

—Original Message—

From: dparnellm [<mailto:dparnellm@gmail.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, July 04, 2012 1:25 AM

To: Planning

Subject: Planning initiatives in Ann Arbor

Dear Planning Commissioners,

I am excited about Ann Arbor's vision to grow into the future. I strongly believe that Ann Arbor cannot be stuck in its old small-town ways, but must prepare for inevitable population growth and do this in a sustainable way. I am aware of a number of projects in Ann Arbor that are helping us move in this direction, but I am concerned that with each of these projects, exposure to air pollution is not receiving due attention.

For instance, I am thankful that time, energy, and money is being devoted to re-thinking Washtenaw Avenue's design. But moving from a suburban car-oriented model to a transit-oriented model is not enough.

If not done right, we could be replacing one evil with another evil.

In my experience, even if a street is "friendly" to pedestrians, that does not mean it is healthy for pedestrians. Last year I worked for a few months near downtown Ann Arbor and sometimes my coworkers and I would walk to downtown for lunch. While I love downtown Ann Arbor in many ways, I found the experience of walking through it to be a bad experience. There were many cars driving through the area around lunch time and as a result, there was a strong smell of vehicle fumes in the air. With my asthma, it was not a good experience. Even for those who do not have asthma, having to smell all the fumes is neither healthy nor pleasant. Even with millions of dollars spent on changing Washtenaw, I am afraid that the situation will be no different if not worse.

I recognize that there is no simple solution to this problem. But I do believe there are things we can and must do to address it. First, we should not think that bringing buildings closer to the road is necessarily a good thing. While I do support the idea of moving parking lots to the back, there should still be significant setbacks between the front of a building and the road. Instead of ugly parking lots between the road and the buildings, we could have green space with trees and wide non-motorized paths. Pedestrians and cyclists would then have the option of walking or biking down the road a significant distance from the road, rather than having to walk/bike just a few feet away from cars whizzing by.

I am not asking for anything very radical. A 50-ft buffer of green space for 4-lane roads and a 30-ft buffer of green space for 2-lane roads would go a long way to protecting the health of Ann Arbor citizens. I look forward to your feedback on my concerns and ideas.

Thank you very much for your service.

Best regards,

D. Parnell McCarter