

Subject: Comments re: Comprehensive Plan for 9/24 Meeting

From: Noah Kazis

Sent: Saturday, September 21, 2024 10:34 AM

To: Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>

Subject: Comments re: Comprehensive Plan for 9/24 Meeting

To the Members of the Planning Commission:

While I cannot make this week's meeting, I am grateful for the chance to comment.

I am strongly supportive of the overall direction of the comprehensive plan. This sort of development can help protect affordability, allow more people to join our wonderful community, help keep our economy strong (and Michigan's), and improve our sustainability. My suggestions are meant to be in keeping with that general direction and to offer comment on the questions raised in the Values document.

I live in the Burns Park neighborhood, one of the areas identified as having the potential to add more density. You ask if neighborhoods like this one should densify. As a resident, I say yes! Our neighborhood is wonderful, and more people should get to enjoy our amenities. More importantly, our central location near the University makes this a walkable, bikeable community where driving can be low. I don't see how the City can meet its comp plan goals without allowing growth in neighborhoods like mine.

Moreover, I do not want to see that growth limited only to larger corridors like Packard and Washtenaw. People prefer living on smaller streets that are quieter and safer from traffic, and we should not force new residents only to live in the second-best option of along large streets. Growth should happen throughout the neighborhood, and land use planning should allow a sufficiently large increase in permissible envelope that this development is economically feasible in the short-to-medium-term. (This also affects the question you raised of how we should handle roads that are heavily traveled but whose primary use is residential. This obviously depends substantially on how we address the neighborhoods just around these roads. I'd rather not concentrate growth on the high-traffic corridors if possible. Though, I think facilitating more commercial development along Packard would be terrific. Our existing stores like Argus and Side Biscuit and York are neighborhood institutions--let's have more of that!)

My other comment is to underscore the importance of simplified districts. The chart points to the consolidation of existing categories into fewer categories, which is appropriate. The corollary, though, is the importance of simplicity within these districts. I have seen many ambitious rezoning efforts stymied by the failure to change all the binding land use constraints--allowing multi-family, say, but failing to address parking requirements or dimensional requirements and leaving no feasible development pattern. If the goal in low-rise residential is to allow missing middle housing, say, it must have the absolute minimum number of restrictions necessary consistent with that typology. Avoiding micromanagement *in both senses* is the key here.

I look forward to continuing to participate in this process, and thank you for your thoughtful leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,
Noah Kazis