

From: [Caroline Mohai](#)
To: [Planning](#); [City Council](#)
Subject: Voter feedback about Comprehensive Plan

City Council and Planning Commission members:

To some members of our community, the pushback on Upzoning is viewed as reactionary. Older residents want to keep things as they are for numerous reasons, but the city feels compelled to accommodate the needs of younger residents who find that they can't afford to live in Ann Arbor. Yes, there may be some of that (unease about change that isn't well understood) but there's more to this unease than a lifting of zoning.

I'm seeing an erosion of democratic rule

- PACs are now operating on the local level to give money to people favorable to their policy interests to run for local office. People with a sincere wish to represent their constituents can't compete in campaign fundraising.
- Elections are now orchestrated to boost a specific outcome (such as this August 5th special election and Texas' redistricting effort) which results in voter suppression.
- Impactful policy changes (Comprehensive Plan) are found out about only through the diligence of the voter rather than sending registered voters a mailing.
- Deals being made behind closed doors by both our Republican and Democratic representatives that, if done above board, would not be supported by our voters.
- Our monetary system is under attack from monied interests who want to pick our regulators and have crypto currency as a legitimate medium of exchange.

In addition to the fracturing of our political system, I also see a rapid and potentially catastrophic assault on our middle class. We had strived to have a large middle class, a signature of a strong democratic society, but we appear to be repeating the Gilded Age where more and more money is concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer people which gives them an inordinate amount of influence.

Right now, there is a new group of very wealthy men, primarily, who are younger than the industrial titans of the 1880s. Many are single and neoliberal in their thinking. Elon Musk is a prime example. They have made so much money, primarily in AI and crypto development, that they are searching for investment opportunities. Real estate has always been a popular investment target. I contend that Upzoning, which originated on the West Coast, was designed to open up more opportunities for investment for these billionaires by slashing regulations and encouraging more tax support for new development projects. With lots of money at their disposal, "Upzoning" that is supporting the "missing middle" could be packaged as something appealing to both conservative and liberal voters (more jobs, affordability, sustainability, CO2 reduction, racism, etc.). I argue that the real intent is to

build quickly (using several newly created tax breaks) to satisfy frustrated investors without worrying about market saturation. That is something that the community can deal with after they've gotten their profits and moved on.

Do I think loosening up our R1 zoning to allow more of a mix of housing, (so long it is in scale and observes setbacks), would be positive? Yes. There aren't less humans on the planet and what I wanted (home ownership with a yard) may not be what the next generation of Ann Arborites values. But that's not what this is about. It really is a push by very wealthy billionaires to reshape our built environment to suit their tastes, make lots of money and turn our middle class into landless serfs (AKA renters).

Please do the right thing and Pause the Plan so it can reflect what the residents of Ann Arbor would be willing to accept which cannot be accomplished on your current timetable.

Thank you,

Caroline Mohai