

**Subject:** In support of the comprehensive plan - comments with citations  
**Attachments:** 2023 Been et al.pdf; 2010 Diez Roux and Mair - Neighborhoods and health.pdf;  
20250429 Planning Commission Comments with Citations Bassiouni.pdf

---

**From:** Sarah B  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 29, 2025 11:54 PM  
**To:** Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>; Disch, Lisa <LDisch@a2gov.org>  
**Subject:** In support of the comprehensive plan - comments with citations

Dear Ann Arbor City Planning Commission,

I hope this email finds you well! I had the privilege of sharing my comments earlier today in-person and I am sending you these comments with associated citations, per Commissioner Disch's request (see attached pdf).

Given that some of the references may be behind paywalls, I have attached two key ones (Diez Roux and Mair, 2010; Been *et al.*, 2023) to this email as pdfs; if there are any issues accessing other citations, let me know and I can send along those pdfs as well.

Best,  
Sarah

.....  
Sarah S. Bassiouni, MPH, PBT(ASCP)  
[Ph.D. Candidate in Epidemiologic Science](#)  
[Rackham Merit Fellow](#)  
University of Michigan School of Public Health

Pronouns: [she/any](#). In the spirit of solidarity, I acknowledge and honor the [Meškawahki-aša-hina, Peoria](#), [Anishinabewaki ᐱᐢᓂᓴᓂᐱᐅᐄᐱᐢ](#), and [Bodwéwadmī \(Potawatomi\)](#) and all of the original Indigenous Peoples of the land upon which the University of Michigan stands. ([Whose land are you on?](#))

## **Ann Arbor City Planning Commission Meeting Tuesday, April 29, 2025**

Good evening, everyone. Thank you, members of the Planning Commission, for all that you do.

My name is Sarah Bassiouni, pronouns she/any. I'm a third year doctoral candidate in the Department of Epidemiology here at the University of Michigan. I currently live at 139 Ashley Mews Dr with my partner and I have previously rented in Ann Arbor. I speak in support of the Comprehensive Plan.

I'm trained as a scientist and an epidemiologist. I could wax on about the growing body of evidence that describes the critical role neighborhoods play in our lives and the advantages of increased density.<sup>1-14</sup> But in respect of time, I'm going to focus instead on my experience as a human being who has lived in a society her whole life and who believes that "rising tides lift all boats."<sup>15</sup>

Born and bred in the Midwest, I moved to California after completing my Master of Public Health degree from Michigan in 2016. When I was moving back to Ann Arbor for my PhD in 2022, I compared prices and my one bedroom apartment in San Diego that I had negotiated down to an "affordable" rent of \$1,485 a month was in many cases cheaper than a one bedroom here in Ann Arbor, especially on my measly graduate student stipend. I was shocked.

Because of experiences like that, I was previously very skeptical that building more housing would be better. For me, I was focused on the adjective "affordable": if new housing were not affordable, wouldn't we be in the same boat as before, if not worse? Wouldn't we see the gap between the richest and the poorest among us widen?

But since then I've spoken with people and I've done a lot of research (I am a graduate student after all) and now I speak with full-throated support of more housing, and not just low-rise housing, but mid-rise and high-rise housing, duplexes, triplexes, and other multi-family styles. The data shows that having more housing, both affordable and market-rate, helps to drop housing costs.<sup>16-27</sup> We know this, so I ask the Commission and community members, what are we *actually* afraid of by restricting this comprehensive plan? Is that fear evidence-based or is it grounded in historical inequities that we are inadvertently continuing if we deny or restrict this plan?<sup>28-37</sup>

Ann Arbor is a college town, with all the pros and cons that come with it. We students are not a blight on this town, but an exciting opportunity. I came back to Ann Arbor not only to do my PhD but because I also wanted to settle down here, have a family with my partner here, and become part of this community's fabric. And, I'm far from the only one. *Many* students, graduate and undergraduate alike, passionately want to become part of the Ann Arbor community but we cannot.<sup>38-40</sup> We are consistently priced out of the limited available housing in ways that can feel far from welcoming.<sup>41,42</sup>

With that, I beseech every member of this Commission to please let Ann Arbor grow, let downtown Ann Arbor flourish, and do that by allowing more housing. Thank you.

## Bibliography

1. Diez Roux AV, Mair C. Neighborhoods and health. *Ann N Y Acad Sci*. 2010;1186(1):125-145. doi:10.1111/j.1749-6632.2009.05333.x
2. Carson JR, Conway TL, Perez LG, et al. Neighborhood walkability, neighborhood social health, and self-selection among U.S. adults. *Health Place*. 2023;82:103036. doi:10.1016/j.healthplace.2023.103036
3. Langdon P. When is density good, and when is it harmful to cities? CNU. April 17, 2023. <https://www.cnu.org/publicsquare/2023/04/17/when-density-good-and-when-it-harmful-cities>
4. Pont MB, Haupt P, Berg P, Alst de V, Heyman A. Systematic review and comparison of densification effects and planning motivations. *Build Cities*. 2021;2(1). doi:10.5334/bc.125
5. Thorne M. Defence of density: the benefits of living in a highly populated city. The Parliament Magazine. May 8, 2023. <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/news/article/in-defence-of-density-benefits-of-highly-populated-city>
6. Daniels KM, Schinasi LH, Auchincloss AH, Forrest CB, Diez Roux AV. The built and social neighborhood environment and child obesity: A systematic review of longitudinal studies. *Prev Med*. 2021;153:106790. doi:10.1016/j.ypmed.2021.106790
7. Daniels K, L -Scherban F, Auchincloss AH, et al. Longitudinal associations of neighborhood environment features with pediatric body mass index. *Health Place*. 2021;71:102656. doi:10.1016/j.healthplace.2021.102656
8. Sangaramoorthy M, Samayoa C, Inamdar PP, et al. Association between Neighborhood Stressors and Allostatic Load in Breast Cancer Survivors: The Pathways Study. *Am J Epidemiol*. Published online June 18, 2024:kwae134. doi:10.1093/aje/kwae134
9. Alvarado F, Allouch F, Laurent J, et al. Neighborhood-level social determinants of health and cardioprotective behaviors among church members in New Orleans, Louisiana. *Am J Med Sci*. 2024;368(1):9-17. doi:10.1016/j.amjms.2024.03.019
10. Keen R, Chen JT, Slopen N, Sandel M, Copeland WE, Tiemeier H. The biological embedding of social adversity: how adolescent housing insecurity impacts inflammation over time. *Brain Behav Immun*. 2024;119:1008-1015. doi:10.1016/j.bbi.2024.05.008
11. Tomas CW, Timmer-Murillo S, Kallies KJ, et al. Examining the role of social vulnerability, neighborhood characteristics, and geospatial patterns of firearm-related injuries and clinical outcomes in Milwaukee county. *Soc Sci Med*. 2024;352:117035. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2024.117035
12. Fottrell AK, Curtis MA, Weeks FH. Ambient Air Pollution, Housing Context, and Birth Outcomes Among Wisconsin Mothers. *Matern Child Health J*. 2024;28(8):1386-1394. doi:10.1007/s10995-024-03941-3
13. Zhang L, Yang NN, Shen T, Sun X, Yabroff KR, Han X. Association of Residential Segregation

With Mortality in the U.S., 2018–2022. *Am J Prev Med*. 2025;68(5):1010-1014.  
doi:10.1016/j.amepre.2025.01.010

14. Noppert GA, Clarke P, Stebbins RC, et al. The embodiment of the neighborhood socioeconomic environment in the architecture of the immune system. *PNAS Nexus*. 2024;3(7):pgae253.  
doi:10.1093/pnasnexus/pgae253
15. Gaudiano P. A Rising Tide Of Inclusion Does Not Lift All Diversity Boats Equally.  
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/paologaudiano/2022/03/10/a-rising-tide-of-inclusion-does-not-lift-all-diversity-boats-equally/>
16. Been V, Ellen IG, O'Regan KM. Supply Skepticism Revisited. Published online November 10, 2023. doi:10.1080/10511482.2024.2418044
17. Greenaway-McGrevy R, Phillips PCB. The impact of upzoning on housing construction in Auckland. *J Urban Econ*. 2023;136:103555. doi:10.1016/j.jue.2023.103555
18. Baum-Snow N, Hartley D. Accounting for central neighborhood change, 1980–2010. *J Urban Econ*. 2020;117:103228. doi:10.1016/j.jue.2019.103228
19. Brummet Q, Reed D. The Effects of Gentrification on the Well-Being and Opportunity of Original Resident Adults and Children. *Work Pap*. Published online July 16, 2019.  
<https://ideas.repec.org/p/fip/fedpwp/19-30.html>
20. Alameldin M, Underriner Q. San Diego's Success in Spurring Missing Middle Housing: The Accessory Dwelling Unit Bonus Program. Turner Center. February 15, 2023.  
<https://turnercenter.berkeley.edu/research-and-policy/san-diego-adu-bonus-program/>
21. Boustan L, Margo RA, Miller MM, Reeves J, Steil J. JUE Insight: Condominium development does not lead to gentrification. *J Urban Econ*. 2023;133:103524. doi:10.1016/j.jue.2022.103524
22. Bratu C, Harjunen O, Saarimaa T. JUE Insight: City-wide effects of new housing supply: Evidence from moving chains. *J Urban Econ*. 2023;133:103528. doi:10.1016/j.jue.2022.103528
23. Li X. Do new housing units in your backyard raise your rents? *J Econ Geogr*. 2022;22(6):1309-1352. doi:10.1093/jeg/lbab034
24. Mast E. The Effect of New Market-Rate Housing Construction on the Low-Income Housing Market. *Upjohn Inst Work Pap*. Published online July 1, 2019. doi:10.17848/wp19-307
25. Freemark Y. Zoning Change: Upzonings, Downzonings, and Their Impacts on Residential Construction, Housing Costs, and Neighborhood Demographics. *J Plan Lit*. 2023;38(4):548-570.  
doi:10.1177/08854122231166961
26. Büchler S, Lutz E. Making housing affordable? The local effects of relaxing land-use regulation. *J Urban Econ*. 2024;143:103689. doi:10.1016/j.jue.2024.103689
27. Asquith BJ, Mast E, Reed D. Local Effects of Large New Apartment Buildings in Low-Income Areas. *Rev Econ Stat*. 2023;105(2):359-375. doi:10.1162/rest\_a\_01055

28. Stocking S. U-M research raises awareness of racially restrictive covenants in Ann Arbor housing. The Michigan Daily. January 26, 2021.  
<http://www.michigandaily.com/news/ann-arbor/u-m-professors-reveal-racially-restrictive-covenant-s-ann-arbor-housing/>
29. Stanton R. Researchers map Ann Arbor's racist history of housing discrimination. mlive. January 19, 2021.  
<https://www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/2021/01/researchers-map-ann-arbors-racist-history-of-housing-discrimination.html>
30. Stanton R. 10,000 homes in Washtenaw County may have race restrictions in property records. mlive. February 7, 2024.  
<https://www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/2024/02/10000-homes-in-washtenaw-county-may-have-race-restrictions-in-property-records.html>
31. Hwang E. A Long History of Racial Desegregation & Discrimination in the Ann Arbor Public Schools. BWC. <https://blackwashtenawcounty.org/blog-1/538pbdkp6fcy89y8i5frxny0wn86t>
32. Spencer S. 'A Letter to the West Side' highlights historically Black Ann Arbor community. The Michigan Daily. February 10, 2025.  
<http://www.michigandaily.com/news/ann-arbor/a-letter-to-the-west-side-highlights-historically-black-ann-arbor-community/>
33. Mapping Racial Covenants in Washtenaw County. Justice InDeed.  
<https://www.justiceindeedmi.org/mapping>
34. *Room for Change: Ann Arbor's Fair Housing Protests in the 1960s* | Ann Arbor District Library.; 2024. <https://aadl.org/roomforchange>
35. Morioka S. A Legacy of Bigoted Deeds in Ann Arbor | Law Quadrangle. 2022.  
<https://quadrangle.michigan.law.umich.edu/issues/fall-2022/legacy-bigoted-deeds-ann-arbor>
36. Tobier L. Housing Segregation in Ann Arbor. The Communicator. May 25, 2022.  
<https://chscommunicator.com/83353/features/2022/05/housing-segregation-in-ann-arbor/>
37. Deng L, Hampshire R, Levine J, et al. Op-Ed: For climate and affordability, reform zoning. The Michigan Daily. June 19, 2020.  
<http://www.michigandaily.com/opinion/op-ed-climate-and-affordability-reform-zoning/>
38. Theut K. City and students share concerns over affordability of housing. The Michigan Daily. June 21, 2017.  
<http://www.michigandaily.com/news/ann-arbor/affordable-housing-still-top-concern-students-city/>
39. Spector A. South U developments include more off-campus housing. The Michigan Daily. November 26, 2024.  
<http://www.michigandaily.com/news/ann-arbor/new-south-u-developments-provide-more-off-campus-housing-but-umich-students-remain-concerned-about-affordability/>
40. Nouhan C. City Council discusses police oversight commission, housing affordability. The Michigan Daily. March 19, 2019.

<http://www.michigandaily.com/news/ann-arbor/city-council-shell-1/>

41. Stanton R. Hundreds apply for ‘affordable’ Ann Arbor apartments with rents up to nearly \$1,700. mlive. March 12, 2025.  
<https://www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/2025/03/hundreds-apply-for-affordable-ann-arbor-apartments-with-rents-up-to-nearly-1700.html>
42. Stanton R. Nearly 7,000 people apply for 20 new affordable housing units in Ann Arbor. mlive. January 11, 2025.  
<https://www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/2025/01/nearly-7000-people-apply-for-20-new-affordable-housing-units-in-ann-arbor.html>