

Subject: ecomment Planning Commission Meeting 03/04/2025
Attachments: Letter to Planning Commission 4 March 2025.docx

From: Kim Winick
Sent: Tuesday, March 4, 2025 12:19 PM
To: Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>
Subject: ecomment Planning Commission Meeting 03/04/2025

Attached please find my electronic comment for this evening's Planning Commission Meeting. Please add it to the meeting packet.

Thank you.

--
Kim Allen Winick
1045 Olivia Ave.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

4 March 2025

Ann Arbor Planning Commission:

I, unlike most residents of Ann Arbor, have been following closely the draft proposal for the revision of the city's master plan. I understand that housing costs, both purchase prices and rents, in many parts of the country have become unaffordable for a significant fraction of the population. It is this issue that the Mayor and City Council have repeatedly raised in support of their plans to significantly upzone most of Ann Arbor and eliminate single-family zoning. Experts, however, have argued that zoning is just one, and not the dominant factor, that has pushed housing prices and rents into the unaffordable range. The dominant factors are the price of new construction (excluding land costs) along with the stagnation of real purchasing power among a significant portion of the population. See, for example:

The New Republic

The Case Against YIMBYism by Michael Friedrich. March 15, 2024.

<https://newrepublic.com/article/179147/case-against-yimbyism-yimbytown-2024>

Economics from the Top Down

From Commodity to Asset: The Truth Behind Rising Housing Prices by Blair Fix. August 22, 2024.

<https://economicsfromthetopdown.com/2024/08/22/from-commodity-to-asset-the-truth-behind-rising-house-prices/>

and

https://youtu.be/Jex02iV52pM?si=HQt0Z_pP_vSooBG0

It should be added that the proposed changes are likely to further gentrify the city. The limited stock of affordable housing will be "scraped off" to permit the construction of high density, expensive units for the well-off.

At a recent presentation by Michelle Bennett, an Ann Arbor senior city planner, to the North Burns Park and Pattengill Neighborhood Associations, she admitted that the proposed master plan/zoning changes may not make housing in Ann Arbor significantly more affordable. Given this fact, what is behind the Mayor and City Council's push to upzone? I can only speculate, but my strong suspicion is that misguided ideas along with money and politics is playing a large role.

I turn now to my second point. The Mayor and City Council would like for us to believe that their proposed plan has broad citizen support. Admittedly, they have hosted a variety of forums to inform the public, but the lack of a widely circulated local newspaper has left the public ill-informed. I speak with many colleagues and fellow Ann Arborites, most of whom

are unaware of the proposed Master Plan/upzoning changes. When informed, they are against the proposal. It would be straightforward for the city to broadly inform its citizens by including a brief, to the point, facts only, synopsis of the proposed changes with their semi-annual property tax bills, water bills, etc. The city has hired external consultants to formulate the new master plan. It has already spent (or committed) nearly \$800,000 on a very poor plan. The plan's recommendations were dictated to the consultants, in advance, by the Mayor and City Council, with little or no input from a broad cross-section of city residents. Unfortunately, the members chosen to staff official government committees do not represent a broad range of expertise and citizen views.

Third, the City has demonstrated that it is very poor at planning. Public spaces, social amenities, natural features, etc. receive short shrift when new developments are proposed and completed. One only needs to look at South University area and the Beekman project on Broadway to see this. Many residents are not against well-planned development that takes into account the existing neighborhoods and the social fabric of the city. Unfortunately, the poorly thought out master plan/upzoning proposal being proffered by the city government will damage the city while failing to substantially increase housing affordability. The City of Ann Arbor should be able to do better than this.

Kim Winick
Ann Arbor