

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

City Staff Comments

From the outset of the Comprehensive plan process, the project team has been committed to offering distinct forums, methods, and timeframes for the community to share their concerns, ideas, and aspirations. The project team embraced an iterative process, where one engagement session may differ or build on feedback received from prior conversations. While this approach did not result in a set of pre-conceived questions used throughout the process, it enabled the plan to move from data review, to considering approaches, to validation of the ideas and concepts presented in the draft document today.

The following pages document this engagement and include a timeline outlining the types of engagement conducted, when they occurred, and summaries of events and activities.

We appreciate the many comments collected throughout the process, which have helped support a strong vision for the future of Ann Arbor—while balancing physical and resource constraints.

We hope this summary brings clarity and reflects the many thoughtful conversations, responses, and the time people took to engage during this process.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

	Define Values	20-Min City	Role of Downtown	Density Changes	Where to See Land Use/Amenities	Mad Libs	Up to 4units /House Types	40k Units'	75k Units'	Prioritize Block Redevelopment	Agree on Changes
Survey											
Green Fair 23'											
March 24' Workshops											
Housing Commission Questions											
April 24' Workshops											
Green Fair 24'											
Summer Festival & Online											
Meeting In a Box											
Target Outreach											
October Workshop											

Above is an illustration of the types of questions and activities that were asked and where they took place

Links: A2CP Engagement Summary

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Timeline of Engagement

	2023		2024			2025		
	Fall	Win	Spr	Sum	Fall	Win	Spr	Sum
Steering Committee								
Planning Commission Subcommittee								
Planning Commission								
Interviews & Focus Groups								
Invited Presentations								
Online								
Tabling								
Large Public Events								
Targeted Outreach								
Targeted Focus Groups								

Above is an illustration of the overall engagement efforts and the timeline in which they occurred. Summaries and specific information about each event are provided on the following pages.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Planning Commission Subcommittee	
Location: Online	Date: August 11 th , 2023
Outreach: Posted in City Hall and the City's online meeting calendar (Legistar)	Purpose: Guiding the creation of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee
Format: Online	Attendance: Planning Commission Subcommittee and City Staff

Discussion Topics:

The subcommittee discussed its plan to form a diverse steering committee to guide the development of the new comprehensive plan.

Steering Committee Purpose

- The committee will act as an intermediary between the community and the planning process, providing feedback, and ensuring diverse perspectives are considered.
- It will serve as a sound board at various stages, validating approaches, reviewing content, and drafting documents.

Application Process

- A public call for interested individuals will be posted online and in hard copy.
- Applications will include questions about experience, interests, demographics, and availability.
- Staff will initially rank recommendations, then present them to the full Planning Commission for formal appointment.

Desired Diversity

- Members should represent a wide range of demographics, including renters, homeowners, students, youth, people with disabilities, and residents from different neighborhoods.
- Consideration for independent business owners and those passionate about specific plan elements (like sustainability) was also raised.

Focus Group Difference

- Focus groups will be smaller, more specialized groups to delve into specific plan topics, while the steering committee will have a broader community focus.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Stakeholder Interviews	
Location: Online and in person at various locations	Date: August 28 th , 2023 to Sept 7, 2023
Outreach: Scheduled conversations with project team and City staff selected stakeholders.	Purpose: High level stakeholders' perspective on Ann Arbor's future as part of the comprehensive plan
Format: Facilitated conversation	Attendance: ~35 City Department Heads, Planning Staff, and Elected Leaders

Discussion Topics:

Housing: Rising costs are pushing residents out. There's demand for affordable, flexible options like ADUs and multigenerational housing. Zoning reform is needed to support density and climate goals.

Commercial: Support small BIPOC-, immigrant-, and family-owned businesses. Avoid displacement through rezoning. Encourage walkable retail and better use of surface lots. Expand streetscaping.

Development: Simplify zoning and the development process. Support small developers. Economic growth funds city services. Consider a cross-departmental review team.

Transportation: Promote regional transit, park-and-ride/bike, and walkable access. Streetscapes are public spaces. Align CIP with plan goals. Density reduces driving.

Engagement: Start outreach early. Include youth, BIPOC, immigrants, and housing-insecure residents. The Black community often feels left out.

University: Coordinate with UM on land use, housing, and transit. Address tax-exempt impacts. Help students stay and diversify the economy.

Environment & Resilience: Address dioxane plume and aging infrastructure. Invest in resilient, equitable systems. Balance density with service needs. Rethink greenbelt use. Fund parks and sustainable stormwater solutions.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

House Party (U-M)	
Location: Liberty Annex	Date: September 12 th , 2023
Outreach: Advertised as part of wider event by other organizations	Purpose: To inform about the plan and gather ideas in a space dedicated to housing solutions
Format: Activity session in event	Attendance: 287 (entire event)

Discussion Topics:

The Comprehensive Plan session, led by Taubman College students, used a gathering of community members interested in finding creative housing solutions to develop thoughts and ideas around Ann Arbor housing. Participants provided reactions to examples of “gentle density” housing and responded with stickers on a map to indicate what type of density they would be interested in seeing in their neighborhoods.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Tabling	
Location: Green Fair	Date: September 22 th , 2023
Outreach: Ann Arbor Observer advertisement, Groundcover Advertisement, city social media accounts, Office of Sustainability and Innovation (OSI) newsletter, OSI collaborator emails	Purpose: Getting community input on city values
Format: The booth featured a large chalkboard where city staff and consultants encouraged participants to write down their comments.	Attendance: 41 responses

Discussion Topics:

The Comp Plan team set up a table at the 2023 Green Fair to distribute information about the plan and its process, to gather perspectives on important values including identified areas they felt were missing from community discussions. Responses focused on the need for housing, community spaces, and sustainability.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Planning Commission Subcommittee	
Location: Online	Date: October 2 th , 2023
Outreach: Shared at 2023 Green Fair; Press Release shared with City Council, Community Action Network, Barrier Busters network, Washtenaw Housing Alliance, U-M Student Planning Club, Housing Commission, 121 Catherine Community Council, Ann Arbor Public Schools, City Sustainability Ambassadors, and GovDelivery email notices	Purpose: Guiding the creation of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee.
Format: Prepared presentation by City Staff and Consultants	Attendance: Planning Commissioners and City Staff

Discussion Topics:

To support the creation of the Comprehensive Plan, the Planning Commission launched a Steering Committee selection process focused on equity and inclusion, using broad outreach and demographic data to ensure diverse representation. The intent is that the Committee would help shape the plan through community engagement, goal setting, and strategy review.

Application Process

- 43 applications were received; 39 included optional demographic data.

Diversity Goals

- The committee aims to reflect Ann Arbor's diversity—across race, ethnicity, gender, age, income, and lived experience.
- An anonymized repository of applications and demographic data was created to identify representation gaps.

Outreach Strategy

- The application deadline was extended to October 16 to boost participation.
- Targeted outreach focused on underrepresented groups, including those involved in disability advocacy, racial equity, business ownership, and student communities.

Evaluation and Selection

- Staff will qualitatively assess applications with a focus on equity and inclusion, recommendations will be presented to the subcommittee after the deadline, and final appointments will be made by the full Planning Commission.

Committee Responsibilities

- Engage the community and gather broad input, help define and validate goals. Develop strategies to meet those goals, and review and provide feedback on the planning process and final document.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Planning Commission	
Location: Online	Date: October 11 th , 2023
Outreach: Posted on City Hall meeting board; Online City Meeting Calendar (Legistar)	Purpose: Guiding the Creation of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee
Format: Prepared presentation by City Staff and Consultants	Attendance: Planning Commissioners and City Staff

Discussion Topics:

A kickoff meeting for the Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan, outlining its purpose as a guide for the city's future development and priorities, including land use and public spending. The meeting introduces the consultant team, Interface Studio, along with specialized partners, and highlights the key issues the plan must address as defined by City Council: affordability, sustainability, and equity. The document notes that engagement efforts have already begun, revealing significant concerns about housing affordability in Ann Arbor. It also lists the specific points mandated by the City Council resolution for the plan, such as incorporating climate goals, recommending ways to increase housing density, and developing policies to repair past inequities.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

City Website Comment Box	
Location: Online	Date: Start October 12 th , 2023 to April 10 th , 2025
Outreach: Added to project website as a method for viewers to leave feedback while visiting/viewing project information.	Purpose: Providing different options for public comment
Format: Submitted comments	Attendance: 267 comments

Discussion Topics:

Comments from the website show community concern about affordable housing, infrastructure, and public transit, with residents also emphasizing the need for inclusive planning, environmental sustainability, and preserving neighborhood look and feel amid new development. This engagement was transitioned to the city's engagement platform in the draft phase.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Planning Commission Subcommittee	
Location: Online	Date: November 6 th , 2023
Outreach: City Hall Meeting Board, City online meeting calendar (Legistar)	Purpose: Guiding the creation of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee.
Format: City meeting	Attendance: Planning Commissioners and City Staff

Discussion Topics:

The Planning Commission subcommittee reviewed a proposed list of 12 members for the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. The goal was to ensure diverse representation across race, age, housing status, and geography. While the group was broadly representative, gaps remained. Staff planned to do targeted outreach to fill those gaps before finalizing the list. Two Planning Commissioners planned to join the group to support continuity.

Application Overview

- 113 applications were received after extending the deadline.
- Demographic data was collected but anonymized for review.
- Staff recommended 12 members, with plans to add 2–3 more to improve representation.

Demographic Highlights

- Gender: ~1/3 male, 2/3 female.
- Race/Ethnicity: 33% Black, 8% Hispanic, 0% Asian-American (a noted gap).
- Residency: 9 live in Ann Arbor, 3 do not.
- Age: Broad range, with some under- and over-representation by age group.
- Disability: 25% of members identify as having a disability.
- Language: 4 members speak a language other than English at home.
- Housing: About half are renters, aligning with city demographics.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Online – Emails to City	
Location: Online	Date: Starting November 16 th , 2023 to May 20, 2025
Outreach: N/A	Purpose: Providing different options for public comment.
Format: Emails to city staff	Attendance: about 500 emails

Discussion Topics:

Maintain Single-Family Zoning: Residents want to preserve the character of their single-family neighborhoods. They are specifically opposed to height increases and setback reductions. Some are opposed to the nuisance denser units would provide in terms of on street parking, and enjoyment of their property in a quiet setting.

Prioritize Housing Growth: Residents generally support the idea that providing more housing stock will alleviate housing shortages and stabilize housing costs. There is a general sense that with residential density comes many other benefits like local commerce and increased walkability and transit access.

Lack of Engagement: Residents feel there was inadequate communication about the CLUP process and that there should be more in-person engagement, a statistical survey, a postcard mailed to their home, or a vote on the plan, among other suggestions.

Plan Won't Create Affordable Housing: Residents feel that all new development in Ann Arbor is expensive, luxury housing catered to wealthy households and developers. Despite city efforts, the city has always been expensive.

Plan Doesn't Address Infrastructure Needs: Residents are concerned about the capacity of current infrastructure systems to handle increased stormwater, water, sewer gas, electricity, and snow removal needs if there are more households to serve. Some believe to pay for upgrades will increase their already high taxes.

Too Development Friendly: Residents feel the plan is too welcoming to new development due to proposed zoning changes regarding height requirements, setbacks, and open space requirements. This is believed to be a giveaway to the developer community.

Doesn't Protect Natural Features: Residents are concerned that open space and natural features will be compromised to make room for development. Tree canopy is of high concern.

Support Density of People: Residents welcome more neighbors for a variety of reasons, including preventing sprawl, reducing vehicle miles traveled, increasing tax base, allowing people to live near daily needs, and achieving A2Zero goals.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Little Data in Plan: Residents feel that there is insufficient data to support some of the claims or that data exists that directly contradicts claims made, specifically regarding how allowing more housing will make housing more affordable.

Draft Plan Designates Land Use Incorrectly: Residents are opposed to how the plan lays out future land use, specifically regarding where density is added, or when mixed-use/commercial is proposed in current single-family zones. Please note, many of these comments were calling for more density, and felt this plan did not go far enough to address the housing crisis.

DRAFT

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Steering Committee	
Location: Online	Date: January 17 th , 2024
Outreach: None	Purpose: Steering Committee Kickoff Meeting
Format: Prepared presentation for the Steering Committee by City Staff and Consultant Team.	Attendance: Steering Committee Members, City Planning Staff, and Consultants

Discussion Topics:

The kickoff meeting introduced the plan and its purpose: to guide the city's future development. It also outlined the role of the Steering Committee and emphasized the plan's importance for shaping future land use, policy, and resource allocation.

Key issues facing Ann Arbor

- Population growth
- Housing affordability
- Job market dynamics
- Tax base challenges
- Zoning complexities
- Supporting data presented

Role of the Steering Committee

- Oversee the process
- Provide feedback
- Guide public engagement
- Promote the plan
- Schedule for future meetings defined
- Assist with public engagement and outreach efforts
- Ensure broad community involvement in the plan's development

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Online – Survey	
Location: Online	Date: January 2024– June 2024
Outreach: Press release, social media posts, website banner, community org emails; Gov Delivery email notices (6,638 emails); Press Release (coverage on WEMU radio and MLive)	Purpose: To gather a broad base of responses about life in Ann Arbor, from those who live, work, and study in the city
Format: online survey questions	Attendance: 3,168 responses

Discussion Topics:

The survey was initiated to get a general sense of the thoughts, values, and concerns of people who live, work, and study in Ann Arbor. It was not intended to be a statistical survey, but rather a general starting point and one of many sources of public input. Questions focused on neighborhood changes and amenities, housing challenges and preferences, commute and transportation patterns, and defining values.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Planning Commission Subcommittee	
Location: Online	Date: January 30 th , 2024
Outreach: City online meeting calendar (Legistar)	Purpose: Presenting plan updates and initial findings
Format: City Meeting	Attendance: Planning Commission Subcommittee, City Planning Staff, and Consultants

City Council Directives

- Increase housing density in single-family zones.
- Modernize zoning codes.
- Use values to guide land use and address past harms from land use policies.

Key Data & Trends

- Population growth has slowed; student population rising.
- Strong demand for housing, but limited space for new development.
- Most buildings built between 1940s–1970s.
- Recent construction split evenly between residential and commercial.

Demographics

- Growth in 18–34 and 65+ age groups; decline in families.
- Increase in Asian population; Black population more dispersed.
- Historic Black neighborhoods now have lower Black population percentages.

Jobs & Economy

- 94,000 jobs in Ann Arbor; 37% tied to the University of Michigan.
- 76,000+ people work in Ann Arbor and live elsewhere.
- Over half of non-resident workers who responded to the survey want to live in the city.

Taxes & Land Use

- City relies heavily on property taxes (52% of revenue) and 42% of land is non-taxable
- Multifamily housing taxed as commercial, affecting affordability.
- Only 13% of land has potential for major development.

Development & Zoning Challenges

- Infrastructure limits where density can increase.
- Older zoning rules restrict new housing types.
- Need to explore density in R1/R2 zones and rethink lot sizes/setbacks.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Invited Presentations – Housing and Human Services Advisory Board (HHSAB)	
Location: Online (Zoom Meeting)	Date: February 8 th , 2024
Outreach: Conducted by OCED	Purpose: Invitation from HHSAB to present an overview of upcoming process
Format: Presentation, Q & A	Attendance: Unknown

Discussion Topics:

The presentation covers City Council's directive, the purpose of a comprehensive land use plan, the process and project timeline, key data points from preliminary analysis, and the engagement process.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Interviews and Focus Groups	
Location: Downtown Public Library	Date: March 12 th , 2024
Outreach: City invite	Purpose: To bring together key stakeholders for direct conversation with the team, helping everyone better understand the issues facing Ann Arbor
Format: Guided Conversations during March workshops	Attendance: 27 Stakeholders, City Staff, and Consultant Team

Discussion Topics:

Participants in the focus group discussed key challenges facing Ann Arbor, including the growing need for affordable and supportive housing, the pressures on downtown businesses, and the importance of improving transportation and parking. They emphasized the need for flexible zoning, creative development strategies, and better coordination across city departments.

Housing Challenges

- Housing affordability has worsened since the pandemic.
- Homelessness, evictions, and rent increases are rising.
- Families and voucher holders struggle to find housing.
- More supportive housing, flexible zoning, and creative financing are needed.

Commercial & Downtown Concerns

- Downtown businesses face high costs and limited retail diversity.
- New developments create competition for existing businesses.
- There's support for more density and mixed-use spaces, but concerns remain about affordability and design.

Transportation & Parking

- Parking and transit issues affect access and livability.
- Residents and businesses want better transit options and smarter parking management.
- Street closures should be more intentional and better planned.

Community Engagement

- Broader, more inclusive public input is essential.
- Community voices are needed to shape Ann Arbor's future effectively.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Large Public Event – March Downtown Workshops	
Location: Downtown Public Library, Online	Date: March 12-14 th , 2024
Outreach: Yard signs; community, partner, city council, and city newsletters; news release with coverage in MLive, WEMU, and ClickonDetroit; ads in AAATA buses, The Observer, and Bike Film Fest; 90+ email invitations to community orgs, city commissions, and U-M depts and orgs; social media posts; social media ads reaching over 25k accounts, NextDoor posts	Purpose: Create opportunities for the community to help shape the plan by sharing comments and feedback with the team
Format: 3-Day Public Open House, Online Engagement and Targeted Survey with Housing Commission	Attendance: 300+ attendees

Housing Affordability and Supply

- A significant concern is the lack of affordable places for families, as well as people in jobs like teachers or waiters. This is seen as contributing to a decrease in the school-age population and budget issues for schools.
- There is a strong call for building more housing overall to help lower costs.
- People want more diverse types of housing, not just single-family homes or high-end apartments.
- Suggestions for more housing types include allowing duplexes, triplexes, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), co-ops, and "missing middle" housing in more areas, including neighborhoods currently zoned only for single-family homes.
- Some suggest limiting or regulating short-term rentals (like Airbnb) to make more properties available for long-term residents.
- Ideas to make housing costs more manageable include potentially changing taxes, using a community land trust to remove land cost from the equation, simplifying the building permit process, and potentially building housing above parking lots.

Mobility and Transportation

- There is a strong desire for people to be able to walk, bike, and use public transit more and rely less on cars.
- The bus system is criticized for not being timely or connecting effectively, forcing people to walk long distances.
- Parking is a mixed issue: some think there's plenty, others want to stop building new public parking, and some want free weekend parking.
- There is also a request for more accessible parking spaces for people with disabilities.
- Equity in mobility for elders is also mentioned.

Downtown and Retail

- There is a desire for a more active and lively street experience, especially with ground-floor businesses in shopping areas.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

- Suggestions include making it easier to start small businesses and potentially requiring developers to include and support retail in new buildings.
- Some comments suggest expanding the idea of "downtown" or creating smaller commercial centers in neighborhoods to make them more walkable and less reliant on the main downtown area.

Zoning and Development

- Many commenters advocate for changing or relaxing zoning rules to allow for more density and mixed-use buildings (combining homes and businesses) in more parts of the city, including residential areas.
- Specific zoning changes mentioned include reducing minimum lot sizes, changing building setbacks (distance from the street), and allowing more types of homes everywhere.
- There's a desire for development that includes a mix of building sizes (small, medium, and high-rise), while some wish to keep a "human scale" or prevent tall buildings from being too close to sidewalks.
- The process of getting building approval is seen by some as slow and adding costs.

Equity and Inclusion

- Equity is mentioned as important for things like mobility for older people, access to services and opportunities for people of all income levels, and making sure housing is affordable for everyone regardless of background.

Sustainability and Green Space

- Protecting and adding green space, trees, and natural areas is very important to many people.
- There's a desire for more parks, public squares, and community gathering places.
- Adding green infrastructure like rain gardens and landscaping to buildings and public spaces is encouraged.
- Connecting urban growth with the health of the environment is a key concern.
- Specific ideas for sustainability include using rooftop gardens, geothermal energy, solar panels, city-wide composting, banning plastics, using sustainable building materials, and designing buildings to protect birds.
- Reducing reliance on cars is seen as good for the environment.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Steering Committee	
Location: Online	Date: March 20 th , 2024
Outreach: None	Purpose: Updates on engagement (survey and public events), Housing and Retail
Format: Prepared presentation by City Staff and Consultants	Attendance: Steering Committee, City Planning Staff and Consultants

Discussion Topics:

The meeting included updates on public engagement efforts such as surveys and events, and discussions on the state of housing and retail in the city, with particular attention to downtown. Key takeaways from engagement activities highlighted public desires for diverse housing options, a downtown accessible to everyone, and an increased variety of businesses. Background materials also examined demographic shifts, housing affordability challenges, and strategies for creating more affordable housing and supporting the retail ecosystem.

Downtown Public Workshop

- 3 days with over 300 attendees.
- 27 stakeholders in small group meetings.
- Values defined: diverse housing, local business investment, accessibility, public spaces, better transit, density, and open space preservation.
- Downtown vision: a mix of jobs, housing, recreation, entertainment, goods, and services.
- Desire for more residential development and new businesses.
- 75% of responses favor building up in Downtown adjacent areas.
- Major takeaways: focus on housing, inclusivity, business mix, and physical growth.

Online Engagement (as of 3/19/24)

- 2,735 responses to date.
- 83% live in Ann Arbor, 67% work there, 6% are college students.
- 65% own their home, 61% don't have children at home.
- 25% interested in ADUs.
- 40% say too little housing is being built, 35% say development is in the wrong places.
- 60% want a mix of uses in their neighborhood.
- 55% of non-residents would live in Ann Arbor if they found suitable housing.
- Underrepresented groups: dorm residents, less educated, recent movers, renters, Asians, young adults, low-income, African Americans.

Housing

- Shift from single-family homes to large apartments.
- Pipeline: 7,670 units (65% not under construction).
- 496 affordable units.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

- Missing options for families; families are a smaller share of households (43%) compared to the metro region (56%).
- Areas with older adults may see substantial change.
- Ann Arbor is unaffordable; most cost-burdened households are young adults.
- Density is increasing through various measures.
- ADU legislation updated in 2021; 46 ADUs created since 2016.
- Potential for 1,500 new ADUs.
- Housing around the university exceeds zoning limits.
- Comprehensive housing policy needed.

Retail

- Ann Arbor's retail serves a broad region, but local residential demand doesn't support the current volume, leading to a surplus space.
- Many neighbors, especially low-income ones—lack walkable retail, limiting access to daily goods and services.
- Families, students, and office workers have distinct needs (e.g., food & beverage, quick services), which shape retail demand.
- Businesses are clustered in corridors and centers, with limited presence in residential areas.
- TC1 districts offer short-term reuse potential, but few vacancies meet modern needs. Small spaces limit independent business opportunities.
- Mixed-use redevelopment can displace existing businesses. Tools are needed to preserve affordable space and support transitions.
- Strategies should support retail in underserved communities and encourage incremental, inclusive redevelopment.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Large Public Events – April Open House	
Location(s): Traverwood, Westgate, and Malletts Creek Libraries	Date: April 23 th 24 th and 26 th , 2024
Outreach: Flyers, social media posts, website banner, press release, Ann Arbor Observer ad, GovDelivery email notices (3,106 emails) and A2 News Notes, email sign-up list	Purpose: Neighborhood focused outreach for the community to comment and help shape the plan by sharing comments and feedback with the team
Format: Public Open House and Online Engagement	Attendance: 300+ Attendances, City Staff, and Consultants

Discussion Topics:

Open houses were held at three different branch libraries to reach various neighborhoods. Responses from attendees highlighted both the benefits and concerns regarding increased housing density. Proponents saw density as a way to address housing affordability, promote social diversity, encourage sustainability, and boost the local economy. However, worries came up about the potential loss of green spaces, negative impacts on neighborhood quality of life due to issues like noise and parking, and the risk of gentrification. Respondents also offered suggestions for improving the city beyond housing density, including the need for better transportation, more green spaces and parks, support for local businesses, enhanced safety and cleanliness, and greater community engagement in planning processes. The feedback reveals mixed opinions and a recognition that the success of increased density depends heavily on careful implementation and balanced planning.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Steering Committee	
Location: Online	Date: May 15 th , 2024
Outreach: None	Purpose: Reviewing “What If” land use scenarios
Format: Prepared presentation by City Staff and Consultants	Attendance: Steering Committee, City Planning Staff and Consultants

Discussion Topics:

The Steering Committee covered topics such as insights gathered from public engagement and various "what if" land use scenarios. Key feedback from public workshops and meetings highlighted a strong desire for more diverse and affordable housing, increased density, improved transit and bike infrastructure, and a more vibrant downtown area.

Citywide Development

- More types of housing and increased total housing (higher density)
- Improved bike lanes and pedestrian walkability
- Livelier riverfront and expanded downtown footprint
- Incentives for affordable and intensive development (missing middle housing)
- Preservation of historic districts and green spaces
- Better public transit and accessibility
- More small businesses and neighborhood retail options
- Livability and equity for all

Downtown Takeaways

- Housing was the top topic
- Downtown should be for everyone
- Increase the mix of businesses downtown
- Physical growth of downtown, especially to the south

Land Use Scenarios - Interrelated elements: Sustainability, Equity, Affordability

- Sustainability: efficient resource use, reduced land consumption, green infrastructure
- Equity: access to amenities, neighborhood livability, preventing displacement
- Affordability: more housing, affordable housing funds, financial stability, reduced transportation costs

New Housing Supply

- Expands overall supply and types of housing
- Frees up existing housing

“What If” Questions

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

- Housing for commuters (~35k to 40k households)
- Housing in single-family zoned areas (up to 4 units)
- Residential development in TC-1 and commercial areas
- Another downtown-scaled hub (e.g., Briarwood)

Potential Gains

- Stabilized rents
- More housing types
- Affordable housing fund
- Reduced commuter traffic
- Boosted transit and local business
- Increased tax revenue

Potential Losses

- Changes in neighborhood patterns
- More local traffic short-term

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Planning Commission Subcommittee	
Location: Online	Date: May 28 th , 2024
Outreach: GovDelivery emails notices (2,787 emails); Online City Meeting Calendar (Legistar); City Hall Meeting posting	Purpose: Discussion surrounding increasing housing supply and density, particularly concerning building height in residential areas
Format: Prepared presentation by City Staff and Consultants	Attendance: Planning Commission Committee, City Planning Staff, and Consultants

Discussion Topics:

The Subcommittee meeting focused on public feedback on housing affordability and sustainability, the potential for increased density in various areas, including currently single-family zoned neighborhoods, and the challenges posed by the existing Unified Development Code (UDC) which often hinders the types of development desired by the city. Speakers highlighted the need for easier processes for infill development and addressing conflicting regulations to achieve the goals of the comprehensive plan. The meeting also touched upon the importance of considering infrastructure needs and public spaces in future development.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Invited Presentations – Orchard Hills Maplewood Neighborhood Association	
Location: Zoom Meeting	Date: June 5 th , 2024
Outreach: City staff invited to attend by Neighborhood Association	Purpose: Annual meeting of the Orchard Hills Maplewood Homeowners Association
Format: Presentation and Q & A	Attendance: 30 residents

Discussion Topics:

The presentation outlined what a Comprehensive Plan is, City Council directives, background data, shared engagement summaries to date, including that 75% of respondents were supportive of 2-4 units per parcel in single family areas

Contact neighborhood association for the recording.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Tabling – Summer Festival	
Location: Summer Festival	Date: June 16 th , 2024
Outreach: Intercepting attendees at the festival	Purpose: Create opportunity to reach the community where they are; to help shape the plan by sharing comments, feedback, and questions
Format: Conversations were held with community members at a booth in both the Community and Children’s spaces. In the children’s space, mad lib and Legos were provided.	Attendance: around 50 reached

Discussion Topics:

The team set up a table in the kid’s activity tent and another informational table at the popular Summer Festival. Children were invited to build a Lego model of their imagined future city, and to fill out a mad lib card discussing what they hope to see in the future. Parents and other adult attendees were invited to fill out an activity sheet or navigate to on the website – the paper responses were later entered into the online platforms.

Suggestions from the children’s mad libs focus on enhancing the city’s walkability and bikability through more sidewalks and bike paths, alongside a desire for more green spaces and trees. Children also wished for more cats and dogs, and improvements like affordable housing and expanded public transit options like trains. Finally, some envisioned practical local amenities, like coffee shops and small markets, and a future Ann Arbor that is a sustainable and inclusive world-class city.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Online Activities – Summer Game	
Location: Online	Date: June – August 2024
Outreach: Summer game website post	Purpose: Spreading community awareness of comprehensive plan process and engagement opportunities
Format: Online activity	Attendance: 2,329 awarded badge

Discussion Topics:

The team partnered with the Ann Arbor District Library to add an Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan badge to the 2024 Summer Game, a popular activity that draws both youth and adults to engage in scavenger-hunt-type challenges. To earn the badge, players had to navigate to pages of the Comprehensive Plan website that explained the plan process and offered opportunities for input. Thousands of players completed the activities such as “balancing our priorities” and “how should we grow” and earned the badge.

[Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan | Ann Arbor District Library](#)

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Invited Presentation – Environmental Commission	
Location: Online	Date: June 27 th , 2024
Outreach: Online City Meeting Calendar (Legistar)	Purpose: To connect with the commission and discuss its thoughts as they relates to the plan
Format: City meeting	Attendance: Environmental Commissioners and staff

Discussion Topics:

Key topics included a comprehensive plan review, including affordability, sustainability, and equity in future development. Attendees focused on the natural features element of the plan, with commissioners posing questions and offering feedback on protecting green spaces and managing issues like invasive species.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Steering Committee	
Location: Online	Date: July 17, 2024
Outreach: Online City Meeting Calendar (Legistar)	Purpose: Discuss data and a vision
Format: Presentation	Attendance: Steering Committee, City Planning Staff, and Consultants

Discussion Topics:

The Committee discussed the working draft vision statement, potentially reflecting Ann Arbor's aspirations for 2050: "A2 is for All".

Vision

- A city that welcomes all new residents and fosters robust civic engagement.
- Health and wellness embodied in city policy and planning.
- Creating new housing options with a variety of types at different price points.
- Balanced development that embraces growth while integrating critical natural features.
- Improving the quality of existing open spaces to foster a biodiverse environment.
- Walkable neighborhoods with access to basic needs and amenities.
- Safe streets for all modes of transit.
- Reducing carbon emissions through efficient use of land, buildings, and infrastructure.
- Growing the non-residential commercial tax base.
- Providing diverse job opportunities at a range of skills and educational requirements inside the city.
- Protecting targeted lower-cost older commercial areas.
- Supporting neighborhood commercial development that encourages local ownership and the provision of amenities.

Growth Scenarios

- The Committee also discussed land use and growth scenarios, including how many new residents to plan for. Two approaches for creating enough housing to align with goals were presented:
 - Approach #1: Create enough housing to stabilize prices, supporting affordability goals. This would require approximately 600-900 housing units per year, representing a 1% growth rate.
 - Approach #2: Create enough housing so that half of all commuters could live in the city by 2050 if they choose. This supports affordability and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) reduction goals. This would require approximately 1,400-2,000 housing units per year, representing a 1.875% growth rate.

Potential future land use districts considered as part of the future land use map:

- **Neighborhood Residential**

Emphasizes housing at a neighborhood scale. It features a 35-foot height limit and allows for 1-4 housing units on typical parcels, potentially more on larger ones, with limited neighborhood commercial uses. This district could apply to many areas currently zoned R1, R2, and R3 to facilitate neighborhood infill.

- **Mixed-Use Transition**

Intended to provide medium-intensity housing and mixed uses, stepping down in scale towards adjacent neighborhoods. It has a 35-foot height limit when adjacent to neighborhoods, with allowed height increasing further away, potentially up to 120 feet max. It is focused on bigger corridors and allows for both neighborhood-scale and mixed-use style buildings. Examples of applicable areas include portions of Packard, Stadium, Plymouth, S. State, and Eisenhower.

- **Mixed-Use Hub**

Allows for the tallest buildings and is designed around strong transit hubs. It starts with a taller building height limit, such as 55 feet, increasing significantly further from neighborhoods, potentially exceeding 300 feet tall. This district is intended for mixed uses (residential, commercial, office/lab) and encourages the redevelopment of suburban commercial areas. Examples of applicable areas include Downtown, State & Eisenhower, Stadium, and Washtenaw.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Planning Commission Subcommittee	
Location: Online	Date: July 23 th , 2024
Outreach: City Hall Meeting Board; Online City Meeting Calendar (Legistar); GovDelivery email notices (2,808 emails)	Purpose: City Meeting
Format: Presentation	Attendance: Commission, City Planning Staff, and Consultants

Discussion Topics:

The Subcommittee meeting focused on the process of updating the plan. Discussion centered on emerging themes and values like affordability, sustainability, and equity, and how these should be translated into a new vision and goals for the city. The meeting also explored preliminary concepts for future land use districts, aiming to simplify zoning categories and outline scenarios for accommodating future housing needs. Consultants presented initial ideas for residential, mixed-use transition, and mixed-use hub districts, prompting feedback and discussion among the commissioners.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

City Council	
Location: Council Chambers and Online	Date: August 12 th , 2024
Outreach: Legistar; Council GovDelivery email notices, Council website	Purpose: City Meeting
Format: Presentation	Attendance: Planning Commission, City Planning Staff, and Consultants

Discussion Topics:

Key updates presented include an introduction to the new Human Resources Director, highlighting her focus on employee engagement and strategic planning. Additionally, there is a detailed look at the upcoming visit from a delegation from Tübingen, Germany, Ann Arbor's sister city, with a packed itinerary centered on climate action and sustainability efforts. Finally, a significant portion of the information concerns the Comprehensive Plan update process, outlining community engagement, emerging themes related to affordability and growth, and planned future steps, alongside a review of recent changes to the development review process and zoning regulations.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Meeting in a Box	
Location: Online, Summer Festival, Pop-ups	Date: August 15 – December 24, 2024
Outreach: Website banner, info at pop-ups, GovDelivery email notices (2,865 emails)	Purpose: Create opportunities for the community to help shape the plan by sharing comments, feedback, and questions
Format: Downloadable worksheet packet	Attendance: 34 responses

Discussion Topics:

Community members who filled out the Meeting in a Box worksheet packet emphasized the need for more affordable housing options across income levels, better transportation and accessibility, and the protection of green spaces and natural features. There were also concerns about how growth might affect a neighborhood's look and feel and quality of life. Many participants highlighted the importance of civic engagement, transparency in planning, and equitable access to essential services. Discussions also raised questions about how increased housing density could impact infrastructure and community stability.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Targeted Focus Groups - Delonis	
Location: Delonis Center	Date: September 17, 2024
Outreach: Delonis Center staff recruited 20 guests to participate in one of two hour-long discussions, each receiving a \$20 gift card.	Purpose: To create the time and space to capture underrepresented voices in the Ann Arbor Community
Format: Guided Conversation	Attendance: 20 guests

Discussion Topics:

The two focus groups, each with ten members, were designed to be a loosely structured conversation on what the plan values mean to participants and what they see as important for the city's future.

Affordability

- Sense that Ann Arbor will never become affordable.
 - Primarily catering to students whose parents fund housing.
 - Students seen as competing for housing, resources.
- Need to build, renovate, use empty buildings.
- Need to build affordable housing, additional shelter.
- Sense of disillusionment over hotel next to shelter.
- The city is already good, it just needs to be affordable.
- Should be possible to live here if you work here.
- Needing to move out to Wayne County if transportation available.

Bus system

- Bus access is important for jobs.
- Mon-Fri schedule is good, but Sat-Sun is not.
 - Bus takes too long.
 - Still need to get to good distribution on holidays, but no bus service.
- Desire for bus/carpool lanes to speed up service.
- Difficulty accessing stops when it snows.

Shelter

- Need for additional shelter capacity, year-round.
- Desire for shelter services to be open to everyone.
- Innovative solutions - mobile washing unit, pallet houses.
- Wanting the Housing Commission to be more transparent, better advocates.
- Opportunities for UM students to work or volunteer helping at shelter.
- Need for more case managers - only residents get case management.
- Need for women and children's shelters, keeping families together.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Sustainability

- Need for a bathroom option that doesn't require a phone.
- Redefine sustainability.
 - Green jobs employment program.
 - Using city-owned properties for housing.
- Need for phone charging outlets that work.
- More programs (detox related).

Gripes with the City

- Caters to tourists and students.
- The idea of building a fancy hotel next to the Delonis center was really offensive.

Ann Arbor Positives

- Trails, forests, rivers, lakes, parks.
- Openness, opportunity to express yourself.
- Block parties, food trucks.
- Good balance of nature and city.
- Generally positive police behavior, better than other nearby cities.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Steering Committee	
Location: Online	Date: September 18 th , 2024
Outreach: GovDelivery email notices (2,876 emails)	Purpose: To learn about and discuss the proposed goals and objectives for each major area of the plan
Format: Worksheet prepared by City Staff and Consultants	Attendance: Steering Committee, City Planning Staff, and Consultants

Discussion Topics:

This Committee discussed the draft goals and strategies across three key areas: Land Use & Housing, Economy & Vitality, and Sustainability & Infrastructure. The goals for Land Use & Housing focused on creating diverse, affordable housing options in walkable neighborhoods while protecting natural features. Within Economy & Vitality, the aim was to grow the commercial tax base, create diverse job opportunities, enhance downtown, and establish mixed-use centers. Finally, the Sustainability & Infrastructure goals addressed improving transportation, parks, reducing carbon emissions, expanding services, and increasing social resilience.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Tabling – Green Fair 2024	
Location: Green Fair	Date: September 20 th , 2024
Outreach: Ann Arbor Observer advertisements, city social media, Office of Sustainability and Innovation (OSI) newsletter, OSI collaborators email, press release	Purpose: To spread awareness of the plan and understand hopes and concerns regarding added density
Format: Tabling	Attendance: 18 chalkboard participants

Discussion Topics:

The team set up a table at the Green Fair to distribute information about the plan and used a large chalkboard to gather responses on the opportunities and challenges of adding 40,000 new housing units to the city. Responses on opportunities included better transportation infrastructure, more sustainability, and housing access. Challenges included traffic and parking and climate change.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Planning Commission Subcommittee	
Location: Online	Date: September 24 th , 2024
Outreach: City Hall Meeting Board; Online City Meeting Calendar (Legistar); GovDelivery emails notices (2,823 emails)	Purpose: City Meeting
Format: Presentation	Attendance: Planning Commission, City Planning Staff, and Consultants

Discussion Topics:

Public commenters address concerns about walkability, energy efficiency in buildings, and the impact of increased density on existing neighborhoods. The Interface Studio presentation discusses a proposed simplified land use framework, analyzes areas with potential for complete neighborhoods, and raises questions for the committee regarding density along busy roads, strategic investments in underserved areas, and the future of well-established neighborhoods. The discussion highlights the complexities of balancing growth, sustainability, equity, and preserving neighborhood character.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Tabling – Farmers Market	
Location: Kerrytown Farmers Market	Date: October 9 th , 2024
Outreach: Direct communication with market staff	Purpose: To reach more community members, including those with an interest in sustainability
Format: Tabling	Attendance: around 10 people

Discussion Topics:

The Comp Plan team set up a table at the Wednesday Ann Arbor Farmers Market in Kerrytown to reach residents interested in sustainability and local issues, hear their concerns and ideas for the future, and direct them to online resources and activities. Conversations focused on the plan process, the need for a sustainable future of the city, and housing.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Tabling – Groundcover	
Location: Groundcover Office	Date: October 11 th , 2024
Outreach: Direct communication with organization	Purpose: To create the time and space to capture underrepresented voices in the Ann Arbor Community
Format: Tabling	Attendance: around 5 people

Discussion Topics:

The Comp Plan team set up a table at the Groundcover office during Friday vendor drop-in hours to reach housing-insecure community members, inform them about the plan process, and hear their opinions on the future of the city. Conversations with Groundcover vendors focused on the lack of affordable housing in the city and creative housing solutions such as Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). The team also directed vendors to the engagement activities on the website and offered paper copies of the Meeting in a Box.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Focus Groups – Affordability	
Location: Online	Date: October 14 th , 2024
Outreach: Invitations by City Staff	Purpose: Creating an opportunity to directly provide input for draft plans as it relates to affordability
Format: Guided Conversation	Attendance: Consultants, City Planning Staff, Housing Commission Chair, Washtenaw Housing Alliance, Intercooperative Council, Renters Commission, HHSAB, Realtor, Core Spaces

Discussion Topics:

The focus group discussed the affordability component of the Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan revealed a range of perspectives from stakeholders including developers, housing advocates, real estate agents, and residents. The discussion centered on the need for diverse housing options beyond single-family homes and traditional apartments, such as co-ops and missing middle housing. Participants also addressed challenges related to housing attainability for moderate-income individuals and incoming faculty, the impact of rising property taxes, and potential solutions like utilizing city-owned land and advocating for tenant opportunity to purchase. Concerns were raised about the appropriateness of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and the use of specific neighborhood designations.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Focus Groups – Sustainability	
Location: Online	Date: October 15 th , 2024
Outreach: Invitations by City Staff	Purpose: Creating an opportunity to directly provide input for draft plan as it relates to sustainability
Format: Guided Conversation	Attendance: Consultants, City Planning Staff, Environmental Commission, TheRide, Neutral Zone, Washtenaw 2030 District, Energy Commission, Office of Campus Sustainability (U-M), TeaHaus

Discussion Topics:

Participants, including city planning staff, community members, and representatives from various organizations, discussed key issues like housing, transportation, infrastructure, and environmental goals. The conversation highlighted the challenges of balancing different priorities, such as increasing density while addressing parking concerns, and emphasized the need for specific, actionable strategies to achieve stated objectives like carbon neutrality and community resilience. The focus group also touched on the importance of regional coordination and the role of institutions like the University of Michigan.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Large Public Events – Downtown Workshop	
Location: Downtown library, online	Date: October 23 th , 2024
Outreach: Press release, social media, Ann Arbor Observer posting, email list – GovDelivery email notices (2,901 emails)	Purpose: To present the public with work to date and receive feedback on plan goals and draft land use map
Format: Open house with presentation, online activities	Attendance: 200+ people

Housing Density and Affordability

- There is a recognized need for increased housing density, especially in mixed-use developments, to address housing shortages and affordability. This includes allowing taller buildings and more diverse housing options, particularly affordable housing for low- and middle-income residents
- Key proposed changes that participants rated included adding density near north campus" and the concept of "Low rise residential districts," as well as "Expanding downtown," all of which relate to increasing housing density and options

Transportation and Infrastructure

- A specific proposed change that participants rated was to "Develop transit corridors," highlighting a direct action related to improving transportation infrastructure
- Participants called for better public transit, bike lanes, and pedestrian pathways to reduce car dependency and improve neighborhood connectivity.

Community and Public Spaces

- Emphasis was placed on the importance of parks, green spaces, and community hubs. There is a desire for more accessible, well-maintained public spaces integrated into urban planning.

Environmental Sustainability

- There is a clear need for sustainable development practices, including energy-efficient buildings and preservation of mature trees. Participants also supported policies promoting fossil fuel-free construction and green infrastructure.

Zoning and Land Use

- Participants were asked to rate their reactions to several key proposed land use changes, including "Develop transit corridors," "Add density near north campus," "Redevelop shopping center," "Low rise residential districts," "Expanding downtown," and "Preserve industrial space"
- Concerns were raised about current zoning laws. Participants expressed a desire for reforms that allow more flexible land use, support mixed-use development, and reduce restrictions on building heights

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

- It's notable that while attendees generally supported the recommendations, some specifically had "questions and concerns regarding proposed land use changes

Community Engagement and Transparency

- There is strong interest in better communication and more inclusive engagement in planning decisions, especially from residents in single-family neighborhoods
- Feedback that online engagement activities mirrored the in-person workshop using Miro board activities, with results from these online efforts planned to be incorporated alongside the in-person feedback, demonstrating a broader approach to outreach

DRAFT

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Focus Groups – Natural Features	
Location: Online	Date: October 24 th , 2024
Outreach: Invitations by City Staff	Purpose: Creating an opportunity to directly provide input for draft plans as it relates to natural features
Format: Guided Conversation	Attendance: Consultants, City Planning Staff, Environmental Commission, GSI Studio, Matthei Botanical Gardens, Insite Studio, Huron River Watershed Council, County Water Resources Commissioner

Discussion Topics:

The natural resources focus group discussed balancing development with environmental protection, particularly regarding tree preservation and natural area quality. Participants debated the city's current regulations, noting a focus on quantity over quality in natural spaces and trees. The conversation highlighted the challenges of prioritizing areas for protection versus development, considering both ecological value and public use, and the limitations of the city's authority over land owned by other institutions like the University of Michigan and the public school district. The discussion also touched on regional considerations, alternative development approaches, and the need for updated natural area assessments.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Focus Groups – Equity	
Location: Online	Date: October 24 th , 2024
Outreach: Invitations by City Staff	Purpose: Creating an opportunity to directly provide input for the draft plan as it relates to equity
Format: Guided Conversation	Attendance: Consultants, City Planning Staff, Office of Organizational Equity, Steering Committee member from Dunbar Tower Affordable Housing, National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women’s Club, Inc., Student Leadership Mentor

Discussion Topics:

Participants discussed challenges like the difficulty of undoing past harm, the lack of ownership opportunities for Black residents, and the need for support for local businesses. Key topics explored include increasing housing supply and affordability, protecting existing residents, promoting independent living through universal design, and encouraging walkable neighborhoods. Concerns were raised about gentrification, accessible engagement, and the intentional allocation of resources to benefit marginalized communities, particularly BIPOC and low-income residents. The conversation highlighted the importance of inclusive language and intentional action to achieve equitable outcomes in housing, economic development, and community well-being.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Tabling – Elks Event	
Location: Elks Lodge	Date: October 27 th , 2024
Outreach: Direct emails with organization staff	Purpose: To create the time and space to capture underrepresented voices in the Ann Arbor Community
Format: Tabling	Attendance: around 10 people

Discussion Topics:

The Comp Plan team set up a table at the 2024 Elks Community Fun Day to reach a historic Black community space and hear needs and priorities from Black community members. Attendees learned about the plan process, discussed their thoughts on the city moving forward, and participated in the dot voting activity ranking development priorities. Discussions focused on the loss of affordability and Black residents in Ann Arbor, as well as the need for greater physical accessibility for aging and disabled residents.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Tabling – Library	
Location: Westgate and Malletts Creek library	Date: November 6 and 8 th , 2024
Outreach: Direct emails with library staff	Purpose: To reach young families and speakers of other languages
Format: Tabling	Attendance: around 10 people

Discussion Topics:

The Comp Plan team set up a table at the Westgate Library after a baby playtime to reach young families, and at the Malletts Creek Library after an ESL class to reach speakers of other languages. The team distributed information about online activities and solicited feedback through the dot voting activity ranking development priorities. Conversations focused on the plan process and strategies for improving affordability.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Tabling – Campus	
Location: State & North University	Date: November 13 th , 2024
Outreach: Intercepting passersby	Purpose: To spread awareness of the plan and learn about priorities and concerns in the campus community
Format: tabling and activity	Attendance: around 20 students

Discussion Topics:

The Comp Plan team set up a table and interactive activities in the city right-of-way at the corner of State St and North University to reach U-M students and other community members. Passersby were invited to engage in a ping-pong game with balls labeled with important goals to discuss, or to write on a chalkboard what they prioritized for the future of the city. They were also invited to add to the dot voting activity ranking development priorities and were directed to activities on the website. Discussions focused on the lack of affordable housing for students and the need for better pedestrian infrastructure.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Invited Presentation – Parks Advisory Commission	
Location: Online	Date: November 19 th , 2024
Outreach: PAC conducted outreach	Purpose: To connect with the commission and discuss environmental issues as it relates to the plan
Format: Prepared presentation by City Staff and Consultants	Attendance: PAC, Planning Staff, and Park Staff

Discussion Topics:

This commission presentation included an update on the city's Comprehensive Plan and its aim to guide future land use and development with a focus on affordability, sustainability, equity, and dynamism. Discussion focused on the potential impacts of increased population density on the city's parks and natural areas.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Steering Committee	
Location: Online	Date: November 20 th , 2024
Outreach: Gov Delivery email notices (2,915 emails)	Purpose: Reviewing engagement and draft goals
Format: Prepared presentation by City Staff and Consultants	Attendance: Steering Committee, City Planning Staff, and Consultants

Discussion Topics:

The Steering Committee meeting focused on three main areas: an engagement update, a review of draft goals and strategies, and a discussion on future land use. A draft Future Land Use Map was presented, leading to discussions of topics such as employment areas, mixed-use zones, and public land.

The Committee also reviewed draft goals and strategies spanning key categories—Housing & Neighborhoods, Economy & Opportunity, and Infrastructure & Services—with the aim of addressing housing supply and affordability, economic diversification, environmental resilience, sustainable transportation, and efficient resource use.

This was the Steering Committee’s final formal meeting. In 2025, the plan entered the drafting phase, and it was taken to the Planning Commission, the adopters of the plan, for review and editing.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Planning Commission Subcommittee Meeting	
Location: Online	Date: November 26 th , 2024
Outreach: City Hall Meeting board; online City meeting calendar (Legistar)	Purpose: Conversations around land use regulations
Format: City Meeting	Attendance: Planning Commission, City Planning Staff, and Consultants

Discussion Topics:

This Subcommittee meeting focused on feedback regarding proposed changes to Ann Arbor's land use regulations. The discussion centered around future land use classifications and their application on the future land use map, contrasting approaches like gentle density versus maximizing housing opportunities in residential areas. A significant portion of the conversation addressed the proposed mixed-use hub categories (core, innovation, retail) and an employment non-residential district, with participants debating the necessity and implications of restricting housing in certain areas for the sake of economic diversification and tax base stability. Concerns were also raised about the impact of these proposals on areas like North Main and the potential for unintended consequences when trying to be overly prescriptive with zoning.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Focus Group – Neutral Zone	
Location: Neutral Zone	Date: December 3 rd , 2024
Outreach: Direct emails with organization staff	Purpose: To include the voices of youth in envisioning the future of the city
Format: Presentation and discussion	Attendance: 10 teenagers

Discussion Topics:

City staff and consultants presented the plan process and outcomes to date, then asked the young people to present about their hopes and concerns for the future of Ann Arbor. The participants spoke about their interest in environmental sustainability and living in a vibrant, active city. They focused on their experiences getting to daily destinations without driving, noting the need for better bus service and greater safety for pedestrians and bicyclists on the streets.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Presentation – Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning	
Location: 2000 Bonisteel Blvd	Date: January 16 th , 2025
Outreach: Direct email with chair of department	Purpose: To share with students about the city's planning process
Format: Presentation and Q & A	Attendance: 15-20 students and faculty

Discussion Topics:

City staff shared a presentation that started with a description of a comprehensive plan, the process and timeline, and values. Then, the presentation covered background data regarding demographic changes, housing development pattern, land use trends, and economic and retail analysis. A summary of engagement to date was shared. Staff spent more time walking through the future land use categories, their purpose, and how they can help achieve the city.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Planning Commission Meeting	
Location: Council Chambers and Online	Date: January 23 th , 2025
Outreach: City Hall meeting board; Online city meeting calendar (Legistar); GovDelivery email notices (2,940 emails)	Purpose: Provide overview of the draft's content to the entire commission
Format: City meeting	Attendance: Planning Commission, City Planning Staff, and Consultants

Discussion Topics:

The Commission expressed a strong desire for a plan that proactively addresses the housing crisis by allowing greater density and more flexible housing typologies in traditionally single-family areas. They supported removing unit count restrictions and using form-based regulations like height limits (leaning towards 48 feet). There was also a significant consensus against prohibiting residential uses in any part of the city, pushing for residential to be permitted universally. The approach to mixed-use areas was suggested to be simplified and unified.

New Land Use Categories

- Low-rise Residential: Replace R1/R2 zones (36% of city land), allowing diverse housing types.
- Mixed Use (Hubs & Corridors): Include 2,500 acres for transit-oriented development, with hubs aligned to TC1 zoning.
- Retail, Innovation, Employment: Zones for specific uses, with debate over whether housing should be allowed.

Low-Rise Residential Debate

- Early discussions supported up to 4 units and 35 ft height.
- Recent proposals favored 48 ft height and no unit cap, focusing on form-based regulation.
- Many commissioners supported unlimited units within a 4-story scale, regulated by form rather than count.

Housing Restrictions Debate

- Arguments included prioritizing housing, avoiding exclusion, and letting the market decide use.
- The likely direction was to allow residential use citywide.
- Strong opposition to restricting housing in any zone, including Employment, Innovation, and Retail.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

City Council Meeting	
Location: Online	Date: February 10 th , 2025
Outreach: None	Purpose: update on the Planning Commission's discussion on major comp plan themes
Format: Prepared presentation by City Staff and Consultants	Attendance: Planning Commission, City Planning Staff and Consultants

Discussion Topics:

The presentation and conversation between staff and the Planning Commission focused on changes to housing density.

Key Direction from the Planning Commission

- Recent guidance has focused on housing, employment and tax base, and infrastructure. Staff noted these priorities differ somewhat from their original vision.

Mixed Use Hubs

- State/Eisenhower: Targeted for redevelopment but faces infrastructure challenges.
- Innovation District (North Campus): Initially limited residential to prioritize biotech uses, but the Commission now supports adding housing despite infrastructure concerns.
- Retail Districts (e.g., Arborland, Maple Village): Currently car-centric; the Commission favors full redevelopment over incremental change.

Employment District

- Intended to preserve space for non-university jobs. While staff proposed limiting residential use here, the Commission wants housing allowed citywide. Concerns include environmental and infrastructure issues, but the Commission views housing as the top priority.

Housing Capacity & Implementation

- Zoning changes could enable 30,000–97,000 new housing units by 2050. Staff emphasized the need to align growth with infrastructure capacity and to clearly identify areas where upgrades are needed. The plan will be a high-level vision, with zoning specifics to follow in a future code rewrite. It will be reviewed every five years, with annual progress reports.

Council & Public Feedback/Concerns

- The shift in low-rise density from what was shared with the public.
- Restrictions on housing in Innovation and Employment zones.
- Potential impacts of relaxed standards in retail areas.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Invited Presentations – North Burns Park and Pattengill Neighborhood Associations	
Location: Downtown Library	Date: February 20 th , 2025
Outreach: Email invite from neighborhood associations	Purpose: Provide update on the process and proposed changes
Format: Presentation and Q & A	Attendance: ~ 50 residents

Discussion Topics:

City staff shared a presentation that started with a description of a comprehensive plan, the process and timeline, and values. Then, the presentation covered background data regarding demographic changes, housing development pattern, land use trends, and economic and retail analysis. A summary of engagement to date was shared. Much of the session was focused on the residential district in the future land use map. Residents were concerned about how greater density in the neighborhood would damage tree canopy coverage, increase land speculation and student rentals, and change the character of their neighborhood.

Contact the neighborhood association for a recording.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Invited Presentation – Old West Side, Broadway, and Old Fourth Ward Neighborhood Associations	
Location: Council Chambers and Online	Date: March 5 th , 2025
Outreach: Email invite from neighborhood association	Purpose: To clarify the potential impact of proposed comp plan changes to historic districts
Format: Prepared presentation by City Staff	Attendance: ~ 50 residents

Discussion Topics:

The historic district representative, Jeff Crockett, organized a meeting with a set of pre-determined questions from residents for staff. He provided the questions to staff prior to the meeting and received the responses in writing to distribute to the attendees. There was also time for other questions during the meeting. Residents were primarily concerned about how zoning would impact historic districts in terms of density, tree canopy, and design guidelines. It was also asked if it is possible to build our way into affordability.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Invited Presentation - Year of Democracy – U-M	
Location: Ford School	Date: March 12 th , 2025
Outreach: Conducted by U-M	Purpose: To share with students and faculty how local planning is connected to democracy
Format: Presentation and Q & A	Attendance: ~ 50 people

Discussion Topics:

City staff shared a presentation that started with a description of a comprehensive plan, the process and timeline, and values. Then, the presentation covered background data regarding demographic changes, housing development pattern, land use trends, and economic and retail analysis. A summary of engagement to date was shared. Students had concerns about the lack of local retail and grocery stores forcing people into cars because they are not provided closer to residents. Students also asked about methodology for reaching out to people of color to be included in engagement. Residents also attended and shared concerns about how greater density could encourage renting and how that could limit residents from building equity in homeownership. There is also a concern that an increase in supply does not contribute to affordability.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Planning Commission Meeting	
Location: Council Chambers and Online	Date: April 1 st , 2025
Outreach: City Hall Meeting Board, Online City Meeting Calendar (Legistar); GovDelivery email notices (2,999 emails)	Purpose: City meeting
Format: City Meeting	Attendance: Planning Commission, City Planning Staff

Discussion Topics:

Many individuals express their views on a proposed comprehensive land use plan, particularly focusing on changes to zoning laws and the potential impact on housing affordability and neighborhood character. A significant point of contention is the proposed increase in housing density and building heights, with some supporting it as a solution to the housing crisis and others voicing concerns about infrastructure, traffic, and the loss of single-family neighborhoods. The discussion also touches on the process of community engagement in the planning, with disagreements on whether it has been adequate and inclusive.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Lower Burns Park Neighborhood Association	
Location: Senior Center	Date: April 5 th , 2025
Outreach: City Councilmembers invited staff	Purpose: To address and listen to resident concerns
Format: Q & A	Attendance: ~ 50 residents

Discussion Topics:

Questions were asked about infrastructure capacity in accordance with more growth, a clarification of Missing Middle housing, how affordable housing is built, if the city plans for growth with AAPS, and how trees are regulated in single-family and two-family zones. There were no official notes taken but the meeting was recorded by the neighborhood association for more details.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Planning Commission	
Location: Council Chambers and Online	Date: April 15 th , 2025
Outreach: City Hall Meeting Board; Online City Meeting Calendar; GovDelivery email notices (3,123 emails)	Purpose: Review the draft comp plan
Format: City meeting	Attendance: Planning Commission, City Planning Staff

Discussion Topics:

Residents voice concerns about the proposed elimination of single-family zoning, its potential impact on housing affordability and the character of existing neighborhoods, and the adequacy of public engagement in the planning process.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Planning Commission	
Location: Council Chambers and Online	Date: April 22 th , 2025
Outreach: City Hall Meeting Board; Online City Meeting Calendar; GovDelivery email notices (3,126 emails)	Purpose: Review the draft comp plan
Format: City meeting	Attendance: Planning Commission, City Planning Staff

Discussion Topics:

Several residents and commissioners voice their opinions on the Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan, specifically concerning housing development and zoning regulations. Concerns are raised about the adequacy of community engagement in the planning process. There is debate regarding the effectiveness of a one-size-fits-all zoning approach and whether proposed changes adequately address housing affordability for middle-income residents. The conversation also touches upon economic development strategies, the role of parks and open space, and the importance of fostering walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods, with commissioners discussing the document's structure and clarity.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Large Public Events – April and May Open House	
Location: Traverwood, Westgate, and Mallets Creek library branches	Date: April 24 th , April 30 th , May 7 th
Outreach: flyers at the library, city hall, and Bryant Community Center; GovDelivery email notices (7,598 emails), social media, press release, Office of Sustainability and Innovation newsletter, parks and senior center newsletter, community newsletter	Purpose: to collect input on the draft goals, strategies, and future land use map
Format: Public open house and online format	Attendance: 355 people

Housing and Neighborhoods

Goal score: 3.27 (out of 5), Strategy score: 2.63 (out of 5), Feedback responses: 233, Priority responses: 284

The participants were split when it came to densification in residential zones: 41 for densifying and 39 opposed. An additional 9 respondents were opposed to any densification at all, even in the downtown and hub areas. Some worry about the unknown consequences (20), which go hand in hand with wanting to see a greater explanation of the plan's methodology and implementation (13) and more research and data to understand how the strategies connect with the goals (16). Notably, a significant number of respondents were unconvinced that density would improve affordability (21). Other concerns included environmental and infrastructure challenges associated with density (18) and that neighborhood character won't be protected (18). While many participants highlighted the importance of walkability and non-car transportation options (15), others described the importance of cars and parking, especially for seniors and disabled people (7). The top priority from participants was to protect neighborhood character (26), which included an emphasis on preserving the visual cohesion of neighborhoods (15). Many respondents also highlighted the need to improve affordability for all income levels (25), through increasing housing supply (21) and expanding income-restricted housing (12).

Economy and Opportunity

Goal score: 3.43 (out of 5), Strategy score: 3.04 (out of 5), Feedback responses: 107, Priority responses: 123

The responses do not show a clear consensus among the residents. The highest proportion of respondents (22) support the proposed hub districts. Many report the improved walkability and retail diversity that could come as a result of a downtown-like hubs throughout the city. The next most common response (18) was that the goals or statements were vague or unclear. This came in the form of questions or comments that the descriptions were not concrete enough to properly evaluate. Support for local entrepreneurs was also emphasized (11). Some lamented the loss of smaller local businesses and urged the city to assist where feasible. Respondents used this opportunity to discuss housing and its connection

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

to economic development – some believing that density will support local commercial uses and others that it will ruin the neighborhoods and force local business out. The priorities reflect the open responses: support for hub districts and support for local entrepreneurs are the top two, earning 20 and 14 calls outs, respectively.

Infrastructure and Services

Goal score: 4.05 (out of 5), Strategy score: 3.81 (out of 5), Feedback responses: 228, Priority responses: 108

The highest proportion of respondents were related to protecting natural features (17). There is concern that with greater density, environmental protections will be eroded and that a balanced approach would support both development and trees, water, and green spaces. The second most common was an expression of general support (16) for goals and strategies. In the case of “general support,” responses were either nonspecific support or comments that expressly supported more than one of the goals or strategies. When combined, references to transportation, including multimodal, roads, and public transit infrastructure (35) top priorities. Many of these comments are to improve public safety and reliability. Similarly, if combined, infrastructure energy and resilience infrastructure (13) call for the city to plan for future needs under extreme climates. The priorities largely follow the open responses: protect natural features (26) and expand multimodal transportation infrastructure (20).

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Planning Commission	
Location: Council Chambers and Online	Date: April 29 th , 2025
Outreach: City Hall Meeting Board; Online City Meeting Calendar (Legistar); GovDelivery email notices (3,142 emails)	Purpose: Review the draft comp plan
Format: City meeting	Attendance: Planning Commission, City Planning Staff

Discussion Topics:

Citizens and commissioners discussed the draft comprehensive plan, focusing heavily on housing, land use, and development. Speakers raise concerns about community engagement, the clarity and consistency of the plan's language, and the potential impacts of increased density on existing neighborhoods and infrastructure. There was significant debate on whether building more housing will lead to affordability, how to support economic development and diverse businesses within the city, and the appropriate balance between growth and preserving neighborhood look and feel. The discussion highlights the complexity of balancing different goals and the need for clearer communication and potentially revised strategies in the final plan.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Planning Commission	
Location: Council Chambers and Online	Date: May 6 th , 2025
Outreach: City Hall Meeting Board; Online City Meeting Calendar (Legistar); GovDelivery email notices (3,235 emails)	Purpose: Review draft comp plan
Format: City meeting	Attendance: Planning Commission, City Planning Staff

Discussion Topics:

Residents expressed significant concerns about the city's proposed comprehensive land use plan, arguing it is based on unsupported growth assumptions and inadequate data, particularly regarding population projections and infrastructure costs. Many urged the planning commission to pause the plan to allow for more robust public engagement, a thorough review of data, and a more realistic approach to housing needs and economic development. Conversely, some speakers advocated for the plan to move forward, highlighting the housing crisis and the potential for increased density to address it, while also discussing specific site plan reviews and the nuances of different zoning districts like the proposed "flex" zone.

Ann Arbor Comprehensive Plan

Engagement Overview

Planning Commission	
Location: Council Chambers and Online	Date: May 13 th , 2025
Outreach: City Hall Meeting Board; Online City Meeting Calendar (Legistar); GovDelivery email notices (3,224 emails)	Purpose: Review the draft comp plan
Format: City meeting	Attendance: Planning Commission, City Planning Staff

Discussion Topics:

Many speakers expressed strong concerns about potential negative impacts on neighborhood character, affordability, trees, and infrastructure if the plan is enacted as written. Advocates to pause to plan allow for more public engagement and data review showed up, as did several speakers supported the plan. Supporters believe that increased density is essential for addressing the housing crisis, fostering inclusivity, and revitalizing areas, and that the concerns raised reflect resistance to necessary change or a misunderstanding of the plan's goals and process. The commission and staff acknowledged the diverse feedback and the need for further refinement, particularly regarding how the plan's vision translates into the specifics of zoning and addresses neighborhood scale and infrastructure challenges.