

Subject:

5/13/25 Agenda: Comprehensive Plan Comments

From: Lynn Borset**Sent:** Saturday, May 10, 2025 2:58 PM**To:** Lenart, Brett <BLenart@a2gov.org>; Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>**Cc:** Briggs, Erica <EBriggs@a2gov.org>; Cornell, Jenn <JCornell@a2gov.org>; Disch, Lisa <LDisch@a2gov.org>**Subject:** 5/13/25 Agenda: Comprehensive Plan Comments

Please place this message in the Agenda packet for the 5/13/25 Planning Commission Meeting. Thank you.

Hello Planning Commission Members,

Thank you for your work on the Comprehensive Plan thus far. I hope you will continue to refine and improve it, and I offer the following comments.

I suggest that “density” is emphasized far too much. “Density” is not the goal. The goal is housing, especially housing that is priced within reach of middle-income people and families. As several Commissioners have acknowledged, ‘density’ will not achieve moderately priced housing. Therefore other strategies, such as cooperatives and land trusts need to be included in the document.

In addition, housing must be balanced against other needs and goals, most importantly in my view, our sustainability goals. Preserving our existing natural features, especially our tree canopy, is the most effective short-term strategy for reducing carbon emissions. According to the first Urban and Community Forestry Plan (2011), 70% of Ann Arbor’s tree canopy is on private land, the majority of it residential. That Plan also establishes canopy cover targets for areas of our city. “Density,” allowing larger building footprints and reducing set-backs, threatens our tree canopy. The Comprehensive Plan needs to establish guidelines for maintenance of tree canopy and other green spaces in residential, and other, areas. In addition, the recommendations of the Environmental Commission need to be specifically incorporated into the CLUP.

I understand that Zoning is a next step, however the Comprehensive Plan should provide more specific guidance to lead that process. The CLUP should provide metrics to ensure that zoning meets the intent of the Plan. Metrics should define things like: 1) overall target population numbers, 2) number of people per square mile (or acre) by area of the city, 3) percent tree canopy cover by area of the city, 4) target percentages of housing types (single family, duplex, multiplex, etc.), 5) target amount (and maybe type) of retail by area.

The concept of a single residential zoning category is entirely inadequate. It is naïve to think a “one size fits all” approach would be effective in achieving any goals whatsoever; rather, it opens a Pandora’s Box for entirely market-driven developer interests. The Comprehensive plan should set clear parameters so that zoning regulations actually enable us to achieve what we are aiming for. This includes a strict height limit of 3 stories (35 feet) in all residential areas, without premium exceptions.

In summary, much work is needed to improve the draft Comprehensive Plan before presentation to City Council. The goal of moderately priced housing, not density, must be clearly explained. The multiple goals of housing, protection of natural features and tree canopy, carbon neutrality, must be balanced with appropriate metrics defined to guide implementation of the Plan. I agree that it would be best to pause the current process to allow for more thorough citizen engagement, and to make many refinements and improvements in the draft Plan.

Thank you for taking my comments into consideration,

Lynn M. Borset

Ward 5

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