

City of Ann Arbor

301 East Huron Street  
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Dear City of Ann Arbor Planning Commission,

I'm writing this letter in opposition to the proposed change in Floor Area Ratio calculations, known as ZORO (Zoning Ordinance Reorganization project) and its affect on the Unified Development Code.

The proposed change would be to add in the areas of hallways and stairways to the floor area. Currently, those areas are not included. By increasing the numerator in the ratio, the ultimate result of the change would be to create smaller structures, and therefore, less density in proposed development projects.

My first issue is one of fairness. Property owners and buyers and seller of properties use the current ordinances to make investment and financial decisions concerning properties. Changing the ordinance in ways that adversely affect the value of properties in Ann Arbor should only be done when the public interests, health, safety and/or welfare of its residents can't be accomplished in any other way. Have the proponents of this change given the reasons for the ordinance change? Is it to lower density across the board? Is this in the public interest or in the interests of certain parties?

I'm also worried about the unintended consequences of these kinds of actions and the speed with which the change is being proposed. While I'm not expert enough to evaluate the probabilities, I'm experienced enough to know they occur. At a minimum, I would hope the city staff, appointed officials and elected representatives would take their time understanding, studying and debating the issue and possible repercussions and not rush into a decision on the matter.

The heart of my opposition, however, is the long-term effect on affordable housing. The obvious result of this change would be to reduce density across the board. The reduction of density will lower the supply of housing in the City over time. Given that Ann Arbor is an attractive place to live, we can assume a steady demand for housing. Reducing the supply of housing with a steady demand for housing results in price increases. The price of housing in Ann Arbor is already one of the most pressing issues facing our community. It's currently very difficult for average income earners to live within the city limits. Anything that artificially increases house prices through a change in an ordinance should be a last resort, and we've not heard any cogent arguments to that effect.

Thank you for your service and your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kevin J. Belew  
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Ann Arbor, MI 48103