

Subject: Trying to fight people's wants gets you nowhere

From: Abdulrahman Ateya

Sent: Thursday, January 23, 2025 7:24 AM

To: Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>

Cc: Lisa Disch <ldisch@umich.edu>; Harrison, Cynthia <CHarrison@a2gov.org>

Subject: Trying to fight people's wants gets you nowhere

Hello Planning commission,

I recently reviewed the "Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan Planning Commission 01.23.2025" presentation. I found some of the things presented to be contrary to Ann Arbor's stated goals for comprehensive planning.

All of City Council's goals should be met by the plan.

Before I start, know that keeping less intense zoning codes in the face of demand for more intense development is an implicit subsidy. Zoning for office where there is demand for commercial is an indirect subsidy that is not proven to work and definitely has no correlation to jobs. Zoning for light industrial when there is a housing shortage and that light industrial land is not being used at capacity is an implicit subsidy for that light industrial and is a poor one at best. Hired consultants don't have the right to get in the way of the voters who voted for a council who spoke.

First, I appreciate the consultant's decision to look into the risks of the items they are proposing. The presentation, as I saw in slides, was thorough.

1. Exceeding the state's multifamily goal is not a commendable achievement. The state of Michigan is not aligned with Ann Arbor's desire to become an affordable, walkable place.
2. Presenting several controversial buildings without the context that they came up in is misleading. City Place came from city leaders rejecting, repeatedly, a development that preserved 8 historic properties. Lockwood was affordable housing that was opposed vociferously and not entirely for positive reasons. The George was a rescue project after an overambitious developer took advantage of a process the public desperately wanted to demolish abandoned buildings. Davis Place is a strange inclusion - it is a nice building. Another example of what you may get is 211 W Davis, a single family home with a Zestimate of nearly 1.5M. At last sale of the two properties, Davis Place condos sold for 30% less than 211 W Davis and occupy less land per unit than the single family at 211.
3. The comparisons to city blocks in the present point out that the buildings as proposed would cover dozens of parcels. The Gott/Summit/Miner/Hiscock block, for example, would require a developer to assemble twenty-three properties, over half of which have independent owner-occupiers. You may point out that City Place was a consolidation (many have pointed this out before, fearing consolidation, ignoring that market factors make it incredibly difficult to actually accomplish this), but that one was because it was a developer's magnum opus project. Other notable recent consolidations have been of blocks mostly owned by a single landlord.
4. The presentation of a form based code as an improvement on other types of regulation is unimaginative and irreverent of how present-day form based codes work. The most famous form-based places, the New Urbanist communities, have subsidized grocers and home prices in the multi-to-tens-of millions. Birmingham, MI, another form based place, is no affordability exemplar.

5. 3/4 places with a Hub districts are downzoned from their present zoning code, TC-1. Why down zone these corridors? This does not make sense. Despite TC-1 being a moderately aspirational idea that requires developers to take major risk in developing somewhere that is not the natural development pattern of radiating outside of the city center, TC-1 is a ratcheting zoning code that has been approved by Ann Arbor residents. Why change something? Unless it is broken, which the consultants make no claim to say, then it should stay.
6. The fight for light industrial to remain in the city is also peculiar. The consultants started this whole process by pointing out that Ann Arbor has very little redevelopable land. Why cut out some of it?

Thank you for reading!

Abdulrahman Ateya
University of Michigan, Class of 2024
Stephen M. Ross School of Business
ateya@umich.edu | m: 248.897.1663 | w: 313.474.2366
[linkedin.com/abdulrahmanateya](https://www.linkedin.com/abdulrahmanateya)