

Subject: Comprehensive Land Use Plan

From: Catherine Riseng
Sent: Thursday, May 15, 2025 6:33 PM
To: Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>
Subject: Comprehensive Land Use Plan

To: Ann Arbor Planning Commission, cc City council
Date: May 15, 2025

We are writing to express our concerns about the proposed Comprehensive Land Use Plan for Ann Arbor.

One big concern is the lack of reliable data used to develop this plan, especially about population and job growth. The growth in both areas that the plan is based on are very far above those provided by Southeast Michigan Council of Government (SEMCOG) – the organization whose role is to provide the best estimates of these projections. Use of SEMCOG data is the accepted standard for the American Planning Association. How is it that Ann Arbor's Planning commission and by extension City Council and Mayor are ignoring these accepted approaches that would lead to land use projections based on accepted facts? We have very serious concerns that this plan is based on erroneous facts, biased toward the type and extent of development that the city government would like to impose.

We also have major concerns about how the city is planning for infrastructure that will support these new developments. New development typically requires investment in new infrastructure which will fall on taxpayers. Ann Arbor already has a very high tax rate, part of the reason that many homeowners seek to buy homes in surrounding townships. We support paying taxes for infrastructure and schools and have voted in support of all of these taxes. However, this plan does not adequately address these very serious fiscal management issues. The plan for paying for the new or repaired/improved infrastructure will likely fall on the next City Council and mayor who were not responsible for the irresponsible fiscal analysis which should be part of this plan.

One aim of this plan is to provide affordable housing – a focus that we support. But the analysis for this plan is based on supply and demand which assume that more housing will reduce costs and more housing is available. I didn't expect this Mayor and Council to support Reagan-nomics. This approach fails to consider that developers determine prices even though development may be speculative. One City Planner even noted that filling Ann Arbor with housing might still not solve the affordable housing issue. Building large high-rise developments in the hope that eventually they may be affordable is a huge change to Ann Arbor that based on a theory, not facts.

We are concerned about the direction of the Planning Commission direction that takes their direction from the Mayor and Council. While the staff are competent and careful, the policies seem to be based on a fixed idea of endless growth of low- and high-rise development and not necessarily of the needs and wishes of a community residents and existing businesses. We attended one of the roll-out meetings and have read quite a bit of information online. That said, those meetings were not designed to ascertain what citizens want and need, they were more a roll-out of the plan with little opportunity for big picture feedback and input. This felt like an effort to show that the city had informed the citizens – check the public engagement box – but it is pretty clear that no real changes will occur to these plans. This plan feels like Council and the Mayor handing out-of-town developers the key to the city.

And finally, we feel so discouraged and dismayed by City Council and the Mayor putting two resolutions on the August ballot to promote major development on the library lot and reject the plan for public space on the

library lot which was approved overwhelmingly (63%) in 2018. The Mayor and his allies have bemoaned the loss of this development opportunity and refused to accept the results of the 2018 election insisting that this property asset was too valuable to be wasted on what the community actually voted for resulting in this new Proposal A and B.. This is such a cynical move, knowing that typically only 14% of voters vote in August elections. A group of citizens has worked hard to create this public space with no help from the city, rather an effort to block any positive use and activities this public space could provide. Having green spaces downtown is very important for mental and physical health of the downtown-living population and environmental benefits such as stormwater infiltration and storage, carbon sequestration, and shade. We hear many statements about how many park acres the city has but very few of these are accessible by walking or bus – downtown green spaces are needed. This comprehensive land use plan should identify and include open spaces opportunities in the downtown and surrounding areas with high density development.

Sincerely,
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I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which I work and pay my respects to the Elders, past and present.