downtown Advisory Report section by section, beginning with **Land Use** and **Housing**. (The D.A.R. is the main tool being used by the Planning Commission in forming the Downtown Plan.)*

Present: Ledell Zellers, Fred Mohs, Cliff Fisher, Davy Meyer, Michael Bridgeman, Jonathan Cooper, Melissa Berger

In these two meetings, we discussed Zoning of downtown neighborhoods, touched on specific Definitions of Density, and then began to address the Residential and Mixed Use Areas as defined in the *Land Use section of the Downtown Advisory Report*, pages 18-22.

ZONING

Ledell read from the Madison Zoning Ordinance, a Statement of Purpose for R4 zoning which thoughtfully promotes families. R4 has been “established to stabilize and protect the essential characteristics of certain medium density residential areas normally located in the outlying as well as some inlying urban parts of the City, and to *promote and encourage a suitable environment for family life where children are members of most families.*”

R4 zoning is not found in the boundaries of CNI, where the lowest density housing is R6. “The R6 general residence district is established to stabilize and protect the essential characteristics of certain of the highest density residential areas normally located in the central part of the City, and to promote and encourage, insofar as compatible with the intensity of land uses, a suitable environment for a predominantly adult population, and in those central areas located in close proximity to the central campus of the University of Wisconsin, to promote and encourage a suitable environment for student housing facilities.”

Discussion ensued about whether or not families are welcomed / promoted with the current zoning, and whether or not they should/can be. In R6 zoning, single family homes are broken up into apartments to create the most profitable use. Fred remarks that underlying zoning issues sabotage families moving downtown. The counterpoint is that if there is a market for families (adequately sized/priced houses, schools, neighborhoods), they will come. R6 zoning does not prohibit families, it just doesn't promote them either.

The Marquette neighborhood recently down-zoned—some members present said it may be helpful to take a closer look at that example and consider whether or not similar down-zoning would be possible and/or useful in any downtown neighborhoods.

DEFINITIONS OF DENSITY

Jonathan read from the Bassett neighborhood plan the following definitions of density:

Low Density	under 15 units per acre	}	City of Madison Comprehensive Plan defines only as Medium Density, 16-40 units per acre.
Medium Density	16-25 units per acre		
Med-High Density	26-40 units per acre		
High Density	40-60 units per acre		
Very High Density	more than 60 units per acre		

To help the group imagine these levels, Jonathan shared that his block in the Bassett neighborhood has a density of 39 units per acre. A McGrath apartment building proposal in Bassett neighborhood, 4 stories high, with 1 and 2 bedroom units, has the density of over 100 units per acre.

RESIDENTIAL AND MIXED-USE AREAS

As defined in pages 18-22 of Downtown Advisory Report. Map included in appendix.

Residential Districts

Overall: In the overall definition of Residential Areas in the D.A.R., the committee members generally agree with the definitions and boundaries. The key concern is that the Downtown Plan is in harmony with the established neighborhood plans.

1. *East Mifflin area is a concern*, as it has no official neighborhood plan.

Group agrees that it can likely be incorporated into the Bassett plan, as it is similar in character, vision, identity, and geography.

2. *James Madison Park area is a concern*, as it too has no neighborhood plan.

Specifically of concern for the Downtown Plan is the area outside of Mansion Hill District, approximately bordered by N. Webster, E. Gorham, N. Blair, E. Mifflin.

a. *Residents and Alders* for James Madison should be included in discussions of vision for this area.

b. *Historic Districting*—is it desirable? Is it going to move ahead?

c. *Houses along Gorham Street* overlooking park are significant

I. Lakefront Zone

A. Bassett Neighborhood including Jonathan Cooper and Pete Ostlind should be involved with analyzing this district.

B. Determine historic preservation buildings, determine status of proposed conservation district. Buildings have been proposed:

1. Dowling Building, 445-447 W. Wilson St

2. George House, 437 W. Wilson St

3. Siebecker House, 409 W. Wilson St

4. Doty School, 351 W. Wilson St

C. Determine if there are any desirable opportunities for buildings taller than 4 stories. If so, define them specifically in the proposal.

II. West Washington Ave

A. Hash out recommendations for this area further, perhaps using language from the Bassett conservation district which this district is inside of.

B. 3-Story height limit is preferred.

C. There is room for improvement here. Rehabilitation and selective development is desirable, as long as it keeps with the character of current homes.

D. Deep lots would lend well to carriage homes or other interesting development.

E. AAA Building is a concern and candidate for improvement.

III. East Washington Ave

A. Group agrees with D.A.R., though wants to take a closer look at the 200-500 blocks of E. Washington to see if there are specific areas especially primed for redevelopment.

B. Group agrees that Brayton Lot is a major concern and look forward to watching the infill development unfold.

Mixed-Use Districts

A. East Campus District

***did not yet address, will in next meeting*

B. State Street District

***did not yet address, ran out of time. But Fred wants to be included in this conversation as the Angelic building and others in this district are a prime concern of his.*

C. High Density Student Housing District

1. Group agrees that this is a good area to have student high-rise development.
2. Only concern is the “buffer-zone” area between this district and the W. Dayton / W. Mifflin Street Residential district.
3. Agree with report calling for “a pleasing transition in scale and character to the adjoining and existing residential district” with buildings up to 5 stories in height, but think there is an error in the D.A.R. The D.A.R. mentions “W. Mifflin Street” twice where we believe they mean W. Dayton Street. Clarify this point to ensure we share the correct vision. The group does not believe it is appropriate for this district to spread as far as Mifflin St.

...Remaining nine Mixed-Use districts as well as A & B above will be on the itinerary for the next meeting!

Next Meeting Scheduled for Monday, February 18
5:15pm at Barriques!

***Adding to our “Brainstorming” document, we continue to come up with more questions, concerns, ideas, and potential policy endorsements under the topics of Land Use. The compilation of our brainstorming results under the topic of Land Use has now been organized into six categories in the attached document: “Land Use Break Down”, for ease in reading. It is still, however, an evolving document which will be added to and condensed as we move forward through this process.*