

Subject:

Don't limit the building heights in the comprehensive plan

From: Maia Hausler**Sent:** Monday, May 12, 2025 10:02 PM**To:** Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>**Subject:** Fwd: Don't limit the building heights in the comprehensive plan

Hello,

I'm incredibly frustrated that the demands of a vocal minority of "Not in my back yard" residents are being taken so seriously in the draft comprehensive plan. Building heights are something that should be addressed in the zoning process, and limiting them at this stage is short-sighted AND classist. In a recent email urging people to support A2N2 speakers they said "*we can make an impressive show of **real neighbors from real neighborhoods!***" A statement that implies that renters are not real neighbors. I am a real neighbor, from a real neighborhood, and I rent. I am a small business owner and artist. I also volunteer with Project Grow and have adopted the park across the street from my house. I'm very involved in my community and making it a better place for EVERYONE. Not just landlords and homeowners, but renters, visitors, and unhoused populations as well. I hope to one day be able to own a home here. The way things currently stand, that seems like an impossibility. The way things currently stand (with my rent increasing every year) living here at all seems like an impossibility.

The people who take issue with bigger buildings and more housing in Ann Arbor are not working to build a better Ann Arbor in the future. They are stuck in the past and do not understand the struggle of younger generations or of those with less means than them. Everyone is so focused on keeping Ann Arbor the same, but they conveniently ignore the fact that it is not the same because the housing costs have gone so high that the people who have made this town so special in the past can no longer afford to live here (unless they bought a home years ago). Please look to the future of this special city when drafting the comprehensive plan.

Before moving back to Michigan in 2022, I lived in Copenhagen. It is a city with high density housing and yet in many ways it feels more small town than Ann Arbor currently does. Like a lot of people in the city, we lived in a 6 story building full of small apartments. The center of the building had a shared courtyard 20 times larger than our current yard. It had shared gardens, fruit trees, grills, picnic tables, and play equipment. We hosted cookouts, and birthday parties, and had drinks with our neighbors of all ages. We had less motor vehical traffic noise, and more nature sounds. We had small grocery stores with healthy food on nearly every corner. We were able to bike or take the train everywhere in the city safely and quickly. We could even take the train into the countryside to forage for berries or go to the beach or for a walk in the woods.

We chose to move to Ann Arbor because, out of all of the towns in Michigan, it reminded us the most of Copenhagen. It seemed at the time that Ann Arbor was moving in the same direction as Copenhagen. That the people here cared about residents having a high quality of life. Having a safe, walkable, bikeable city. Having access to housing with green space FOR EVERYONE. But, by limiting building heights you take this quality of life and reserve it for the wealthy and for those who got here first. You cut out most of the younger generations from this dream. You reserve the green spaces for the people who hoard their backyards to themselves and don't want taller buildings because they might bring in "not real neighbors"

to the real neighborhoods. But how can you have true community without including everyone? How can you have safe bike lanes and sidewalks if most people have to drive into downtown from far away and you restrict grocery stores and cafes to only business districts, forcing people to drive to them? People in this town want to retain an elite lifestyle where only they have access to these things, simply because they don't want "evil renters" moving in next door. DO NOT give in to their demands. Renters are neighbors too. Some renters will hopefully one day be home owners. We are all people and we all deserve access to the amenities Ann Arbor has to offer. Lower incomes should not force us to live outside of Ann Arbor even though we work here.

Please make the comprehensive plan as broad and open as possible to allow for creative developments that have a "small town feel" while still being larger buildings that house many people. Do not restrict building heights. Instead maybe focus on ways that those same higher density buildings can fit into the character of A2 (required greenspace as part of the development etc.) Focus on what residents (not just homeowners) want out of their city.

I want Ann Arbor to be a city that other cities look to as an example of how to build a sustainable, walkable, friendly community, just like Copenhagen is. If you put limits on what can be done you will make that impossible and force out those who actually make the city run. You will squash creativity and innovation. You will be putting limits on our hopes and dreams. A few suggestions as you go forward with this process:

- Allow high-rise buildings in the Transition district and residential neighborhoods when not immediately next to single-family homes OR when they have a large enough setback of greenspace between the new building and the single family home. This is a "win" in several respects: permitting the most housing in the most desired places, allowing students and others to live as close as possible to school and work, helping folks who prefer that their single-family neighborhoods don't feel as much development pressure, decreasing reliance on cars, providing needed revenue to the city, and so much more.
- Allow the same types of commercial opportunities throughout the "Transition" district AND allow for certain types of businesses in residential neighborhoods on main streets (ex. small grocery stores, cafes, etc.)
- Make sure that all properties that aren't single-family or duplex (R1/R2) are included in the Transition or Hub districts. In other words, don't effectively downzone multifamily neighborhoods by allowing them to be lumped into "Low Rise." The new restrictions in single-family areas make it especially important!

Thank you,
Maia Hausler
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