

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Environmental Commission](#)
Subject: Comment re Housing density and biodiversity - the importance of natural areas
Date: Tuesday, April 22, 2025 4:58:28 PM

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Tuesday, April 22, 2025 4:50 pm

To the Environmental Commission,

My husband and I have lived in the southeast corner of Ann Arbor since 1965, when we moved into Colonial Square Cooperative, which had just been built. We were leaving North Campus student housing and looking for a community that was affordable and diverse because we wanted to raise our 6 year old daughter in a place as vibrant as North Campus, with neighbors from all over the world. My husband was working on the line at the Ford Plant in Ypsilanti and I was just starting my 30 year career as a school librarian, commuting to Wayne Westland schools. What I didn't anticipate was the accessibility of the nearby woods and what a difference that natural area would make in our lives.

When I came home each day and changed into jeans and sturdy shoes, to wander the woods I continued a lifelong appreciation of nature begun as a Girl Scout in Detroit.

When we learned, in the late 1960s that the school system was planning to build a third high school on their 40 acre site, we worked with our neighbors to petition the Board to preserve the land as a natural area. We started before the first Earth day and had no idea what we were getting ourselves into! We then spent the next 30 years pressuring the city to purchase two adjacent parcels of land, including working with the city to get a state grant for the last purchase. Once the city's Natural Area Preservation program was instituted, we became stewards of a 90 acre park, we've continued to work - now to stave off a host of invasive plants such as buckthorn, honeysuckle and garlic mustard. It's been an unintentional life's work that has brought us some aggravation over the years, but much more pleasure and satisfaction. No doubt we couldn't have done it without the support and structure of Colonial Square Cooperative and a whole lot of neighbors. So, at 85 and 94, our lives are bound up with *both* affordable housing AND proximity to nature. We hope you will keep both in mind as the city works through its Comprehensive Plan.

Judith and Manfred Schmidt
[REDACTED]