

The City Land Use Comprehensive Plan is NOT giving enough attention and planning to protect open land, natural features, biodiversity and sustainability. Housing density focus is overshadowing concern for the value of natural places or greenspace. Human population is continually growing exponentially everywhere. It is unrealistic to think that Ann Arbor can ever provide enough housing, much less affordable housing, for all people who want to live in Ann Arbor now and in the future.

The desire for living in Ann Arbor and especially having affordable housing, is leading City Council to press for higher density of population all over the city. While trying to provide housing is admirable, the City of Ann Arbor is not including enough public input from its citizenry. A good plan includes diverse land use not just housing. The City seems to want to increase density everywhere. Housing density increase should be planned for areas that have supporting infrastructure. The plan should not be sprawling and developing places in areas without supporting infrastructure, nor should planning cause massive changes to the character of its neighborhoods. Land use planning includes protection of natural areas. Not everyone wants to live in an urban area.

Ann Arbor is not a 'cookie cutter' town in its people or its landscape. Our landscape is not one flat area, with no nature or natural features. The decisions The Plan seems to create smaller home lot sizes, build higher and create affordability while only looking at a paper plat map of squares, rectangles etc. of Ann Arbor. The Plan does not seem to take any other features or factors into account. Greenspace is not only aesthetic for humans, but tremendously important to our physical and mental health. Humans need to remember that nature provides us with the air, water, food and shelter for our very survival. Nature is necessary to support all life.

The neighborhood we live in is away from the downtown and attracts people who value open land and nature. It is one of the offerings of unique neighborhoods Ann Arbor has to offer. The Plan hopes to increase housing density here - where there isn't infrastructure to support that density. This neighborhood is a mix of home sizes on land that was agricultural. The original farm lands were divided and passed down to family members and then evolved onward for sale to others. Some lot sizes are larger compared to closer to town. It is a sought out area in which to live because of the land, proximity to natural areas, the river, and the quality of life that open space and nature provide. Even if this area was forced to become more dense, it would not suddenly be considered "affordable". All areas of Ann Arbor are unique and fill needs for many people and purposes in life. Greenspace should be considered a value and a blessing to not have human development everywhere.

Our Ward representative, Lisa Disch met with a group of our neighborhood residents last year to tell us that our area would be changing from R1A to R1D. Thus a single family home on 1 acre could be purchased and could then be developed into 4 quarter acre home sites. Our lot would have 8 homes on it instead of one. In a letter to us before the meeting, Lisa implied that we were elitists to want acreage for only one home owner. She also implied that neighborhoods with acreage were wealthy and had a history of trying to keep diversity away. Needless to say, we were all very upset with her implications. The area does not have an exclusionary history. I remind the reader that we were farmland, and not all the homes here are only filled with wealthy people. More recently much of the regions woodlands were bought and developed partially by out of town "developers". Those newer neighborhoods do have high density and are still very expensive....not affordable.

With increased density, not only is nature removed forever, but the character of the neighborhood is changed forever. These areas of more open land lots provide a different character from downtown living. They provide options for families living in Ann Arbor. Not everyone wants the same type of home environment. Our citizens should be involved and have input about their City's future BEFORE our city representatives take actions on our behalf.

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Very Sincerely,

Margot Mehringer

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