

**Subject:** Public Comment February 18th

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**From:** Orpheus Bartleson <orphbar@umich.edu>

**Sent:** Tuesday, February 17, 2026 2:50 PM

**To:** Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>

**Subject:** Public Comment February 18th

Hello!

My name is Orpheus, and I'm from the Inter-Cooperative Council, a cooperative housing organization in Ann Arbor. I work with the organization and live in one of its houses.

The ICC functions as "Group Living," which is not allowed by right anywhere in the current code, and restricts us to zones R2B and R4. Our existing functioning in these zones is conditional, depending on our obtaining a Special Use Exception. An SEU requires the property to have 8,500 square feet in the lot, 5,000 square feet of floor area, and 350 square feet of lot area per occupant. Nine of our 18 houses were "grandfathered" into their neighborhoods and are noncompliant with these current zoning laws. These houses cannot be structurally altered, preventing us from making our homes safer, more energy efficient, and accessible.

This poses an additional issue when things go wrong at our houses. Usually, if your home burns, you at least have the comfort that you can rebuild and return to the same location with the same community. However, this isn't the case for us. In 2004, one of our houses (Stevens, 816 S. Forest Street) burned, and we were not able to rebuild because of zoning limitations. We had to sell the land because co-ops were no longer permitted at that parcel under the current zoning code. If my house were to be burned down tomorrow, 16 other people and I would lose our housing and our community, with no option to rebuild.

It is crucial that the planning commission remove lot size and square footage limits for group living and student cooperatives. As long as those limits remain in place, any group living structure is limited in its ability to improve at a structural level. Something as simple as a wheelchair ramp cannot be added to 9 of the ICC's 16 houses. Additionally, these current limits ensure that when a noncompliant group living structure burns down, the people who lived there will not only lose their home, their livelihoods, and their community, but they will also be exiled from their neighborhood overnight.

I ask that the lot requirements be removed for Group Housing uses and that cooperative housing be allowed in residential zones by right. Both are crucial to sustaining Ann Arbor and to providing affordable housing to all residents.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Orpheus Bartleson