

**Subject:** AUD Ordinance and Sign Ordinance

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**From:** Sam Homan  
**Sent:** Friday, July 25, 2025 4:57 PM  
**To:** Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>  
**Subject:** AUD Ordinance and Sign Ordinance

Dear Planning Commission:

### **CLT and the AUD Ordinance**

I'd like to suggest that a simple, generally applicable modification to regulations that *I think* would give the CLT what they want with minimal consequences:

*Full basements, irrespective of whether they contain livable space, shall be excluded from square footage limits or FAR calculations in all zones and for all uses.*

Any house or apartment building or office or factory or AUD that was built on a slab and maxed out FAR or square footage limits could now be built with a basement. Nothing above ground would change.

I'm *\*not\** including walkout basements in the exemption, since that could get messy, but I believe exempting full basements would not result in any changes to forms that can already be built above ground in the city subject to FAR or square footage limits.

In fact, I would go a step further:

*Livable, completely underground structures on a lot shall be excluded from square footage limits and FAR calculations in all zones and for all uses and only need a 6 foot setback from lot lines provided they don't break the 45 degree foundation rule for an adjacent lot property.*

Basically, I'd legalize backyard bomb shelters. Not--I'll hasten to add--because I'm worried about nuclear war, but because I followed Colin Fruze's [series](#) on YouTube, where he built a "bomb shelter" (really just a second living room/rec room) in his backyard in England and thought it was cool. These would presumably be subject to the very stringent International Building Code for underground buildings, so I doubt many people would be taking advantage of it, but I don't see a reason why we shouldn't allow something like that here if someone wants to do that.

And we have an absolutely world class example of underground structure in Ann Arbor: [The University of Michigan Law Library Addition](#). It was built underground to not clash from the Gothic Law Quad and it succeeds masterfully. You'd never know it was there from the sidewalk and it does not detract from the environment at all even though it goes right up to the street and provides the library a massive increase in square footage. I would argue that we should take the lessons from this success and generalize them to our zoning code.

The final exemption I'd add is for underground parking garages:

*Completely underground parking garages that can support a street or street equivalent, park or open space, or a building that covers at least 50% of the footprint of the underground parking structure shall not count towards any parking maximum.*

If for example, Arbor South wanted to put an underground garage under one of their buildings, like what the city did with the Library Lot parking garage, I say great, it'd be out of sight out of mind. Don't count that towards their above ground limit. Again, these types of structures are incredibly expensive, so I doubt many developers, if any, would take advantage of this, but the option would be there if they wanted to.

### **Notification Signs**

A couple of thoughts sprang into my head when I listened to your discussion on signs.

- **Building renderings should be the prominent element on the signs** as what the proposed building will look like is what people care about.
- **For large projects, during the construction phase, there should be a large sign on the construction fence with a rendering of the completed building.** Like what the University does. When people see the construction cranes at the corner of say State and Packard, they're naturally curious, what's going on there.
- **Renderings on signs should be prohibited from including people in them.** So many of the wind swept plazas that get built start with renderings of the plaza full people in them doing.... something. Whatever it is these rendered people are doing, it almost never comes to pass that flesh and blood people are there doing it once the plaza gets built. This disconnect leads to people who saw the rendering feeling lied to. The rendering on posted signs should strive to be a simple and honest depiction of what the building will look like. Nothing more.
- **Woodbury Gardens:** The last rezoning postcard I got in the mail was for Woodbury Gardens informing the neighborhood that it was requesting TC1 zoning. This is a huge site covering 40 acres spread across 7 parcels and 5 zones (R3, R4A, R4B, R4C. and--weirdly--PL). It's also almost completely cut off from the adjacent neighborhoods with what I believe are conflicting land use buffers and has no street connections to any of them. While rezoning still requires a postcard, it's worth mulling over how the sign ordinance will apply to a by right project here. Would each of the 7 parcels need to have a sign? How would the adjacent but completely disconnected residents on Iroquois, South, Coler, Jorn, and Harpst be expected to find out about the project? This is important because *by design* a lot of R4 sites, like Woodbury Gardens or the Ponds on Packard, are completely separated from the adjacent R1 neighborhoods. Something to think about as you shape this.

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