

**Subject:** Comp Plan comments for tonight's discussion  
**Attachments:** Comprehensive Plan Ch 5 comments\_20250429.pdf

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**From:** egjones@umich.edu **Sent:** Tuesday, April 29, 2025 2:16 PM  
**To:** Radina, Travis <TRadina@a2gov.org>; Ghazi Edwin, Ayesha <AGhaziEdwin@a2gov.org>; Lenart, Brett <BLenart@a2gov.org>; Taylor, Christopher (Mayor) <CTaylor@a2gov.org>; Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>  
**Subject:** Comp Plan comments for tonight's discussion

I have given this a lot of thought, so I would appreciate your reading the attached pdf. Thank you!  
-Eleanor Jones

## GENERAL/OVERALL ISSUES

- 1) Throughout the Plan: **Various ideals** and catchphrases are mentioned throughout the plan but are not supported, justified, or guaranteed to occur (list below). I ask that you remove references to these ideal features the Plan will not actually enact. Deliberate or not, they are a distraction from the substance of the Plan, which actually only promises unbridled densification regardless of effect on the nature of our city.
  - a) “Allow for aging in place” sounds good but means nothing unless you actually have concrete ways to make that happen.
  - b) “Universal design” sounds great but I don’t see anything in the plan that will cause more housing to be built to those standards.
  - c) “Many varieties of housing will be built” is just an empty promise if there is nothing in the plan to actually cause that to happen.
  - d) The ideal of “Mom & Pop” stores on the corners in residential areas is not going to happen unless the plan has specific ways to ensure it.
  - e) The plan assumes people will have many fewer cars but this is unrealistic. Also unrealistic to not make a plan to support EV charging.
- 2) If you think people won’t read the whole plan, why not create an executive summary?
- 3) Will any public engagement quotes from residents that you’ve rec’d in 2025 be included?
- 4) How do you justify not doing a statistically valid survey?

## CHAPTER 5 COMMENTS

### p. 96, “Future Land Use Approach” - What are we looking to protect?

#### **Why is quality of life not the top priority, the basis of the whole plan?!**

The plan should first make sure we maintain (if not improve!) quality of life, hanging onto the things that make it a wonderful place to live. This Plan is also an opportunity to **make Ann Arbor *better*, not just more populous.**

Ann Arbor provides fantastic quality of life for residents, from the vibrant, quirky downtown to quiet tree-lined neighborhoods, from cultural events and restaurants to great public schools, in pleasant surroundings. “Tree Town” in addition to trees boasts some great public and private natural and architectural treasures throughout the city – not least of which are existing parks and homes throughout the city, many of which have welcoming front porches, landscaping, tiny front yard gardens, rain gardens, or big vegetable gardens in back yards. Many have beautiful architectural details like fancy wood trim, beveled glass windows, attractive entryways, welcoming front porches, etc. that delight the eyes of pedestrians walking by. These exist because a century ago, they were built with care and attention to appearance, not just functionality or capacity.

Whatever is built now will be with us forever, so why should we lower our standards and then have to live with the consequences forever? Why should we ruin pleasant neighborhoods by enacting “*reduced*” restrictions on materials and aesthetic ‘style’?” Why should we permit crowding (building closer to lot lines and less space between homes) when current regulations provide for a much more pleasant place to live? Where is the mandate for that? Where in the Plan is there justification for these measures? Why change this now?

Now is the time to enact setbacks to allow **more** street-side trees to be planted; to require new construction to plant trees and create rain gardens and other permeable green spaces. Given climate change, we don’t have a minute to lose when it comes to reducing concrete heat islands, growing our own natural shade, and mitigating carbon emissions – all of which also contribute to everyone’s quality of life. Why not incentivize solar panels, green roofs, etc. on all new multi-family housing construction? Ditto for beautiful, high-quality architecture. Why not incentivize features like front porches, peaked roofs, pleasing architectural details and overall shapes? We can build better, not just **more**.

I am concerned about the (lack of) durability of ugly new structures. How soon will they need to be torn down and end up in the landfill? Sustainability is not just the latest energy efficient appliances; it's also using more durable materials and construction methods that will last.

**p. 98: "What are the drivers for change?"**

Where is actual, statistically significant evidence of the assertions on p. 98? Who are those 80% and 73% of respondents? What is the "n"? What portion of all adult residents is that?

**p. 100 - Graphic is really confusing – what is it meant to convey?**

**p. 102 - Future Land Use Character Area Breakdown**

**Residential district:**

- 1) "Low rise" is not defined.
- 2) Why should we reduce restrictions on materials and aesthetic style? Justification?
- 3) Aging in place – nice ideal but not supported by the Plan. Delete reference.
- 4) "*Maximum building footprint or building width to maintain neighborhood rhythm*" – What on earth is "neighborhood rhythm" and who gets to judge what's in keeping with a given neighborhood's "rhythm"? Will the neighborhood residents get a say?
- 5) Under development style, what is "neighborhood fabric"? Who gets to define what will be considered "compatible with existing neighborhood fabric"? Will the neighborhood residents get a say?
- 6) Re: Businesses entering residential areas – Who, pray tell, will dictate what types of businesses can move into a given neighborhood? What are "neighborhood-serving services"?

**p. 104 Practical application, residential district:**

*"Commercial spaces should be directed toward arterials and collectors, rather than local streets."*

Is this trying to say commercial will actually be limited to arterials & collectors? Or is it just more wishful thinking?

Transition district - "*some are closer to Residential Districts than others, and in those cases, building heights may be limited based on their proximity to nearby homes*" Higher-intensity uses should be concentrated at key nodes and major intersections." Again, "may be" and "should" are not enforceable so to me they just sound like empty promises.

**p. 106, Investments Needed to Achieve Future Land Use Vision –**

1<sup>st</sup> paragraph: I think it is ridiculous that this section on needed investments pretends infrastructure is not an issue. Writing the plan as some fairy-tale future scenario re: needed infrastructure improvements is just plain dishonest and leads me to not trust you to take this seriously. The Plan gives short shrift to residents' very valid concerns about our current infrastructure. The city floods basements with raw sewage already, by not providing basic maintenance of current infrastructure. Many residents are rightly horrified at the idea of radically increasing density when current infrastructure isn't up to the current demand. Don't gloss over the problems; re-write and expand this section to do justice to this serious subject.

By only highlighting "Transit" and "Open Space" it gives the impression that infrastructure upgrades to support this radical increase in population density are insignificant. Water, sewer, storm drains, electricity, telecom ALL would need to be scaled up to accommodate the proposed density. The Plan should be upfront about needed infrastructure updates to support your goal densification.

**p. 108 – There is nothing in the plan to guarantee a variety of housing types will actually be built.**

I ask that you remove this empty promise everywhere it occurs OR add something to the Plan that would actually require or otherwise actually ensure that a variety will be built. Also, "up to 4 stories" and "no limit on the number of homes" as these are too radical a departure from existing zoning and are not justified. I have met no one who agrees with those proposals.

Why is there an office building and "small commercial building" in the diagram of residential district on p. 108??? I thought commercial was restricted to ground floor in residential areas?

Cherry-picked illustration of the one actual neighborhood store that exists in all of Ann Arbor. (Totally unrealistic to promise any particular kind of business will move into neighborhoods.)

p. 110, Transition District

*“However, some residents have expressed concerns about noise, overcrowding, and traffic.”*

While I appreciate your including this resident concern here, the very next sentence completely blows off that concern & basically says we need to crowd people around transport hubs to reduce car use.

- a) That does not address resident concerns named above.
- b) Just building more housing around theoretical future transit hubs is no guarantee people won't have & drive cars.

p. 116, Flex District

*“By protecting industrial space and improving access to these jobs through strategic location and education efforts, the city can advance economic equity.”*

- a) Where is the evidence for this supposition?
- b) The Land Use Plan does not actually address education.
- c) If economic equity is actually a goal, why not more support for AA Land Trust, owner-occupied multi-unit buildings, and small starter homes? These have actually been proven to help people build their own equity and do contribute to families' generational wealth. Why doesn't the Plan explicitly include ways to promote the creation of more of these housing types?

Thank you for your attention in this matter,

-Eleanor Jones  
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