

Subject: Comprehensive Plan

From: David Gurk
Sent: Monday, March 3, 2025 4:52 PM
To: Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>
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Dear Planning Commission Members:

My name is David Gurk and I am the current chair of Washtenaw Climate Reality, the local chapter of The Climate Reality Project. I was planning on making a statement at your meeting on Tuesday, March 4 but unfortunately I've got another commitment for that time so I will submit my comments to you in this letter:

We are excited to watch the development of the new Comprehensive Plan for Ann Arbor. Ann Arbor is becoming a leader in mixed-use development, and with A2ZERO, a leader in decarbonization efforts. We would ask that the decarbonization goals be more explicit and more concrete in the Comprehensive Plan.

It has been several years since the City of Ann Arbor declared that we are in a "climate emergency". I assure you, that emergency has only intensified over the years since that declaration. Global temperatures shattered all previous records in the year 2023, and those numbers were again surpassed in 2024. We don't expect to set new global heat records every year, but when you do so in two consecutive years, it should be quite evident that despite significant progress in the adoption and implementation of renewable energy, we have neither halted nor reversed the heating of our planet. And we are already feeling the catastrophic effects of this warming, whether in the shocking effects of Hurricane Helene in North Carolina or the devastating fires in California.

Specifically, we would ask that you make energy efficiency, electrification, and the transition to all-renewable energy in all homes and businesses an explicit goal of the Plan. According to Ann Arbor's Greenhouse Gas Inventory, 69% of the city's greenhouse gas emissions come from buildings, so it stands to reason that the decarbonization of buildings should be a focus of the Plan. The Plan should make an explicit commitment to require or strongly incentivize energy efficiency, building electrification, and emissions-free energy in all new development as well as a plan to transition off of the use of fossil fuel energy in existing buildings.

We understand that this may seem as if we are placing the solution to a global problem at the feet of a city commission. But we've got to attack this problem at all levels. Moreover, with the new administration in place in Washington, it seems clear we won't be getting much in the way of positive action at the federal level for at least the next four years. Accordingly, we feel that when a document like the new Comprehensive Plan is being developed, it should not only reflect our values in a clear and unmistakable way, it should also include concrete steps to reach goals consistent with those values. Please take this opportunity to make sure we do so.

Thank you,
David Gurk
Chair, Washtenaw Climate Reality