

Subject: Rezoning proposals

From: Marija Freeland
Sent: Tuesday, April 1, 2025 11:40 AM
To: Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>
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I am saddened and appalled to learn that the powers that be in Ann Arbor are actively moving to rezone all residential areas to allow buildings up to 4 stories high with few restrictions on how much of an area they take up and with no contingencies for parking for the residents in all residential areas in Ann Arbor. Why are we considering paving over Ann Arbor in this manner? I thought sustainability was a major priority for the city. How does redeveloping residential lots so that the buildings on them cover a greater area contribute to sustainability? How does tearing down and throwing away tons of building materials in order to build new buildings contribute to sustainability? It's my understanding that the historical districts in Ann Arbor were created because there was a big push in town at the time to tear down beautiful historic buildings and replace them with apartment buildings. Fortunately the city was successful in saving the character of some beautiful historic neighborhoods through the historical districts. But creating historic districts takes much time and effort and there seems to be no inclination among the powers that be to create more such districts. Instead the push seems to be toward getting more revenue from new development under the ruse that this will eventually create some affordable housing. I have heard this myth about how to create more affordable housing for the whole time I have lived in Ann Arbor and it has never worked. So please don't insult Ann Arbor residents by feeding us more of this false narrative.

I have lived in Ann Arbor since the 70s because of the distinct character and feel of the residential areas. Rather than choosing to live in soulless suburbs in the Detroit area or the new housing developments being built in the townships surrounding Ann Arbor where I would pay less in taxes, I have chosen to live in a city that felt like a home. A city where things like tree canopies and rain gardens mattered. Where I could walk in the neighborhoods and feel like there were distinct characteristics to the homes in the neighborhoods. One time I was watering the plants on my front porch and a woman walking by called out to me and exclaimed how much she enjoyed the distinct feel of the neighborhood and all the mature trees in the area. Now, because the city wants more tax revenue from developers, the powers that be are moving to take away the distinct characteristics that make our city a wonderful place to live. Please understand that I acknowledge that things change, priorities change. When the city asked us to vote on a greenbelt tax that would allow the city to preserve areas around the city that had not yet been developed, to cut off some of the urban sprawl that was happening, I happily voted for the tax. I saw the necessity of rezoning the areas around downtown so that developers could build more high rises, again in an effort to contain urban sprawl. I hoped that the city could use as many city owned parcels of land as possible to build more housing for those with limited economic means. I mourned the loss of the distinct feel of the downtown area that had come from the unique local shops that used to be there but rejoiced that we still had our residential areas that were distinct and homey and were a pleasure for homeowners. But now this is threatened by the rezoning efforts. And the group that was supposed to be responsible for making sure that new development at least looked good has been disbanded. My only comfort in all of this is that I am getting older so my hope is that I will not live long enough to see this new Ann Arbor of soulless high rise development engulf the entire city. Yet I also still hold out hope that those of you responsible for this push to rezone all residential areas in the city to allow these four story buildings that will have few to no restrictions on how large the buildings will be or how many lots they will take up will reconsider and will move instead to save the unique character of our wonderful residential areas. Please, please do this for the many residents of Ann Arbor who care deeply about this city.

Sincerely,

Marija Freeland