

From: Norman Tyler
Sent: Thursday, June 11, 2015 1:54 PM
To: Planning
Subject: Premiums discussion

Planning Commissioners,

After the presentation and discussion of premiums at last Tuesday's working session, I made a general statement about an approach to the allocation of premiums on which I would like to expand here. I feel the ideas are based on a logical approach to city planning.

First, the city should have a master plan that clearly represents the goals of our city. This is especially important for downtown and near-downtown areas, where the various impacts of growth are quite interconnected. Second, the master plan should be directly reflected in the zoning ordinance, since zoning is the regulatory tool most useful in accomplishing the goals of the master plan.

To better comprehend the impact of the zoning ordinance, staff should prepare a "build-out analysis," which is a graphic representation (preferably a 3-D or birdseye perspective) illustrating what the downtown area would look like if maximum development took place. Based on review of this build-out analysis, the Commission should carefully consider the question, Is this what we desire for Ann Arbor? The analysis would show any inconsistencies between goals of the master plan and zoning ordinance provisions, which then could be revised as needed. A regular update of this analysis (e.g., every 5 years) would reflect changes in the city pattern.

Now to the question of premiums. It is my strong belief that planning for our city should be done by the city, rather than by developers. Planning staff, and especially planning commissioners, should recommend to Council what should happen on parcels in terms of size, use, and public amenities; this should not be left up to the economics of developers. The use of premiums gradually should be phased out, being replaced with more defined and directed development controls in the zoning ordinance. Rather than developers essentially planning the city on a parcel-by-parcel basis, this approach allows city government to say to them, "This is what we want here; who would like to build it?" In the downtown area, definition can be given through the character areas, each with special provisions inserted as needed into the zoning ordinance.

I recognize that what is described above cannot happen quickly, but it represents a legitimate long-term, simplified approach using the city's available tools. Hopefully this provides a useful perspective on the question of premiums.

There may be additional input to consider, so your comments are most welcome.

Norm Tyler...