

Subject: Monroe Public Comment 7-15
Attachments: Monroe Public Comments 7-15-25 FINAL.docx

From: Gregory Monroe
Sent: Tuesday, July 15, 2025 11:58 AM
To: Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>
Cc: Briggs, Erica <EBriggs@a2gov.org>; Cornell, Jenn <JCornell@a2gov.org>
Subject: Monroe Public Comment 7-15

Hello

Please find attached my public comments for this evening's City Planning Commission meeting.

Thank you!

Attention City Planning Commission and City Planners,

I regret that I will not be able to participate in this evening's Planning Commission meeting or the next.

I encourage you again to consider my comments from last week and respectfully request that the area directly bordering Argo Park and Nature Area, which is currently planned for a Transition District, be rezoned as Residential District under the Plan's "gentle density" framework. (*Monroe Public Comment - Opposition to Transition Zone Designation Adjacent to Argo Park and Nature Area 7-1.*)

I was corrected at a previous meeting that City Council has not passed resolution 25-0633, which was my misunderstanding. I still encourage the Planning Commission to implement recommendations from the Environmental Commission conveyed in 25-0633.

Resolution 25-0633 calls for protecting high-value natural features—on both public and private land—not just for their ecological role, but for public enjoyment. Argo embodies that vision, offering free, year-round access to nature and supporting mental health and well-being. Zoning this area for commercial or industrial use, as allowed in Transition Districts, directly contradicts those values. The area already supports gentle density and affordable housing and should be designated a Residential District to preserve both.

I also want to echo my verbal comments from the second half of the July 1st, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting:

I encourage the Commission to consider various rezoning refinements from residents, especially requests to rezone Transition Districts as Residential Districts (example: Pontiac Trail and Dhu Varren Rd., Argo Park and Nature Area), *holistically* and in the context of the significant and extensive upzoning that the Comprehensive Plan will achieve.

The Comprehensive Plan will achieve an incredible amount of planned density and upzoning across the city. This justifies approaching one-off use cases pragmatically.

Just because an area was zoned for more than single-family use in the past doesn't mean it is a good fit for a Transition Zone designation in the future. We should not approach pockets of zoning that feel incongruent with current land use patterns—or in conflict with residents' valid concerns—with inflexibility.

We should consider arbitrary or unrealized zoning decisions of the past as simply that. Not something that needs to bind us today. I hope that the Planning Commission will exercise thoughtful discretion as it reviews these requests and finalizes the Plan.

I want to briefly share some thoughts inspired from previous conversations:

“We cannot have it all.”

There seems to be tension between protecting qualitative features of our city and reducing friction and impediments for developers so that we can achieve and accelerate an increase in housing stock.

I cannot truly speak for others, but I believe that when many consider their opposition to the Plan, it's rooted less in “gentle density” and more of a concern that developers are not necessarily considerate of qualitative features of the land or the community.

These qualitative features function as public goods:

- Sense of place
- Housing aesthetic and quality of design
- Natural features like trees and vegetation
- Sunlight access for solar and gardening
- Privacy
- Quiet

These comprise qualities that matter deeply to people's everyday experience of place.

I have said it in the past: eliminating or easing regulations for developers (which in my opinion are protections the city provides its residents) may increase housing stock, but it in no way guarantees that the housing built will be affordable in the attainable future—and more importantly it poses real threats to these public goods and the irreplaceable qualities of our city.

This plan favors development. I understand that we need developers to bring about and execute the vision of the Plan. However, Ann Arbor has something incredibly desirable. There's a reason why so many people want to live here. We have what we call in the business world *pricing power*. We can demand developers meet our expectations AND we can continue to spur investment.

Finally, a couple last thoughts here as it seems the Commission is getting into the details of the Plan.

There was a public commentor who mentioned that he had enough solar on his home that he could power six additional houses with the electricity generated, but that he needed access to west-facing sunlight for multiple hours per day. He was concerned that if a structure was built too high next to his house that it would disrupt his access to sunlight.

There was another public commentor who mentioned they lived in a ranch style home and was concerned that a three story structure right next door could actually overshadow her house and yard.

I wonder if we could consider limiting height based on adjacent properties? Meaning, someone could only build one story higher than the adjacent structures, not two.

Neighborhood Supported Businesses

I think many residents support the idea of walkable neighborhoods and small businesses—places like Jefferson Market are highlighted in the Plan, Lowertown was brought up in the July 1st meeting. I was at Lowertown a couple weeks ago on a Saturday night and we moved seats a couple times because it was difficult to hear ourselves over the music playing. This made me think about what it might be like to live in the condo right next door. The consistent music and noise may not bother that particular resident. But I know it would bother me.

I love Jefferson Market and Lowertown. But I certainly would not want to live next door to them. What if a café, a dispensary or a bar opens up next door to my home? What if someone wants to open something else that brings noise, odors, or heavy traffic to the block?

I've built a life in this house. I've got a mortgage. I pay taxes. What protection do I have if the use next door disrupts my home and my quality of life?

These are real concerns. It's not about opposing growth—it's about ensuring that new development is compatible with the neighborhoods people have invested in, lived in, and contributed to for years.

I want these businesses in my city. I just hope that there can be some deliberate and thoughtful consideration that includes neighborhood input in their placement.

And I hope the Commission considers this and other concerns I've shared here as it thinks about the details of the Plan.