

Subject: Infrastructure and the comprehensive plan
Attachments: Address to planning commission 03182025.docx

From: Mary Durfee
Sent: Tuesday, April 22, 2025 4:45 PM
To: City Council <CityCouncil@a2gov.org>; Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>; Taylor, Christopher (Mayor) <CTaylor@a2gov.org>
Subject: Infrastructure and the comprehensive plan

Dear members of the city council and Mayor Taylor,

Please see attached my comments made at the city planning commission meeting prior to the release of the comprehensive plan.

I see that infrastructure has been referenced in the plan, but it is not specific to sewer. It does mention storm water issues, but tangentially. I hope that the commission as it further evaluates the report, and the council as it decides whether or not to approve, will seriously consider the readiness of each neighborhood's infrastructure as it considers the pace of densification.

Mary

Address to planning commission 03182025

Mary Durfee, 1052 Olivia Ave, 3rd ward

I would like to speak against a one-size-fits-all upzoning solution as it fails to take into account that different parts of Ann Arbor were developed at different times and in different ways, which means that the strategies by which increased density is best achieved could differ. I will focus my comments on one particular concern: infrastructure.

Some neighborhoods, like the one I live in, were developed when electrification was in its early stages and before appliances like washing machines, dishwashers, and garbage disposals became commonplace. Most people didn't own cars. The layout of homes and streets, and the water, sewer, stormwater, and electrical infrastructure supporting them, were designed for those times, and not necessarily for the kind of densification envisioned in the proposed upzoning. Further, the proposal fails to address ways that either the city or property developers would be required to realistically anticipate and ameliorate the overburdening of infrastructure, proactively, before existing residents are negatively impacted. For example:

1. Our sewer pipes are already very old and require periodic maintenance. Once, back-pressure during maintenance caused sewage to flood our basement. Repairs were paid for by the city, but many of our personal items were unsalvageable. As the number of users of these aged pipes could grow ten-fold or more based on the upzoning, how are systems that are already prone to failure going to cope?
2. Stormwater drainage is already a substantial problem, and the reduction in setbacks permitted by the upzoning means even less ground absorption. Furthermore, with the removal of requirements for developments to provide off-street parking, regularly cleaning the streets and especially the stormwater drains will not be possible. How can you prohibit street parking for cleaning when the residents don't have an off-street parking option?

3. Snow removal is similarly problematic. When a snow emergency is declared due to a heavy snowfall, where are the residents supposed to move their cars (or have parked their cars in anticipation of a storm) to get them off of the street?

The list could continue with other issues such as trash/recycle collection, transmission of electricity, etc. But hopefully I've made my point, which is that a one-size-fits-all upzoning solution does not take differences into account. I recognize that a big advantage of a one-size-fits-all upzoning strategy is that it treats all neighborhoods the same, to avoid any appearance of favoritism. However, all neighborhoods are not the same. I would encourage the City to work with each neighborhood. That is, to avoid favoritism, give each neighborhood the same (proportional) objectives for densification, and give each a chance to devise its own plan for meeting those objectives that fits its own circumstances.