

Subject: Comprehensive plan and stakeholder engagement

From: Linda Dabrowski
Sent: Tuesday, March 4, 2025 12:38 PM
To: Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>
Subject: Fwd: Comprehensive plan and stakeholder engagement

Please include this in the meeting minutes for tonight's meeting.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Linda Dabrowski**
Date: Mon, Mar 3, 2025 at 6:43 PM
Subject: Comprehensive plan and stakeholder engagement
To: <blenart@a2gov.org>
Cc: Eyer, Jen <JEyer@a2gov.org>, Akmon, Dharma <DAkmon@a2gov.org>, B Dabrowski

Hi Brett,

I just became aware of the city's new draft comprehensive plan through an article in the Michigan Daily. I was surprised to hear from one of my council members, Dharma Akmon, that there had been multiple engagement opportunities and feedback so far indicated a lot of support for the plan. I knew nothing about a plan in process, any engagement opportunities or opportunities to provide feedback. I'm relatively active in staying on top of city issues, so this all has come as a major surprise to me.

I found the list of stakeholders as well as a summary of the feedback on the comprehensive plan website. I found it interesting that stakeholder interviews included several real estate/commercial development type businesses were interviewed and one interview categorized as "student engagement", but nothing with the neighborhoods including homeowners (which are quite a diverse group - families, young and old professionals, elderly, etc). I know the city maintains a list of neighborhood associations which would seem to be an easy way to engage with the neighborhoods. Without any further context, that feels like a missed opportunity, and one that the planning committee should seek to remedy. I know there is great interest in my neighborhood now that there is actual awareness of the plan.

I also noted a few comments from the engagement survey summary that caught my eye:

- UM students out competing for homes (my next door neighbor is now a student rental. It was previously a family home)
- Stuck building for the richest of the rich (isn't that due to the market and what developers are choosing to build to make money to satisfy demand?)
- Fix setbacks and minimum lot sizes (I certainly hope that doesn't apply to lower burns park as our lot sizes are quite small and our setbacks are pretty cozy - I can easily hear my neighbors if both of our windows are open)

- And under the engagement category, hearing from a wide variety rather than a few loud voices. Using zoom meetings to help, and the need for more polling. I most definitely agree that engagement needs to be amped up ... right now, I feel like an extremely loud voice primarily because it feels like the ship is leaving the dock and I'm not even on board. And I have seen nothing in the way of zoom meetings or polls or surveys.

I was also shocked to see that the chair of the planning commission is a real estate developer who, per my neighbor, frequently recused himself from decisions. I commend the recusal as that is more than appropriate, but it does make me question the effectiveness of the leadership if recusal is a frequent occurrence. It also just feels frankly funky. The composition of the planning committee also seems to lack regular people perspective, such as someone who actually lives in a neighborhood, or several someones who actually live in the city neighborhoods, whose voices are very important and should be heard to inform effective planning outcomes.

I have one final comment and that relates to an M Live article in which there was discussion of a change in the recommended number of units in a multi unit building from 4 (which was apparently agreed upon during the engagement session or sessions) but the city planning group changed that recommendation to unlimited. (I can no longer access the article, so some of the facts may be incorrect but the basic gist is that the recommendation went from 4 to unlimited and was a change in what was originally discussed or engaged with) That type of change is significant and increases my discomfort with this plan - how it's been communicated to the neighborhoods, and how recommendations are ultimately being distilled.

In terms of next steps, I'd ask for action on the plan to be paused to get further engagement from all the city neighborhoods. Engagement opportunities should be widely publicized through neighborhood associations, widely used social media such as facebook, instagram, X. Fliers should be posted in all public libraries and in all city buildings where the public might enter. Engagement sessions should be held with each neighborhood and include practical definitions of terms such as "gentle density" "middle housing", and exactly what is meant by the objectives of the plan: affordable, sustainable, equitable, and dynamic. Those words mean very different things and so exact definitions and outcomes are essential to ensure that residents understand what the intent of the plan is.

-Linda