

# Planning 101

March 10, 2026

Planning Commission Working Session

# Agenda



Planning Basics

Long-Range Planning

Short-Range Planning

The Development Review Process

Q&A



# Planning Basics



## What Do Land Use Planners Do?

- **Research and analyze** data and trends
- **Engage** with the public
- **Write** land use policy
- **Approve** development for compliance
- **Plan** for future growth



## Long-Range & Short-Range Planning Tasks

### Long Range (20+ Years)

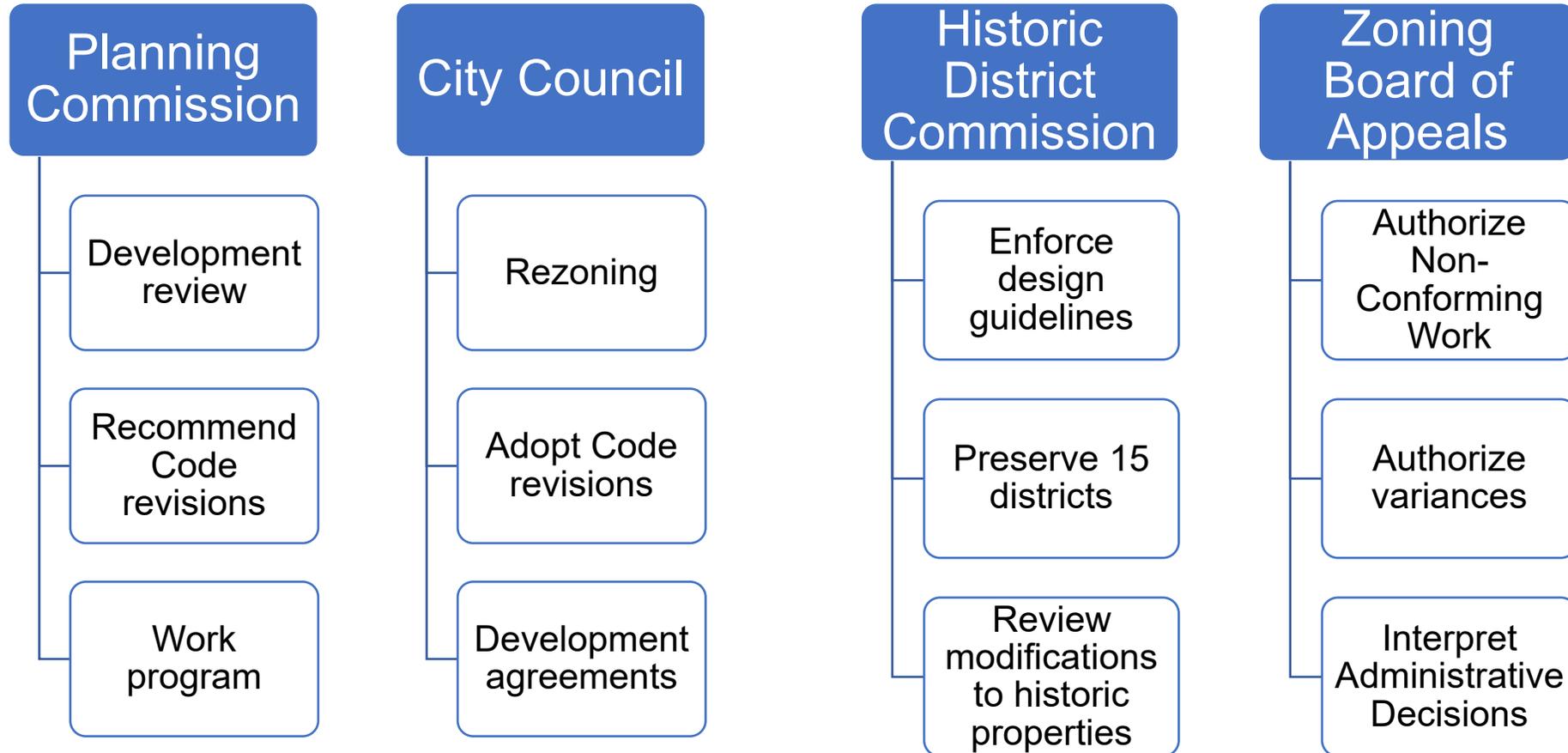
- Comprehensive Planning
- Neighborhood Planning
- Zoning Ordinance Rewrite
- Public Engagement and Stakeholder Building

### Short Range (1-5 Years)

- Zoning Ordinance Updates
- Zoning Permit Review
- Development Review
- Customer Service and Outreach
- Zoning Enforcement



# Commissions



# Long-Range Planning



## What is Long-Range Planning?

- What are our values? How do we achieve them through land use?
- Does our housing supply match our changing demographics?
- How can our land use policy support public transit?
- **What kind of city do we want to become?**



## What is the Role of the Comprehensive Plan?

- Collect data across many areas (housing, demographics, etc.)
- Determine shared values
- Provide a vision and a set of recommendations (i.e. zoning)
- Create a Future Land Use Map
- Help determine where to invest in capital projects



# How Does the Comprehensive Plan Relate to Zoning?

Comprehensive Plan	Zoning
Policy framework; set of recommendations	Local land use law
Direction for how to update zoning through the Future Land Use Map	Implemented with consideration to the Comprehensive Plan recommendations



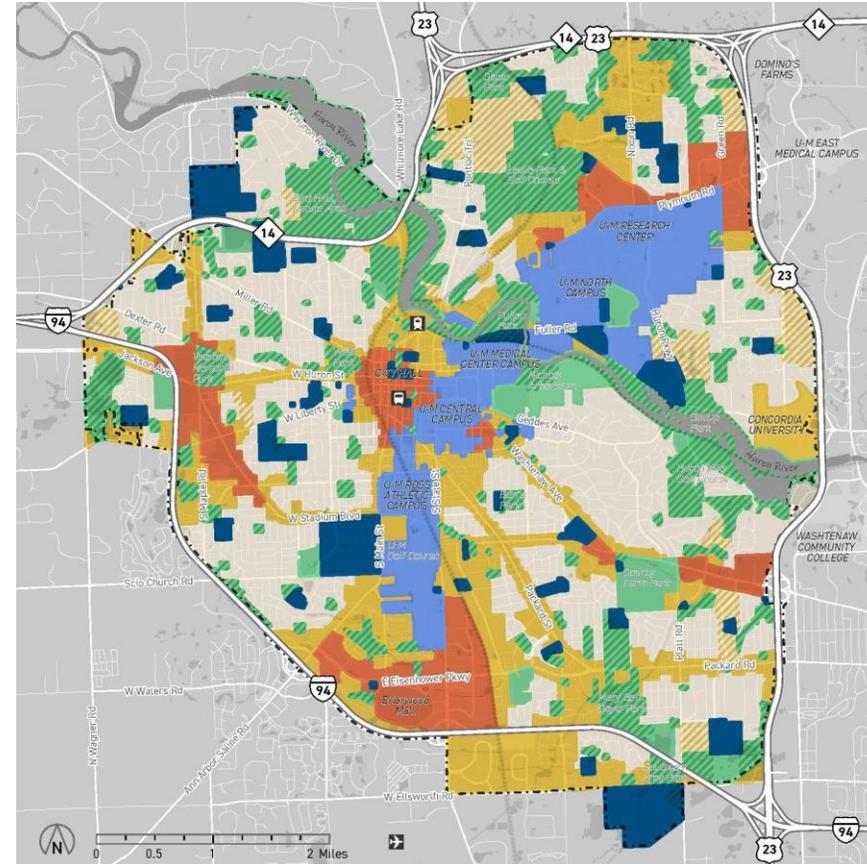
# Ann Arbor: A History

Zoning Year	1923	1940	1957	1967	1980	2024
Number of Zoning Districts	4	6	16	28	33	34
Pages	7	23	67	225	202	305
Number of Character Districts						9
Number of Overlay Districts						1



# What's a Future Land Use Map?

- Convert land use ideas on a map to visually convey the city's preferred development pattern
- The precedent to the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map
- Not legally binding, but a recommendation for land use





## Resources for the Comprehensive Plan

- [Video](#)
- [Project page](#)
- [Subscribe](#) to the Comp Plan email list
- Planning Commission & City Council [calendar](#) to check agenda, minutes, and recordings

# Short-Range Planning



## What is Short-Range Planning?

Short-range planning is how we implement long-range planning goals daily:

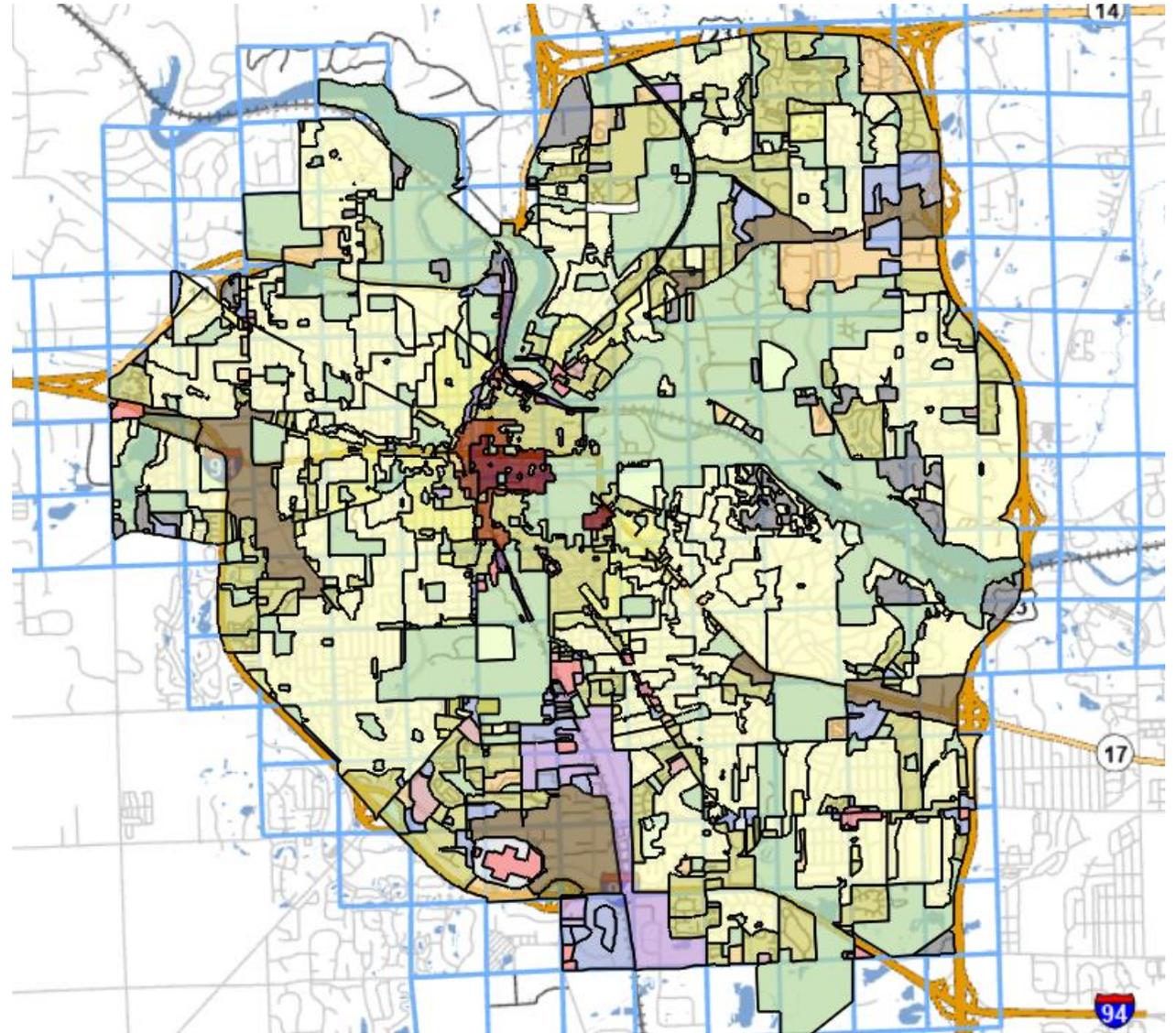
- Customer Service and Outreach – Can I build a fence?
- Development Review - Does this comply with zoning and city ordinances?
- Zoning Permit Review - Does this comply with zoning?
- Zoning Enforcement - After its built, does it continue to comply?



## What is Zoning?

Municipalities divide land into land use "zones" - each zone has a set of regulations for new development that differs from other zones.

- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial





## Why Do Municipalities Zone?

To promote public health, safety, and welfare through land use regulation to meet the needs of:

- food, fiber, energy, and other natural resources,
- places of residence, recreation, industry,
- use of the land is situated in appropriate locations and relationships,
- transportation systems, and other public facilities,
- adequate and efficient provision for transportation systems, sewage disposal, water, energy



## What Does Zoning Regulate?

- Dimensional standards
- Natural features protection
- Solid waste
- Landscaping
- Grading and soil erosion
- Lighting
- Architecture
- Utilities
- Parking



# Dimensional Standards

- Floor area
- Setbacks
- Height
- Lot area
- Lot width
- Lot coverage

TABLE 5.17-4: MIXED-USE DISTRICTS								
Other use and development standards also apply and may supersede or effect the requirements in this table, such as Sections 5.16 Use Specific Standards, 5.18 Special Dimensional and Site Layout Standards, 5.19 Parking Standards and 5.20 Landscaping, Screening, and Buffering.								
DISTRICT	MAX. FLOOR AREA	MAX. FAR	MIN. OPEN SPACE AND MAX. BUILDING COVERAGE (% LOT AREA)	REQUIRED SETBACKS		HEIGHT	LOT DIMENSIONS	
				FRONT	MIN. SIDE AND REAR		MIN. AREA	MIN. WIDTH
O	None	75%	None	Min: 15 ft. Max: 40 ft. [A]	30 ft. [C] when abutting R district, otherwise 0 ft.	Max: 55 ft. and 4 stories when within 300 ft. of abutting R zone, otherwise none.	6,000 sq. ft.	50 ft.
C1	8,000 sq. ft. (non-residential uses only)	100%	None	Min: 10 ft. Max: 25 ft. [A]	30 ft. [C] when abutting R district, otherwise 0 ft.	Max: 35 ft. and 3 stories	2,000 sq. ft.	20 ft.
C1B	None	150%	None	Min: 10 ft. Max: 25 ft. [A]	30 ft. when abutting R district, otherwise 0 ft.	Max: 50 ft. and 4 stories	3,000 sq. ft.	20 ft.
C1A	None	200%	None	None	Equal to minimum of abutting R district	None	None	None
C1A/R	None	300%	None	Min: 10 ft.	Equal to minimum of abutting R district	None	None	None
C2B	None	200%	None	Min: 10 ft. Max: 25 ft. [A]	30 ft. [C] when abutting R district, otherwise 0 ft.	Max: 55 ft. and 4 stories	4,000 sq. ft.	40 ft.
C3	None	200%	None	Min: 10 ft. Max: 25 ft. [A]	30 ft. [C] when abutting R district, otherwise 0 ft.	Max: 55 ft. and 4 stories	6,000 sq. ft.	60 ft.
D1	None	None	None	See Tables 5.17-6 and 5.17-7		Min: 24 ft. and 2 stories [B]	None	None
D2	None	None	Open space: 10% Bldg Coverage: 50%	See Tables 5.17-6 and 5.17-7		Min: 24 ft. and 2 stories [B]	None	None



## Natural Features Protection

- Endangered species habitats
- Landmark trees
- Woodlands
- Wetlands
- Watercourse
- Floodplains
- Steep slopes



# Example of Land Use Reforms - Parking



*Existing*



*Proposed*



# Zoning Code & Building Code

Zoning	Building
Adopted and amended locally	Adopted by the state and cannot be altered locally
Regulates how properties relate to each other for public health and safety	Regulates the construction of a building for public health and safety

# Understanding the Development Review Process



# Development Review

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# Development Review

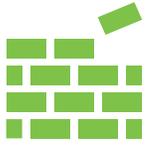
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4. **Approval or Denial by the Appropriate Entity:** the final stage, where the development is approved or denied by the Planning Manager, Planning Commission, or City Council, *depending on project scale and complexity*



# Development Review Team

- Planner
- Engineer
- Urban Forestry
- Transportation
- Public Works (solid waste)
- Fire
- Systems Planning (floodplain, stormwater, soil and grading, utilities)
- Downtown Development Authority (if applicable)
- Building
- Sustainability and Innovations
- Assessor
- Parks
- Attorneys (if necessary)



# Types of Approval

## Administrative Review: Planning Manager

- Small additions to some existing buildings
- Certain accessory structures or minor site improvements
- Routine administrative matters like land divisions and transfers

## Planning Commission

- Recommendations for Rezoning
- Buildings/Developments that are permitted within an applicable zoning district

## Legislative Review: City Council

- Rezoning actions
- Buildings or developments accompanying a legislative change

Staff provides a recommendation for approval or denial



## Average Review Time

- Most site plans for Planning Commission and City Council go through many rounds of review with the development review team
- 7-12 months for many site plans to Planning Commission and beyond
- This has an impact on affordability and equity



# Public Notifications

## Type 1

- Developer shall hold a meeting within 45 days of submitting proposal
- Mail postcards to all properties within 1,000 feet of the site
- Developer uploads Citizen Participation Meeting minutes to [stream.a2gov.org](http://stream.a2gov.org)
- **Effective July 1, 2026:** Post a sign on site with Citizen Participation Meeting information 15 days prior

## Type 2

- Mail postcards to all properties within 500 feet of the site
- Developer available for questions and concerns
- **Effective July 1, 2026:** Post a sign on site within 15 days of submission has been accepted by staff

## Other Notices

- Public hearings
- Rezoning
- Special exception use
- PUD
- General or land division appeal
- Variance

**Q&A**