

Subject: Comprehensive Plan Support

From: Gregg Saldutti Jr
Sent: Tuesday, April 29, 2025 11:02 AM
To: Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>; council@a2gov.org
Subject: Comprehensive Plan Support

Committee Members,

I would first like to thank you for your continued work and dedication in service to the city, particularly in regards to the process of drafting the city's new Comprehensive Plan. You should know that your efforts are appreciated by many in the community, even if that is not always apparent.

As a renter and as someone who is hoping to make Ann Arbor a permanent home, I am writing to urge you to move forward with the broad aim set out in the draft Comprehensive Plan. It is imperative that the city legalizes a much broader range of housing options for the sake of the environment, equity, equality and social justice.

There is ample evidence that shows that denser housing can help us achieve our goals in all of the areas mentioned above.

Denser living through rezoning is better for the environment, allowing development to occur in areas that are already developed and connected to infrastructure, as opposed to clearing greenfield or forested land without any infrastructure connections. Fewer detached homes means more efficiency in heating. Housing people close to work and amenities reduces car trips, which not only uses energy but also creates pollution through brake dust and microplastics shed by tire wear, which ultimately ends up in lungs and in water sources.

Denser living helps to reduce inequality by allowing more racial and economic diversity in higher demand areas, putting people at all income levels closer to jobs, schools and amenities and increasing opportunities for all. It also helps save families the economic costs of longer trips and reliance on expensive forms of transportation- namely cars. Further, as CM Disch highlighted in a recent council meeting, there is ample evidence that shows that increased supply will reduce, and even reverse, housing price increases.

Density creates economic incentives for more diverse business types. As noted in the Comprehensive Plan, grocery stores require a certain density in order to be deemed economically feasible. The need for more types of businesses downtown are even noted by those opposed to higher density. Higher density also makes more sense fiscally. The city benefits from a larger tax base with a reduced cost to deliver services in denser areas- this is an empirical truth.

Density is a prerequisite for all of the goals stated above and laid out in the comprehensive plan. However, there is still strong opposition to the plan.

Many opposed will likely not have considered (or will not recognize) the racist and classist history of zoning regulations that guided housing development in the majority of Ann Arbor. They have also claimed that the Comprehensive Plan is the current council's 'Project 2025'- a document which explicitly supports retention of single family zoning.

They have likely not considered that there was a housing boom in Ann Arbor, one that greatly expanded the developed area of the city from 1950-1970. The problem is that the city has been having the same conversation for 50 years about expanding development and increasing density, and opponents have largely been successful in preventing any meaningful increase in density since then. The same arguments are bandied about now as they were then.

The fact is, though, that many long-term home owners were direct beneficiaries of that housing expansion- an expansion that also meant tree loss, increased traffic, less parking and massive change in the city. As homebuyers themselves, they benefited from either the availability of new housing, or the increased supply and subsequent effects on demand that that new housing afforded. Unfortunately, many have chosen to pull up the ladder behind them.

Furthermore, a large cohort of residents that often use loaded language to lay claim to the 'real' voice of Ann Arbor residents. They spurn outsiders, demonize students (though many of them were students themselves) and look down on apartment dwellers that they claim will lower their standard of living. They claim they support the 'liberal goals' that the plan sets out to accomplish, but they simply don't want to do anything to achieve those goals. They simply don't want any change at all.

At the last council meeting, CM Disch highlighted the evidence that we have regarding the effect on housing affordability as a result of increased supply. We have all the evidence we need about denser living and the beneficial effect on the environment. We know that proximity to amenities, jobs and opportunities should not be reserved for the rich- and, to be sure, rich is what you must be to afford a home in Ann Arbor now. We know that density will allow us to achieve our goals in the area of transportation. We know that greater supply and a variety of housing types benefits all ages- especially those hoping to age in place.

At this late stage we should not be distracted by the voices that always have been- and always will be- opposed to change. Don't forget about all of those that took the time to involve themselves in the process and provided thousands of survey responses- they are stakeholders too. The time is now to make the changes that we should have been making for the past 50 years. I hope you will all stick to the goals set out by the Comprehensive Plan without delay.

Regards,
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