

Subject: in support of denser housing

From: J. Bruce Fields
Sent: Tuesday, April 29, 2025 4:34 PM
To: Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>
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Thanks for your work on the comprehensive plan!

My main concern is for housing supply:

- Every serious plan I've seen for facing climate change envisions significant reductions in carbon emissions from transportation. Cities like Ann Arbor have immense power facilitate that, simply by allowing people to live closer together.
- It's so important just to allow people to live where they expect to be happiest and most productive, allowing economic and personal and family relationships in our most successful cities to flourish, instead of artificially limiting density, forcing people to live farther from work and family and friends.

I hope therefore that highest priority will be insuring that we add maximum capacity for new housing across the city.

Looking in particular at chapter 5:

- I love the suggestion of "no limits on the number of homes". Unit density maximums have no place in a plan meant to address our housing shortage.
- I'm wary of any specific height or size limits, especially as single numbers applied across entire districts. I understand that it may be a political necessity to preserve homeowner's expectation that their immediate surroundings not change drastically. But my experience is that the "impact" of larger buildings--in terms of noise or shadows or simply the amount of visual space they take up--falls off very quickly with distance. Would it be possible to recommend limits that take into account already-existing neighbors? There seems no need to limit setbacks, for example, when neighboring property owners cooperate, or to limit heights, when the new building is only a story or two higher than immediate neighbors.
- I find the impulse to micromanage location of neighborhood retail a little strange. On page 109, the business chosen as to represent the neighborhood retail category is the beloved Jefferson Market, which is not located on a corner, a collector, or an arterial.
- I'm a little concerned about the way the plan discusses "arteries",

"collectors", and "neighborhood streets", for example where it says that "commercial spaces should be directed toward arterials and collectors, not neighborhood streets". There are so many examples where what should be a quick walk from home to a store is turned into a long detour along an artery, and I want to make sure we're not providing support for that pedestrian-hostile pattern. Highly connected, walkable neighborhoods should be the norm across the city, not just in the "hub".

Thanks again for your efforts, overall I'm encouraged by the direction of the draft plan!

--Bruce Fields
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