

Subject: notes on upzoning

From: Barbara Nagler
Sent: Monday, March 31, 2025 3:06 PM
To: Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>
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Dear Ann Arbor Planning Commission members,

I wasn't able to be present in person or remotely at the meeting on March 18 that dealt with upzoning, but I've watched video footage and wanted to add some words.

Thank you for your work. It cannot be easy.

I would advocate for awareness of the purposes (avowed) and the patience needed to study how best to fulfill them.

Affordable housing, for example: Have other cities that implemented upzoning achieved that? According to many, they haven't. Might there be other ways? The people who work but cannot live here are in a sense the servants of those of us who reside in the city. Could residents who can afford to be here and benefit by their services contribute in tax money to subsidize housing in what are probably at least some vacant spaces? There's evidence of far more open housing than necessary, nationwide, to house every homeless person. Vacancy due to waiting for **someone** who can pay a higher monetary price seems a great waste. Is there any study of how much vacancy exists? (It's hard for me to believe all those high rises are completely bought/rented, etc.)

Sustainability: A big buzzword, often used without much study of the support systems and supply chains involved. Problems with infrastructure could do damage; and big buildings create heat and usually light pollution (which affects humans and other animals and even plants.) Water pollution and diversion are among the greatest problems both locally and globally; some of the sites being considered are close to watercourses that empty into the Huron River.

And there's a psychological/physical need for a bit of space and contact with the green world, peace and quiet. Would what attracts people to the city in the first place be too compromised by a blanket approach to upzoning? How about requiring green roofs? Or requiring architecture that blends with the existing neighborhood and is aesthetically lovely (that of course is in the eye of the beholder- still, many can agree about it; few find the huge boxes beautiful. They severely compromise access to vistas/views, for one thing, without adding anything of aesthetic merit in exchange.)

I noticed that several citizens spoke in favor of a slower approach that studies individual neighborhoods and takes into account their needs and characteristics- and engages the people in them. Public engagement is so vital in creating a community together that it should not be compromised in the least. There's time, more than one thinks. A slower, more thoughtful approach can reap better results that arise from real dialogue and mutual respect.

The person who used the term "Trojan Horse" would otherwise have a point. We all (globally, nationally, locally) are saddled with an inefficient and manipulative money system and the anxieties it spawns. It's best not to give in to that while covering it up with fashionable words about affordability and sustainability. There's usually a way that could work, if we can free our minds to think creatively and engage with each other as human beings.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Barbara Irene Nagler