

Subscribe to List

View Past Issues



Like

0

Comment

0

Share



Tweet

Survey on creating our City's vision attached!
Update on the agenda, and what's on the horizon.



[Friend on Facebook](#)

[Follow on Twitter](#)

[Forward to a Friend](#)



Sabra Briere

First Ward, City Council

www.sabrabriere.org

sbriere@A2gov.org

sabra.briere@gmail.com

995-3518 (home)

277-6578 (cell)

Dear neighbors,

I've been enjoying the seasonal weather (finally!). My garden is rose-scented now that all the iris are past their glory. July will bring the lilies; August the dahlias. But for now, I'm enjoying June strawberries (I got more at the Market this morning) and early spring onions. I take a trip to the Farmer's Market every Saturday morning at about 7:30. That way, I'm there in time to find a parking space, shop the freshest items, and be home before 8:30. This is truly one of the benefits of living in Ann Arbor.

There are several items on the Agenda for this Monday (June 20th) but I want to start by talking about the DDA's efforts to create a plan for developing the City-owned parcels downtown. If you don't remember this plan, Council approved the proposal in April. Here's the [link](#) to the resolution (there are maps here, too).

Items in this newsletter

[Creating a vision for Ann Arbor's future](#)

[On the Agenda](#)

Visioning Ann Arbor

The DDA has been tasked with developing a master plan for several City-owned parcels (most are surface parking lots) in the downtown. Creating this master plan (which requires a 'robust public process') is the first step toward developing these parcels.

To start with, they have been asked to concentrate on the area between Division and Ashley, William and Liberty. This six-block

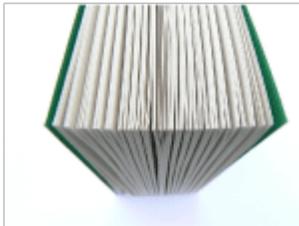


Coffee wakes some of us up

I hold office hours 7:30 to 9 am on Mondays at the Northside Grill.

Recently the discussions have been about the budget and City planning, the Fuller Road project proposal, what might be done at Lowertown (the empty field), and how the DDA will implement its master planning process. If you have an issue or concern, please call or **take advantage of these open hours.**

The folks at The Northside have decent morning coffee and a friendly, neighborhood atmosphere. If you see me there, please wave, and if you have time, please, join me for coffee and a chat.



What am I reading?

I spend a lot of time reading. I read about other communities,

area contains the underground parking structure next to the downtown library, the Old Y lot, the parking structure at Fourth and William, the lot next to Palio's, and the Kline's lot. The DDA's Partnerships Committee is engaged in discussing this project, and may hire someone to facilitate the public process by August. Right here, I want to ask you to take a survey about this public process. Here's the [link](#).

About the Public Process

The City has never had a 'robust public process' of the type many residents envision. Although the City has developed many master plans - through a planning process that directly involved residents - most residents have never known how to or been interested in participating in these planning sessions. The result has been that interested people talk with each other and with staff, developing a plan that is coordinated with other, existing plans. Because they are talking with each other, they reinforce ideas a small sub-set of residents may hold.

When the master plan is provided to Council for approval, sometimes fewer than 100 residents have actually had any input into its creation. Council members may approve the plan and the City staff may begin to implement certain aspects without many residents even knowing about the concepts raised in the plan.

The City Council's resolution requires something more. The DDA must meet the challenge of finding a way to achieve that more 'robust' public discussion. It's not one for which members of the Partnerships Committee have planned.

At this point, the only proposal the committee has heard would include one or two community 'round tables' with intended involvement in each of 100 or fewer residents.

I'm looking forward to getting responses to this [survey](#) -- it's just five questions.

Creating a Vision

Other communities have developed a process based on community involvement. I searched for information on creating a community vision, and found several manuals. I've placed links to these below.

Lansing government, development and planning policy, transportation planning . . .

Here's my current and recent reading list:

The emergency financial manager legislation -- with an eye to its implications for the State.

A series of papers on visioning and leadership -- for municipal governments and the people who live with them.

A variety of white papers on climate change and local government.

I believe that these papers provide valuable background information for making long-range planning and for making public policy decisions.



About the Budget

Although the 2011/12 budget process is complete, there are always some unanswered questions.

Some people have asked me about a report that City staff have abused their purchasing card privileges, and have traveled to resorts using City funds. I don't sit on the Audit committee, but I asked for information from City staff about the use of purchasing cards -- and to do this, I created

There was a surprising amount of information about this process on-line.

[VSP Handbook](#)

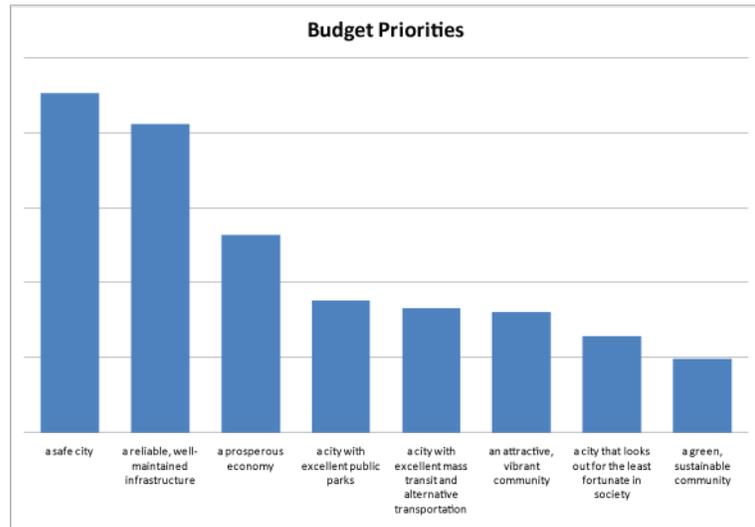
[Visioning How-To](#)

[Visioning and Strategic Planning](#)

[Building Our Future - A Guide to Community Visioning](#)

Why should the 'robust public process' begin with creating a vision?

Although there are many different visions for Ann Arbor's future - visions that include both how the downtown will change and how other areas will change over time (residential, satellite commercial areas, light industrial, alternative transportation, among others) there is no single, community vision for Ann Arbor's future.



(links to larger image)

Over a year ago I conducted a survey that involved a series of 'values statements' about Ann Arbor's budget. Some of those values statements required a visionary view of Ann Arbor's goals and priorities. But these statements were geared toward developing a budget - they weren't intended to answer the question "What will Ann Arbor look like in 40 years?" And that's the question we all need to think about.

If we can talk about that goal - Ann Arbor in 40 years - the development plans for those City-owned parcels will make more sense. We can create priorities, not just for downtown development, but also for other changes in the City, including the budget.

It's good to have a clear set of goals that are understood and supported by the community. At least, I'd like to give that a try.

I hope you'll join the discussion by responding to this [survey](#).

A Vision for the Next 40 Years

a sample of charges for restaurant purchases over \$100 and travel expenses. I have that information [here](#).

The audit of the City's expenditures as of June 30, 2010 included a caution that the City wasn't receiving adequate records of purchases. I don't know what records accompanied the expenses in the spreadsheet (above) but City staff were able to identify each questioned expense. I trust this means that the audit of City expenditures -- based on all expenditures through June 30, 2011 -- will not have that caution. I certainly expect the City to have tightened their procedures.

I continue to hear from people who believe that the Council should have preserved jobs for police and fire fighters.

I continue to hear from others who are dissatisfied with the City's plan to charge downtown property owners for trash pick-up.

I also hear from those who assert that the City should **'empty the buckets'** in order to fulfill community expectations.

On that last, I'm less sympathetic. I've been reading about the emergency financial manager process, and exactly what financial indicators a local government would have to have in order to qualify for an EFM.

One of these indicators is a bond rating of BBB or lower (the City's is between AA- and AA+, with AAA being the highest possible). Other circumstances that would put the City at risk include the existence of [material loans to the General Fund](#) from other local government funds that were not regularly reconciled or that increased, the existence of a structural deficit, and the use of [restricted revenue for purposes](#)

I don't know what the DDA will do with this opportunity, but I really want to create a community vision. The Mayor has a vision; the City staff members also believe they have a vision. Even some members of Council have a vision - but sometimes these visions clash and sometimes they surprise those of us who don't know they exist.

When I first heard that the City's vision included lining the Huron River with green parks - this must have been nearly 40 years ago - I thought: that's the community's vision. When members of Council began promoting more density in the downtown in order to allow for population growth - I thought: when did the vision change? And how come I didn't hear about it?

So I'm hoping you'd be involved in creating a unified vision for the next 40 years. Whether the DDA manages this process or not, I want to talk about it. The first step is this [survey](#). I'll share the information - your willingness to participate in the process and your current visions - on July 3rd.

On the Agenda

The Council will address several budget items at this last meeting of the fiscal year. Most of these items are annual fees for software maintenance, contracts, and supplies. These items are in the 2010/11 budget, and are common to see at the end of the fiscal year, as contracts and maintenance agreements often run from July 1 to June 30.

Medical Marijuana licensing and zoning
This may be the last meeting that the Council will spend much time on this issue. There is a public hearing on the licensing ordinance; Council members expect to vote to approve (or not) these ordinances. Here are links to the latest versions of the [licensing](#) and [zoning](#) ordinance drafts.

Landscaping (commercial construction)
This is a revised ordinance on [landscaping for new and renovated commercial structures](#). There is a public hearing on this ordinance.

Stormwater fees
There is a public hearing and vote on [increasing stormwater fees](#) and amending the billing cycle for summer service.

not authorized by law. The City's practice of maintaining that separation between other funds and the General Fund, as well as the decision to maintain a balanced budget rather than a spending deficit, help to guarantee the City's financial stability.

I'll continue to encourage the City administration to work with the unions and reach an equitable result before July 1. I've been told that the City Human Resources department continues to be creative about keeping as many employees on staff as possible, even as positions are eliminated.

For First Reading

There are technical amendments to the ordinance governing [retirement benefits](#).

Resolutions

A resolution to amend the [Debt Policy and Fund Balance Policy](#).

A resolution to amend the 2011 budget in order to close the Economic Development Fund and transfer \$750,000 back to the General Fund.

Two resolutions for the **design engineering** and **construction engineering** contracts for the Stadium Bridges. The contracts will provide funds for any additional design engineering that proves necessary.

A resolution to issue a contract for repair to the Barton Dam.

As always, I look forward to hearing from you on these agenda items and anything else the concerns you about City government. You can reach me through email (I check it frequently) or by giving me a call (995-3418 or 277-6578).



Survey: a vision for Ann Arbor

Do you have a vision for Ann Arbor's future? Can you help create a vision? Our community is going to change, in small and large ways. The City staff and some residents have already created master plans for the



On the Horizon

The Council's working session June 13 involved three different staff briefings on issues that could affect us all.

Redistricting

The City Charter requires that the City be redistricted after each

environment, downtown and neighborhood development (including zoning), solid waste, compost and recycling, capital improvements -- and many others. These plans often relate to each other but do not necessarily reflect the direction many residents want to pursue.

The DDA will be engaging in a 'robust public process' in order to create a master plan for developing City-owned properties in the downtown. I don't think they can do that without your input.

I hope you'll respond to this survey. I'll share the results with you and with the DDA and Council.

national census. The census numbers came back a few months ago, and the City Clerk has drafted a redistricting plan.

During the last 10 years, the First Ward's population increased compared to the other four wards (the overall population of Ann Arbor decreased between the 2000 and 2010 censuses, but only by 90 people). This population increase in the First Ward means that the First Ward will have its boundaries decreased. All of this change is in the downtown. Each of the other wards will have boundary changes -- and each will receive a portion of the First Ward's current population.

Because the new boundaries result in redistricting less than 2000 people, the changes are minor. They are expected take effect prior to the November election.

I suggested to the City Clerk that a simpler version of the redistricting plan would move almost the same number of residents while requiring fewer boundary adjustments. Here's a [link](#) to the current reapportionment

plan. This is a [map](#) with my suggested changes. The Council will vote on this in July.

Street Maintenance millage renewal and a proposed Sidewalk millage

The Council will be considering whether to put a renewal of the Street Maintenance millage on the November ballot. At the same time, the Council will consider whether to ask voters to approve a new millage for Sidewalk Maintenance.

The staff provided their report at the working session on June 13. I'll have more to say on these two millages in a later newsletter. Here's a link to the staff report.

Annexation

The City staff prepared a report with recommendations regarding annexation of properties that are currently township islands. The Council may consider amending the City's current annexation policies and the agreements with the

townships of Ann Arbor, Pittsfield and Scio. There are several considerations and options included in the staff report. Here is a link to the [report](#) and one to the [map](#) of township islands.

[follow on Twitter](#) | [friend on Facebook](#) | [forward to a friend](#)

[unsubscribe from this list](#) | [update subscription preferences](#)

Sent to <<Email Address>> — [why did I get this?](#)
[unsubscribe from this list](#) | [update subscription preferences](#)
Sabra Briere, Ann Arbor City City Council · 1418 Broadway · Ann Arbor, MI 48105

