

Subject: LoBuPa Master Plan: Residential Zoning Issues

From: Mike Thompson

Sent: Monday, March 3, 2025 12:24 PM

To: Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>; Taylor, Christopher (Mayor) <CTaylor@a2gov.org>; Eyer, Jen <JEyer@a2gov.org>; Disch, Lisa <LDisch@a2gov.org>; Harrison, Cynthia <CHarrison@a2gov.org>; Mallek, Jon <JMallek@a2gov.org>; Watson, Chris <CWatson@a2gov.org>; Radina, Travis <TRadina@a2gov.org>; Ghazi Edwin, Ayesha <AGhaziEdwin@a2gov.org>; Briggs, Erica <EBriggs@a2gov.org>; Cornell, Jenn <JCornell@a2gov.org>; Akmon, Dharma <DAkmon@a2gov.org>

Cc: Nancy Leff; Irina Thompson

Subject: Re: LoBuPa Master Plan: Residential Zoning Issues

Hello all,

I just shared this email with my Lower Burns Park neighbors, and Nancy urged me to also send along to you all as well.

I'd like to share my perspective by way of a very abridged life story:

I was born and raised in Ann Arbor, first near Eberwhite, then when our family got a little too big for that tiny house, my parents bought a bigger house they could afford in AA Twp. As I grew up, I realized what the price of a single family home in Ann Arbor was and realized it was almost certainly out of reach, particularly neighborhoods like Burns Park and Old West Side which were particularly desirable to me. Indeed I never would have been able to afford a house walking distance to downtown on the salary I was making at the time. Then I met my (now) wife and we moved to the San Francisco Bay Area for 4 years, one of a very few places in the US we could have gone that would make Ann Arbor housing look "affordable" in comparison. When we decided to start a family, we faced the same challenge of local housing being financially out of reach so we decided to move back to Ann Arbor and bought our house here in Lower Burns Park, leveraging our CA-adjusted compensation.

It's a sad reality that I had to move away to make enough money to actually afford to live in my hometown, and I worry that the same will be true for our daughter when she grows up. If she wants to live in Ann Arbor as an adult, I would like it to be feasible for her to do so.

On the other hand, I also must acknowledge that our house increasing in value by as much as it has in the 6 years we've owned it (even ignoring our recent renovation) was very beneficial for our net worth. Still, I would gladly trade for a much lower rate of appreciation if it meant our daughter could buy a house here in 20 years.

That's the subjective lens through which I'm attempting to frame my position on the Comprehensive Plan.

I've urged my Lower Burns Park neighbors to consider is that our neighborhood is bound to change over time, even if the Comprehensive Plan ends up being "change nothing". In that case, I would expect the neighborhood to largely continue along its current trajectory, i.e. housing prices increasing rapidly, and

people using their new equity to renovate into bigger, more expensive single family homes, perhaps with an ADU here or there, i.e. stagnant supply. I also expect demand for a prime location like ours will continue at least steady, if not increasing due to increasing student housing needs as the U continues to grow. That's the "neighborhood for millionaires" others have mentioned not wanting. I don't particularly like the look of that future so I'm trying to figure out what it would take to steer us toward something that isn't what-we-have-now-but-more-expensive.

My thought is that increased supply of housing units particularly along busy corridors and closer to campus as suggested in the transitional zones proposed would absorb a meaningful amount of that increasing demand for student housing and folks looking for a lower cost entry point to our neighborhood. I'm also in favor of the opportunity for some thoughtful small, local commercial development in these transition zones (think Argus, Relaxstation, Jack's Hardware, and not Target Express and McDonalds). Many of the houses along State are already single family homes converted to student housing - that land could be used in a way that both increases housing stock, and local amenities for all of us. As for up-zoning the rest of the neighborhood to low-rise residential, I'm keeping an open mind and am interested to get a clearer picture of what this type of zoning actually looks like. Are there examples of this type of zoning elsewhere in Ann Arbor or in other cities that the planners have identified, or that anyone else is aware of? I'm particularly interested to see what this zoning looks like many years after changing from R1/R2 zoning if/when it has reached a new equilibrium

On a non-housing specific note, I'd also like to see the Comprehensive Plan address the concept of [community microgrids](#), though I'm not sure how feasible it is, beholden to DTE as we are.

Thank you for all your efforts on this vital work!

All the best,
Mike Thompson
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On Mon, Mar 3, 2025 at 11:01 AM 'Nancy Leff' wrote:

Greetings,

I would like to make you aware that residents of Ann Arbor are organizing around the proposed Master Plan Zoning changes regarding the creation of a new residential neighborhood zoning code that would apply to every area of Ann Arbor that currently has one of the several residential zoning codes (e.g. R1D, R2D, R4C, etc.). We are gathering input from our association members and meeting to consolidate and present our concerns. I plan to attend tomorrow's, Mar. 4th, Planning Commission meeting to speak.

The vast majority of comments from our association, Lower Burns Park, have been that this plan is seems to be a "boiler plate solution" put forth by the consultant company hired by the city, and needs further discussion and input from the community. We are compiling a summary of our residents' feedback (no attribution to the feedback will be given, but we have the attribution that can be provided if requested by the city and if the resident(s) give(s) permission to be identified). We will be sending that to you in the next few days. There are of course residents who are fully supportive of this plan and their voices will/must be included. Opposing voices are important to reach compromise.

We are not NIMBYS and most of our residents express serious worries that our city already caters to the upper middle class in issues of housing equity. The promises of the city and developers to include affordable housing in approved projects has NOT materialized. We want diversity in our neighborhoods within all parameters: racial, religious, ethnic origins, income, gender identity, home ownership, renters (STR and LTR units), and small, locally-owned businesses. And in fact, our neighborhood does a decent job with respect to most of these parameters. The glaring exception is with respect to housing affordability! We are preparing a map of our neighborhood organization that will indicate the status of each building within our borders - the map will show the diversity that does exist in Lower Burns Park (aka LoBuPa) with respect to the mentioned parameters.

The bullet items listed here are my **personal** wish list of issues that must be renegotiated in the master plan for residential areas:

1. **SETBACKS:** maintain current or slightly modified setback requirements
2. **BUILDING HEIGHTS:** Limit height to two story height
3. **SOLAR ROOFTOP:** New builds must accommodate any building with existing rooftop solar - this is NOT negotiable.
4. **LOT COMBINATIONS/LOT SUBDIVISIONS:** Severely limit lot combinations/subdivisions. Must be lower and upper limits to the final lot size, whether combining or subdividing lots. Breaking up large lots into smaller ones and combining many small lots into large ones are both problematic. In LoBuPa - do not permit any lots to be subdivided and limit lot combinations to a max of two lots.
5. **AFFORDABILITY:** Guarantees that affordable units will be built as part of each residential new build. What is the city's definition of affordable? How will the city establish the affordability guidelines? How will the city **GUARANTEE** that these "affordable units" go to the people who work in Ann Arbor, are full time residents, paying taxes, sending their kids to our schools, and not temporary residents who have no vested interest in establishing long-term community relationships?
6. **INFRASTRUCTURE:** Provide specific plans that will address the infrastructure issues - increased garbage, increased traffic congestion, increased wear and tear on already crappy streets, increased sewage and run off problems, decreased natural sunlight into homes and yards needed for solar and mental health, individual home owner food gardens and rain gardens.
7. **ENVIRONMENTAL & HABITAT IMPACTS:** How are the city's environmental goals and programs met with this new plan for more housing density? To me it seems this plan is in opposition to the mission of sustainability, affordability, and conservation of natural resources in our local neighborhoods.
8. How does this plan keep any neighborhood with owner occupied single family homes from being purchased by developers and eliminating ALL single family homes, replacing them with multi-unit buildings? This will result in the total loss of "neighborhoods" - where you develop long term, productive and caring relationships, where people know and care for each other, you can call on a neighbor for help, you can assist those trying to age in place in their homes, and the list goes on. LoBuPa will be a **PRIME** target for this sort of redevelopment.

Nancy Leff

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Member of Lower Burns Park Neighborhood Association (aka LoBuPa)

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