

Dear Neighbors,

I have been trying to prepare for fall, and falling further behind. I don't know how October could be here so quickly. This morning's very cold start reminded me that I have to dig the summer bulbs as well as put the garden to bed for the winter sometime in the next month or so. AND rake the leaves.

## Leave those leaves?

Some years I've raked many of the leaves onto my flower beds and used them for mulch, removing them in the spring. There were still enough left to rake into the street for the final pickup by the City. Not this year, of course. I'll be bagging leaves and stuffing them and the other garden cuttings that I cannot compost into the compost carts. Compost carts and bags will be picked up by the City through the end of November.

If you compost more successfully than I do (I have a fairly shaded yard), compost your leaves. Leave them on your beds, mulch them with a mulching mower, or somehow let them turn into a benefit for your yard.

Otherwise, it's time to send them to the City to compost. If you don't think you can rake and bag all of your leaves, others will do it for you, for a fee.

For about the same price as two compost carts at the city's discounted price, Arbor Environmental Alliance will schedule up to three curbside leaf collections between October 15<sup>th</sup> and December 15<sup>th</sup> for \$25 per pickup. All leaves will be composted and trees planted to offset the carbon cost of this program.

For more information on this program and on AEA and what more they do for the environment, visit their website at [www.arborencvironmentalalliance.com](http://www.arborencvironmentalalliance.com).

If this interests you, I recommend researching the organization. (I read the website after I read the article, so this is all I know.)

If you have energy to share, Neighborhood Senior Services is coordinating its 35th annual fall chore day on Saturday, Nov. 13, 2010 from 10-2. Volunteers sign up online by Oct 31 at [www.nssweb.org](http://www.nssweb.org) and assist raking leaves, checking smoke alarms, and helping seniors throughout Washtenaw County (712-7775). Groups, individuals, and families are welcome.

There are probably other service organizations willing to rake and bag leaves that I haven't heard about. If you know about a group that can help others, please let me know, and I'll share the news.

## On the Agenda

The agenda for Monday, October 4<sup>th</sup> isn't very heavy, but it has some interesting items.

## Area, Height and Placement (a redefinition of zoning)

I've brought this item up several times in the past. This is the scheduled public hearing, second reading and vote on the ordinance change.

**Redefining Area, Height and Placement** in non-R1 zoning is how I think of this. The re-definition applies only to new construction, not additions, and is intended to affect new construction in areas zoned for commercial, office, research and manufacturing activities outside the Downtown (D1/D2) districts.

If this ordinance passes, new construction for commercial, office, research and manufacturing buildings will become more consistent. Height will be up to 55 feet maximum, depending on zoning; placement on the lot will be further away from any neighboring residential and closer to the street. (There would be a maximum and minimum front setback, to ensure that buildings were closer.)

Maximum useable floor area will increase (to between 75% and 150%, depending on the zoning). This allows a small lot to be more densely developed.

Multiple family buildings (R2 through R4 zonings) must be no closer than 20 feet from each other. Some multi-family zoning has changed, including height and setbacks. Buildings could be taller; density (number of dwelling units per acre) has not increased. **R4C and R2A**, the two districts currently being studied, have not been redefined in this ordinance.

Is there more than this? Well, it's all a matter of opinion. None of us like to see change that affects us, I suspect, and if your neighborhood abuts a busy street with commercial or office buildings, this change could mean some changes. It is clearly a new vision for Ann Arbor. If you want to see what this could mean, if there was a lot of development money to spend and it was all spent outside the downtown in the next few years, here's a website for you – the Washtenaw Corridor Study: <http://www.washtenawavenue.org/>.

I know there isn't much time, but feel free to share your thoughts on this ordinance change.

## Charging for false alarms

If you have a burglar and/or fire alarm system for your home or business in Ann Arbor, you need to know that a maximum charge of \$500.00 could be in your future for each false alarm. Of course, the Police and Fire Departments aren't interested in fining anyone for false alarms, but also don't want their staff returning over and over again to a house or business because there's a problem with the alarm or someone forgets their key and breaks into their own home. (Yes, this seems to happen.)

If you are planning a construction project or anything else that might set off your alarm, make certain your alarm company knows and can work with the police and fire department to help you protect your home.

## Street lights (de-lighting and re-lighting)

This year's budget included a provision to save about \$120,000 by turning off some street lights owned by DTE. (Most of the street lights are owned by DTE.) The Council approved this on the

recommendation of staff, but requested that first there be a pilot program. The pilot program resulted in the discovery that folks in that residential neighborhood were not happy to have their lighting reduced.

DTE, meanwhile, wouldn't reduce the electric bill.

And the State of Michigan didn't cut Ann Arbor's budget (at least, not so far) for Fiscal Year 2011.

As a result, there is a resolution on Monday to suspend the pilot program and amend the budget so this reduction of \$120,000 for the electric bill will be removed (and thus, the budget will be increased by \$120,000). This resolution is sponsored by Council member Christopher Taylor and Mayor Hieftje; the pilot program was in the Third Ward, where they both live.

## On the horizon

These items aren't on the agenda this week, but will be soon. Please let me know your concerns about these and any other issues.

## Fuller Road Station

This is another topic about which I feel I've written quite a bit.

At the Planning Commission public hearing on this issue, I heard several speakers who oppose this project bring up information about restrictions on the land –restrictions dating back many years – that I've been assured by staff have been resolved.

I'm looking forward to something more than assurances, of course. I've asked for more information and a detailed explanation of what restrictions, if any, are on this piece of land. I've learned that the University once asked to buy the land – and the City said 'no'. As I gain access to documents and explanations, I'll make these available.

Making a decision about the future use of this land is important, but so is deciding on the design of the Fuller Road Station – if the Council approves it at all. If you need to know more (want to see the design, want to see a map, want to ask more questions about what else has been going on) please ask. There's a lot of information, and this issue will be on the agenda probably November 4<sup>th</sup>, right after the election.

## North Main Street Corridor Study

The Washtenaw Corridor Study was presented to Council in September during a working session, and the State Street Corridor Study is underway. The next area the City wants to look at is North Main Street.

North Main, as an entrance into Ann Arbor, needs that new master plan. The last plan was approved in 1988 – 22 years ago. There are many elements in the old plan that we'd probably all like to see implemented, and others that probably should be revised. It's past time for a fresh look.

One of my concerns is – and has been – that this entrance is right next to the Huron River, but the River is nearly invisible and nearly inaccessible. North Main Street abuts Bluffs Nature Area and is adjacent to Bandermer Park / the Argo Pond, while being very close to Barton Park, the Kuebler/Langford Nature Area, and Bird Hills Nature Area. But if you didn't know your way to these parks already, you wouldn't find them by driving down Main Street. You certainly couldn't comfortably bike or walk to any of these parks by starting at Huron and Main, and heading north. There are few signs; there are no directions, and crossing Main to get to Huron River Drive in a car is dangerous enough; going there on foot or bike requires nerves of steel (or something).

It's not the best way to show off our wonderful natural features, and certainly not a welcome vista for visitors. I look forward to actually acting on the recommendations that can come from this study.

**Other issues:**

**Planning Commission will vote on zoning for Medical Marijuana dispensaries on Tuesday, October 5<sup>th</sup>.**

Feel free to share this with your neighbors and friends,

Thank you,

Sabra

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