

Subject: Comprehensive Land Use Plan

From: John Lofy
Sent: Friday, June 20, 2025 12:37 PM
To: Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>
Subject: Fwd: Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Dear members of the Planning Commission,
I am writing, first, to thank you for your service to the city. I know your roles are difficult and often thankless, and I'm grateful that you have been willing to take them on for the sake of the rest of us.

Secondly, I'm writing to forward the following email, which I also sent to City Council, to encourage your continued work on and support for the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

Thank you again,
John Lofy

----- Forwarded message -----

Dear Council Members,
I am writing in support of the comprehensive land use plan, and for increasing the amount and diversity of housing in Ann Arbor.

There's much to say on this issue about affordability, sustainability, diversity, justice, and more. I'd like to say something about one of the concerns I hear from my neighbors: "maintaining the character of our neighborhoods." They fear, understandably, that all this change will make the area we love unrecognizable, and that we'll lose the qualities that make it special.

I have great sympathy for those feelings--but it is also important to say that the character of our neighborhoods has *already* changed, often radically, and often in ways that have betrayed many of the values that my neighbors espouse. I have watched this happen myself.

My wife and I have lived in what's now called the Water Hill neighborhood since 1999. It's a great place to be--but a very different one than it was twenty-five years ago. Back then it was much more diverse economically and racially, and that was one of the reasons we wanted to move here. Most of our neighbors had lived here all their lives and had been pillars of the Black community centered in this area. We had great relationships with them, but we realized too late that this diversity was quickly eroding, and that in fact we were partly to blame: we were on the leading edge of the gentrification that has completely changed this neighborhood.

Over the years, we watched the younger generation of Black neighbors sell their homes, unable to afford them and/or uninterested in staying in a place that suddenly felt alienating and often hostile. One of my

neighbors and friends moved away after he consistently got stopped by the police while sitting in Belize Park--which had once been the site of his aunt's home.

Since then we've seen the neighborhood get wealthier and wealthier, with old homes torn down in favor of large houses that fill a whole lot. (We've also seen some interesting innovations to increase density and house more people.)

I've personally benefited from these changes. My house value has been climbing all this time and has given me wealth I never expected. Indeed, there is no way that my younger self could afford to move into this neighborhood now. For those of us who got in early or already have significant resources, the quality of life is wonderful.

But what's undeniable--and why I strongly reject the concern that the Comprehensive Plan will undermine the character of neighborhoods--is that *the character of this neighborhood has already changed*. It was changed by me and my neighbors in ways that further disenfranchised an already marginalized community, and that continues to choke off the ability of most people to be part of our future.

The issue is not whether the Plan will change the character of neighborhoods. That is going to happen with or without a plan. The issue is whether we will be able to steer inevitable, ongoing change according to our values and in support of crucial goals. Or whether--as we've done in the past--we'll allow change to continue in haphazard and unjust ways.

I want to live in a diverse, fun, safe neighborhood, one that's welcoming and accessible to all kinds of people. We do not have to sell out our quality of life to achieve that.

I believe the Comprehensive Plan is a good one. Certainly there are modifications and compromises that can improve it and make it more palatable to all. But I want to encourage you to keep moving forward with it, and I want to thank you for the extensive work, listening, and advocacy you've done to get it to this point.

Thank you for your service to the city.

John Lofy
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