

Subject: Master Plan

From: Bruce Laidlaw

Sent: Sunday, February 23, 2025 12:11 PM

To: Bennett, Michelle <MBennett@a2gov.org>; Kowalski, Matthew <MKowalski@a2gov.org>

Subject: Master Plan

Thank you for your presentation at the meeting at the downtown library on January 20, 2025. The questions raised at the meeting indicated much concern regarding the direction that the master plan revision is heading. You did a great job handling the questions.

If I understood you correctly, you feel that Ann Arbor residents are welcome to having single and two family neighborhoods opened to multiple unit buildings. I have lived in Ann Arbor since 1959 and have seen no sign of such an attitude regarding densification. When I was the City Attorney, I rendered an unpopular opinion that the R2B zoning of part of the North Burns Park neighborhood allowed a single family home to be converted to a sorority house. The North Burns Park Association filed suit to prevent the conversion. But the Michigan Court of Appeals agreed with my interpretation of the zoning regulations. (North Burns Park Association v. City of Ann Arbor, 155 Mich App 686, 400 NW2d 622 (1986))

Currently, only one dwelling unit per lot is permitted in the R1 zones. In R2 zones, the number of permitted dwelling units per lot is two. You indicated that the Planning Commission favors elimination of all dwelling unit number restrictions. My understanding of that concept is that it would permit this pattern of development which exists on Golden Street in Lower Burns Park.



A seven dwelling unit apartment building is on a street where the rest of the homes are single family. Apparently that land use was permitted by an earlier version of the zoning map.

One of those attending last week's meeting asked me if it was possible to force a public vote on such a change to the master plan and zoning regulations. I don't believe there is anything in the Zoning Enabling Act or other state law that would authorize such a ballot question. In the early 1970s the City Council voted to put an advisory question to a public vote. A circuit judge ruled that an advisory ballot question was not authorized. In view of the importance of the issue, it would seem worthwhile to have a professional survey done to see if Ann Arbor residents favor elimination of the dwelling unit number restrictions.

Bruce Laidlaw

--
Reply to