

From: Erin Kenney
To: Planning
Cc: Luke Hyde
Subject: Request for Reconsideration: Zoning Changes in Near-Campus Neighborhoods
Date: Monday, October 6, 2025 9:51:36 AM

Dear Members of the Planning Commission,

I am writing to respectfully urge you to reconsider the language proposed in the comprehensive plan, particularly as it relates to the vulnerability of near-campus neighborhoods to speculative and predatory investment.

The recent reduction in minimum lot size requirements for “two-family” dwellings continues to create strong incentives for developers to target properties for high-rent student housing. While many residents have raised these concerns before, I want to highlight a specific example that illustrates the problem clearly: the listing for 1412 Cambridge in the Burns Park neighborhood.

The promotional language used by the seller is concerning:

“Rare Opportunity in Burns Park - Exceptional Development Potential... Zoned R2B, this property presents a special opportunity for development tailored to University of Michigan-affiliated organizations, making it ideal for student housing, co-ops, or group residences... the current zoning allows for a second home to be built at the rear of the property, with a building footprint exceeding 3,000 square feet.”

This language explicitly markets the property based on its zoning and development potential, encouraging teardown and redevelopment into high-density student housing. In neighborhoods like Burns Park, already 40% rental, we value the diversity of housing and residents. However, large-scale conversions into student-focused developments can dramatically alter the fabric and livability of our communities (lack of parking and environmental issues alone would have detrimental impacts on our dense neighborhood within walking distance to an elementary school).

These changes are not hypothetical. They are already happening and accelerating. Without safeguards, we risk losing the balance that allows long-term residents, families, and students to coexist.

Additionally, the comprehensive plan is silent on the proliferation of fraternity, sorority, and co-op housing. While these have long been part of our neighborhood fabric, we are nearing a tipping point. Without thoughtful limits, the balance may shift irreversibly away from a mixed community toward one dominated by short-term, transient residents.

I respectfully urge the commission to:

- Reinstate the 2,500 square foot minimum lot size requirement for two-family dwellings in near-campus neighborhoods;
- Add language to the comprehensive plan that recognizes and addresses the risks of over-concentration of student housing;
- Consider how zoning changes may hasten the erosion of long-term residential populations near campus;
- Consider how lack of parking requirements for large scale undergraduate developments will be impact the congestion in a neighborhood so close to an elementary school.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to thoughtful planning. I appreciate your consideration of these concerns.

Sincerely,

Erin Kenney
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