

Subject: Comprehensive Plan Comments

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To: Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>; City Council <CityCouncil@a2gov.org>
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Below are comments on Draft 2 of the Comprehensive Plan.

The plan was tweaked, but it's still greatly flawed. My earlier comments were ignored, as were those of many who shared my perspective. Please refer to the July 1 memo from Planning Staff (Lenart and Bennett) to the Commission. Why are the comments (received in January-May 2025) in that memo about single-family zoning and other aspects contrary to the draft plan not addressed in the revised plan? Nearly all those comments are reasonable, yet largely ignored in the plan. **At a minimum the plan needs to include and accommodate views that support and oppose aspects of the plan—and then be revised to propose a way forward that most constituents can accept. You have plenty of feedback. Start acting on all of it.**

Again, **without the ACTIVE PARTICIPATION of the University and townships, this plan is doomed and a colossal waste of taxpayer funds.** Until this is fixed, the only thing that makes sense is to pause the plan and work to get their full participation. Not easy, but it's incumbent on City leadership to pull out all the stops to make this happen. There are multiple carrots and sticks available. Use them!!! That's their job.

I stand by all my initial comments, but to keep this short I'm not going to repeat them so you can ignore them again. However, a few examples of how the plan continues to ignore all the recent input from this spring's meetings and comments from multiple citizens follow.

The plan itself continues to be extremely biased at the outset! For example, all the little cartoons are focused on increasing single family density. There are NO cartoons that take the other side of the issue. Why is that? They should be reflected as well. Just another blatant example of how the plan is ignoring a significant portion of residents and had a pre-determined outcome.

Lots of absolutes which are misstatements...pg 71..."Residents would like to see..." This implies ALL; To be accurate it should say "some residents would like to see..."

Pg. 51—"There is support for aligning growth..." "Residents would like to see..." NO! Yes, some residents support this, but many others do not. The plan needs to reflect these divergent views.

"There is support for significant development..." More like, "There are some who support significant development..." "There is also broad support...." NO, Try..."There are a group of residents who support aligning growth...."

Statements like, “Adding more housing can stabilize prices” simply isn’t true in this situation. On top of a huge demand, costs of land, new construction, utility upgrades, taxes, etc. make this an unrealistic dream, especially when applied to new construction of multiple units in R1 zones. Increasing density by building multiplexes may help in appropriate areas, but it’s highly unlikely there will be any cost relief by increasing density in R1 zones based on the experience in other areas of the country that tried this. Without the University and townships being active players, the plan is doomed. The University and townships are key to helping with the supply issue. So, is this a serious effort to address this issue, or simply a free pass for builders to cram high cost multi-unit buildings anyplace they want them in the city to the detriment of nearby neighbors? (Hint: it’s the latter.)

Rewrite Goal 4 (and others similarly). “...and amenities where practical and viable.” This may make sense in some limited areas, but *in most cases this will never be commercially viable*. Commercial development in the transportation corridors would provide plenty of opportunities to meet this “need”, if actually commercially viable. If not commercially viable, it won’t happen. This plan appears to be based on the vision of a few people who see a nirvana harking back to the 1800’s where you could live, work, and shop, and never need transportation. This isn’t reality. Put some effort into a plan that has a chance of implementation, and take ALL views into account. The majority is not buying tall multi-unit buildings in R1 zones.

Why doesn’t the plan address short term rentals in the city? Short term rentals represent an immediate supply of long term housing. **Prohibit short term rentals and free up more long term housing.** This may appear “radical”, but it’s not nearly as radical and disruptive as jamming tall multiplex units into single family zoned neighborhoods. This change could have an immediate, positive impact on neighborhood character by bringing in more people who have a long term stake in living in Ann Arbor. And please don’t say that can’t be done, when R1 zoning is proposed to be trashed. If that can happen, so can this.

The costs to upgrade infrastructure are totally ignored in the plan. They MUST be included or, once again, another major plan flaw is being omitted. One huge issue is water supply. Sewer and storm water management are others. Once Huron water withdrawal limits are reached in the not too distant future (especially when density is significantly increased), what then? Piping water from Lake Huron via the Detroit system is likely the only option and it’s very expensive. Ann Arbor considered this alternative in the 70’s and rejected it. Where are those costs in the plan and who is going to pay for them—the new developments that drive up the demand? Right...

Parks, golf courses, and other open space should NOT be open to new housing development. These features make Ann Arbor unique and special. Selling to developers is selling out all citizens.

BOTTOM LINE POINT—

In R1 zoned areas, the only reasonable and practical approach that won’t destroy neighborhood character, while helping to increase density, may be to expand R1 zoning to allow duplexes, BUT those duplex structures would need to adhere to ALL CURRENT R1 BUILDING REQUIREMENTS—Height, Lot Size, Setbacks, Open Space, etc. A 3 story height limit is NOT acceptable. It’s simply too overwhelming (and undefined in terms of feet), especially when it’s a block-shaped building and it’s 3 stories high along the setbacks. That’s massive. And any requirements less restrictive than other current R1 requirements are also unacceptable. **Build duplexes according to the current R1 rules, and I believe MOST people will consider that to be reasonable.** “Reasonable” needs to be a key word included across the board in this plan.

I fully support the positions stated by A2 Pause the Plan. They are reasonable, well thought out, and represent a significant portion of the city population. A real plan needs to fully account for all impacts—positive and negative—and properly address them. There are too many holes in the current “plan” for it to even be considered a proper plan. Let’s get this right.

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