

**Subject:** Comprehensive Land Use Master Plan  
**Attachments:** More concrete - Seattle Master Plan.docx

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**From:** Jane Lumm  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 1, 2025 6:43 PM  
**To:** Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>  
**Cc:** Jane Lumm; Lenart, Brett <BLenart@a2gov.org>; Delacourt, Derek <DDelacourt@a2gov.org>; Dohoney Jr., Milton <MDohoney@a2gov.org>; City Council <CityCouncil@a2gov.org>; Ryan J Stanton  
**Subject:** Comprehensive Land Use Master Plan

w/ a corrected typo. My apologies.

And, in reading the outpouring of feedback on ND re: the elimination of single family/residential zoning which is, by orders of magnitude, clearly the most concerning aspect of the proposed MP, I am deeply concerned to see that many residents are now just learning about this proposal. I know the City has hosted many public meetings, but my takeaway from the online ND commentary is that a great many of our residents had no knowledge of this master plan proposal and how it would impact their neighborhoods. This should alarm everyone. The proposed master plan represents a complete upheaval to our neighborhoods as we know and value them, and I strongly urge the City staff and all elected and appointed officials to address the need for greater and more inclusive outreach than has been conducted thus far in the planning process.

----- Original Message -----

From: Jane Lumm  
To: Planning <[planning@a2gov.org](mailto:planning@a2gov.org)>  
Cc: Jane Lumm, "Lenart, Brett" <[BLenart@a2gov.org](mailto:BLenart@a2gov.org)>, "Delacourt, Derek" <[DDelacourt@a2gov.org](mailto:DDelacourt@a2gov.org)>, "mdohoney@a2gov.org" <[mdohoney@a2gov.org](mailto:mdohoney@a2gov.org)>, "[CityCouncil@a2gov.org](mailto:CityCouncil@a2gov.org)" <[CityCouncil@a2gov.org](mailto:CityCouncil@a2gov.org)>  
Date: 04/01/2025 6:14 PM EDT  
Subject: Comprehensive Land Use Master Plan

Dear Planning Commissioners,

You have received input from many in our community on the proposed Comprehensive Master Plan, and it is my hope that you will continue to do your due diligence with regard to acknowledging the input provided by our caring and vested city residents. Any and all recommendations on the proposed master plan should reflect and incorporate the thoughtful input provided by the many city residents and taxpayers who have a stake in the outcome. It seems so obvious to the people you represent to say that your duty is to listen to and act upon your residents' guidance, the very residents who have demonstrated their commitment to our community (financial and otherwise) with their substantial investment in their homes and neighborhoods, so I apologize for stating the obvious, but I think, given what's been occurring with regard to the reception of public input on this matter, the obvious must be stated. As appointed officials, and no different from city staff and elected officials,

you do not need me to tell you our residents and taxpayers are the very people that you work for and were appointed to represent.

My husband and I have resided in AA for 47+ years, and, as such, and like so many property owners and taxpayers, have placed virtually all our equity in our home and, also like the vast majority of residents in single family neighborhoods across the city, urge you to not approve the proposed changes to upzone our neighborhoods -- upzoning changes that would represent a sea change disruption for single-family (R-1, R-2) zoned neighborhoods.

It is not an understatement to state that the "low-rise" residential changes for our neighborhoods are dramatic. For many, ourselves included, "approach 01" with 35' height limits, 1-4 hsg. units/> per parcel, reduced setbacks & lot sizes was drastic and objectionable enough, drastic, that is, if you like tranquility, green space and, in general, a peaceful neighborhood ambiance. What is now being advanced by the City for residential neighborhoods is added insult to injury -- 48 foot height limits, NO limit on the # of units/parcel, reduced setbacks and minimum lot sizes (viz., bigger bldg. envelopes to maximize the # of units on a parcel). Obviously, this represents a monumental change to Ann Arbor's neighborhoods and everything our neighbors bought into when they invested their life savings into their homes and chosen neighborhood. Why do people buy a home, why do they choose a given neighborhood? Think of the quality-of-life factors that folks value when they determine to make a such a significant investment. I strongly urge you to respect these quality-of-life choices and investments.

The proposed "low rise residential" land use changes will utterly dismantle the very neighborhoods we have invested ourselves in and pride ourselves in when it, ironically, comes to the "best of" quality of life metrics that we so often celebrate and that attract people to a given community. We hold ourselves up as a community that values the environment, sustainability, climate reduction strategies, and gauge our progress by all the metrics that drive these environmental goals. And yet, this plan is quite literally the antithesis of an environmentally friendly plan -- it's all about eliminating green space, adding impervious surface in every nook and cranny, garden spaces taking a back seat to apt. buildings, etc., etc., AKA, reduced quality-of-life. The plan for residential neighborhoods is nothing short of a strident assault on each and every homeowner who values their home and their neighborhood investment.

With regard to the environmentally incongruous and iconoclastic attack on our values -- neighborhood and otherwise -- that this proposed neighborhood demolition plan represents, I recommend the attached article about the upzoning debacle in Seattle. Also, I recommend the book: "Happy City: Transforming Our Lives through Urban Design" by Charles Montgomery. This book was recommended to me when I served on City Council, and, like many, I believe you will find the author's findings transformative. The author did extensive research and studied many urban communities. The bottom-line conclusion was also surprising to many pro-density advocates: "by retrofitting our cities for happiness, we can tackle the urgent challenges of our age. The happy city is the low-carbon green city." And what does this proposed master plan do to promote neighborhood "happiness" and quality-of-life? The exact opposite.

Think City Urban Forestry Plan, think Climate Action Plan, think residential health and happiness, and reject the proposed upzoning of our residential neighborhoods.

Thank you for your time, and for your due diligence in attending to the concerns voiced by our residents.

Respectfully, Jane Lumm

(The recent social media discussion regarding the STR ordinance reminded me of why the city undertook establishing a short term rental ordinance in the first place. I served on council when the need for a STR ordinance was brought to our attention and when the subsequent approval of the STR ordinance occurred. The need arose because the city was on the receiving end of many resident nuisance and quality of life complaints caused by STR's in residential neighborhoods. Hence, a key aspect of the STR ordinance was to prohibit non-owner occupied STR's in residential areas -- this recommendation was made after of year + of study, public meetings and input. The proposed high-density upzoning of neighborhoods would elevate nuisance concerns to a level I suspect has not been contemplated or factored into the master planning discussion.)

# More concrete, less green: A cautionary tale about upzoning from South Park

Jan. 24, 2025 at 3:05 pm Updated Jan. 24, 2025 at 4:05 pm







**1 of 4** | This South Park residential lot has six separate homes. It models what is being proposed in the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan for homes throughout Seattle. (Ellen M. Banner / The Seattle Times)

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By  
[Alex Fryer](#)

*Seattle Times Opinion columnist*

You don't need a crystal ball to see the future of Seattle residential neighborhoods envisioned by Mayor Bruce Harrell. Just go to South Park.

In 2019, this diverse South Seattle enclave was upzoned to accommodate more housing. The result was called "Residential Small Lot," and it models what is now being [proposed in the current One Seattle Comprehensive Plan](#) for homes throughout the city.

Some important context: State law mandates at least four units on all residential lots — six if the property is near transit, which includes much if not most of Seattle.

The changes for properties currently zoned as Neighborhood Residential include increasing maximum lot coverage to 50% from the current maximum of 35% for a typical 5,000-square-foot lot.

Under the comp plan proposal now before the council, the city intends to mandate 20% of the lot as open space, but that could include walkways with no soil, let alone trees.

Planners propose shrinking setbacks (required space between the edge of a building and the property line) from 20 feet in front and 25 feet in back to 10 feet in front and 10 feet in back — or zero distance if there is an alley.

In sum: more concrete, less green.

For a preview, check out South Park, where developers are building up to six separate, small houses on a single lot.

In planning documents, some developers list their projects as multiple single family homes with detached units — what one might think of as a backyard cottage or a home over a garage. But in reality, the units all look about the same — sort of a tiny home village selling for about \$500,000 each.

And nary a shade tree in sight.

Experts say you'll see a lot more of the housing South Park is currently experiencing throughout Seattle under the comp plan proposal.

“I think that is going to be the model for 2025,” said architect David Moehring. “What I’m told by Realtors — and I’m sure it’s the case in South Park — is that they can simply sell these units at a better price because it gives the appearance of a single family home, even though there’s six of them on a lot.”

With this type of residential zoning on the table for all of Seattle, I asked some folks in South Park: “What do you think about the changes so far?”

But first, some data.

A 2021 city study determined that [Seattle was losing tree canopy](#), and that it was worse in what are labeled “Environmental Justice” areas, including South Park. “Neighborhoods impacted by racial and economic injustice not only started with less canopy but also lost more than the citywide average,” stated the report.

King County released a [heat mapping study](#) that same year revealing that South Park had some of the hottest summer temperatures of the city: “The data show that surface-level temperatures in areas with paved landscapes, less tree canopy, and industrial activity are substantially higher during summer heat events compared to less urbanized areas.”

Residential Small Lot zoning hasn’t been good for trees, and the numbers show it probably hasn’t done much for families either.

In the 2017-2018 school year — just before the new zoning in South Park went into effect — 381 children were enrolled in the neighborhood school, Concord International Elementary. This year, there are 268 kids, according to the district.

There are lots of reasons why a particular school may experience an enrollment decline. But longtime residents say the new houses in the neighborhood are too expensive and locals are being forced out.

Under the city’s current Mandatory Housing Affordability program, developers in certain areas must include units with lower rents or pay into a fund. In South Park, there are many examples of developers paying instead of including space for tenants with low incomes.

For example, a developer for a project along South Donovan Street paid \$17,310 to the Seattle Office of Housing for the right to build in the South Park Residential Urban Village, according to city records.

“There’s some streets that you just go on and our Latinx, Latina, Hispanic communities have definitely left. And it started with the increase in rents,” said Paulina López, executive director of the [Duwamish River Community Coalition](#). “We have an increase of what we call displacement of our neighborhood.”

Added Robin Schwartz, head of development and community advocacy for the coalition: “We absolutely need density, and it needs to be affordable, but we also need better public transportation so people don’t have to have a car. And there needs to be thoughtful designs. Yes, everybody wants their own front door and their own garage but it doesn’t serve the community if the entire lot is paved and all the trees are taken down.”

There is pushback to the current comp proposal.

In a Dec. 20 letter to planners, the Urban Forestry Commission reviewed the proposed development standards. “Increasing lot coverage will increase pressure to remove trees and add impervious surfaces,” it determined.

Rep. Gerry Pollet, D-Seattle, also weighed in.

The plan doesn’t do enough to reduce displacement of lower income households from zoning increases, he wrote in a Dec. 20 letter as part of public comment on the comp plan. It also fails to adequately accommodate trees and housing.

“The City should not adopt decreased setbacks. The reduction of open space has impacts on the ability to keep mature trees and will prevent replacement trees of any significant size to grow on these residential lots to meet our future tree, runoff and health goals,” wrote Pollet.

Both Pollet and the Urban Forestry Commission want the city to incentivize “stacked flats” — residential buildings where the units are stacked vertically on top of each other. The result would be more space for trees and cheaper homes.



“You not only can do both, you should do both,” said Pollet about density and environmental protection. “There are tools to do both and we’re not using those tools. (With stacked flats) you get a lot more density and you get to save a lot of communal open space and trees.”

In fiery City Hall remarks at a Jan. 6 meeting, Councilmember Cathy Moore took on what she considered weakness in the comp plan regarding affordability and trees.

“I’m going to be looking at this with the eye of — does this in fact produce affordable housing? What I’ve seen so far is that it does not. And simply equating density with affordability is a lie. It’s a myth,” Moore said from the dais.

“The other thing that’s critically important that I’ll be looking at this plan is trees. Again, people diminish trees as a NIMBY issue. They are not a NIMBY issue. They are an ecological necessity and I think unfortunately the building industry has been able to capture the dialogue on affordability and trees, and they’ve been very successful in pitting trees against affordability and they’re not either-or. They can very much coexist, and that’s our goal is to coexist in this city.”

Back at South Park, López recalled an exercise she conducted with a local youth group that was asked to visualize how members would like to see the neighborhood. The kids drew pictures of new housing units similar to what was going up around South Park.

“We were like, ‘Dang, I guess they want to see that,’” said López. But when the kids talked more about their dreams for the neighborhood, they wanted a pool, more green space, more trees and newer, nicer housing.

“They said, ‘Why do we have to live in dirty, full of cockroaches, low investment apartments?’ So my point is, the city should have invested first in putting up better legislation and policies to make people healthier before they’re just allowing construction for people who can afford it, rather than taking care of those who have suffered the most from their injustices.”

South Park has a tough history. Decades of intrusion by industry transformed the former Italian- and Japanese-owned farms into a patchwork of homes and manufacturing. Because of truck pollution and

other factors, life expectancy here is 13 years shorter compared to wealthier Seattle neighborhoods.

The council hopes to adopt a new comp plan by late June. There is a public hearing scheduled for Feb. 5.

Even while the City Council considers new zoning around the city, it can also create stronger anti-displacement and tree protection ordinances.

The question becomes: When City Hall considers how to accommodate all the projected new residents, does it prioritize housing for them over the concerns about affordability from the people who already live here? Does it put developer profit before environmental justice and livability?

The Seattle City Council has much on its plate. It can either rise to meet this challenge with balanced land use ordinances, or create a metropolis remade by greed, the future be damned.

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