

Subject: Comprehensive Land Use Plan

From: Susan Kaufmann

Sent: Thursday, May 15, 2025 9:44 PM

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I have four primary concerns about the existing the Comprehensive Land Use Plan:

- lack of adequate public engagement before the Plan was developed
- unsupported assumptions about growth
- failure to support the values of affordability, equity and sustainability
- failure to address the adequacy of infrastructure

Because the city did not inform all city residents that a comprehensive planning process was launching or do significant neighborhood-level outreach before the plan was fully drafted, there are still many people who do not know or only recently learned that the current phase of the planning process is already substantially completed—and that their neighborhoods may be significantly impacted. The consultant-driven planning process was not designed to benefit from the deep knowledge, creativity and good will of residents who care about the Plan's espoused values and could bring their lived experience to the project.

The CLUP does not cite any sources for projections of growth in population or employment. It asserts the goal of providing housing for 50% of workers commuting into Ann Arbor. What evidence do we have that those commuters would prefer to live here, particularly if prices remain high or increase? The projections in the plan are wildly at variance with SEMCOG projections and seem to have been designed to justify densifying at a rate that will generate maximum tax revenue through speculative, market-rate development. Much of the growth in housing demand results from the University of Michigan's ever-expanding student enrollment. The population of non-student residents has grown relatively slowly, even declining in the last few years.

There is little, if any, likelihood that market-rate development will adequately address the city's serious affordability problem. Property values and infrastructure costs will rise. Developers will set costs at what the market can bear in what is already a wealthy community. Ann Arbor will be more dense but even more unaffordable than it is today. Our lower- and moderate-income neighborhoods, those that contain the workforce housing we aspire to increase, are particularly likely to be targeted for redevelopment with more-expensive housing that is inappropriate or out of reach for those who will be displaced. That displacement is likely to compound inequity. There is nothing in the Plan that proposes how to effectively increase affordable housing or how to prevent or ameliorate displacement of our less-wealthy residents.

Replacing existing buildings with larger ones challenges our sustainability goals in a variety of ways: disposal of discarded materials, increasing impermeable surfaces, reckoning with the environmental costs of creating the new materials that will be needed, remediating the resulting pollution, providing the additional energy inputs to construct new buildings and then to support those who live and work in them, and providing water and wastewater treatment to a larger population. I am not suggesting we never transition to larger buildings. I am suggesting that we make data-driven plans so that such construction is commensurate with need.

Secondly, setback requirements that allow building close to lot lines in residential neighborhoods will reduce the number of trees and other plants, the living, green infrastructure that is important to flood management, to human happiness, and as wildlife habitat. There is little in the Plan about preserving natural features, or about how to manage and pay for necessary infrastructure expansion.

I believe that Ann Arbor is capable, as other cities have been, of creating a democratic, participatory planning process that works to actualize our values, including vibrancy; that supports realistic growth, diversity in housing stock to address affordability as well as disparate needs, and transportation options. There is a wealth of formal expertise as well as deep experience in this town that a more engaged planning process could draw on. I ask you to suspend work on this plan until you have provided evidence supporting your data. I furthermore ask for a new process that includes sustained resident involvement with the goal of creating a plan that actually embodies the values of affordability, equity, sustainability, and dynamism.

Thank you.

Susan W. Kaufmann

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