

Subject: Document for the March 4th meeting
Attachments: Rob Russell Council Planning talk.pdf

From: Rob Russell
Sent: Tuesday, March 4, 2025 12:32 PM
To: Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>
Subject: Document for the March 4th meeting

Hi there,

I would like this document included in the packet for tonight's meeting, if it's not too late.

I'm planning to read it this evening.

Thanks very much,
Rob Russell

Esteemed council members,

I have lived in and around Ann Arbor since first grade and have been a homeowner in the Pattengill neighborhood for over 20 years. Not until *this year* have I felt compelled to stand up against a city decision.

I attended last month's neighborhood meeting. It was refreshing to be made aware that zoning changes were in the works - just as it is very alarming to hear that future residential notices per ordinance 5.29.9.2.d are on the chopping block. It is no shock to me that transparency is still being eroded - but that's not why I am speaking tonight.

I understand the twin goals of the zoning plan are: Home affordability and "Densification" of residential areas.

I and others believe the Planning Commission's current proposal will fail, and drastically.

First of all, three times as many renters face economic insecurity due to housing costs than homeowners. Worse, rents, as we all know, consistently rise, unlike fixed mortgage payments. Therefore, the sale of a residential lot will either go to a single family, missing the densification goal, or to a landlord/builder, increasing density with rental units. And renters are already heavily burdened.

In fact, in *either* case, affordability is questionable, as Ann Arbor is famous for its healthy and growing property values.

Second, Builders or landlords who wind up with a lot are increasingly out-of-town Real Estate Investors - firms or fund managers who see our city as a revenue line item and not as a community. Paying them our rent funnels money out of the local economy and to shareholders living who-knows-where.

Third, and I feel more devious, the city aims to increase residential living density using "Form-based" codes, focusing on frontages and building heights rather than specific types and purposes. **HOWEVER**, the city Design Review Board, regulating building designs and suitability, is under threat of elimination because, essentially, it's too much hassle to keep character in our city. Lack of zoning control and enforcement will actually harm neighborhood aesthetics, especially in traditional/historic areas like North Burns Park.

In summary, this plan will actually result in *reduced* affordability and loss of Ann Arbor's character and charm—while simultaneously depleting our local economy.

Thank you for your time,
Robert Russell
Crestland Dr.