

Focus Group Executive Summary

Who participated?

- 72 individuals (some attending more than one meeting) including:
 - 8 members of the DDA Downtown Marketing Committee
 - 5 members of the Energy & Environmental Commission
 - 59 concerned citizens

What was said?

What is working: The most often cited positive aspects of the downtown zoning ordinances included:

- Revitalization of the downtown is occurring
- More people are living downtown as permanent residents
- The mix of uses is increasing
- The D1/D2 ordinances are simpler and easier to understand than the former zoning districts

What is not working: The most often cited negative aspects of the downtown zoning ordinances included:

- The design guidelines should have more teeth (possibly making them mandatory or necessary for the granting of premiums)
- Premiums should not be granted so freely, or should be eliminated all together; also, they should be changed to ensure that we are getting what we want from them (more affordable housing, environmental/energy enhancements, and others)
- Buildings being built are too tall; height limits should be decreased
- Step-backs or diagonals should be required to prevent all buildings from being constructed as “blocks” and to increase solar access for surrounding properties
- The location of D1 and D2 districts needs to be re-evaluated
 - There should be more D2 areas that provide buffers between residential neighborhoods and D1 districts
 - Build-out analysis should be conducted for D1 and D2 areas
- There is a lack of diversity in the residential development happening downtown
 - Less student housing
 - Number of bedrooms should be better regulated
 - Need more housing for people working downtown, young professionals looking to live downtown, people with families, empty-nesters and seniors
- More protection should be given to historic neighborhoods abutting D1 and D2 districts
 - The Historic District Commission should have more say over development that happens adjacent to the district, and which negatively impacts a historic resource
 - More setbacks/buffering and changes in massing should be required for projects abutting a historic district

- Retail uses should be required on the first floor of new developments
- The urban forest should be better protected
 - Landmark trees need more protection
 - More landscaping and green space should be incorporated into projects
- More on-site parking should be required of new developments
- The vision for downtown should be revisited, and the zoning should be revised to reflect it
- Footing drain disconnect problem – no development should be approved unless the City has the infrastructure (including storm water and sewer) to support it
- Character areas should be redefined and/or given more teeth
- The political process/approval process should be improved
- The ordinances already on the books should be enforced