

**Subject:** Notes on the Comprehensive Plan

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**From:** Sophie Grillet  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 23, 2025 2:45 PM  
**To:** Manor, Courtney <CManor@a2gov.org>  
**Subject:** Re: Notes on the Comprehensive Plan

Thanks Courtney,

I guess a lot of what I was trying to say was a bit of a mish-mash between what I personally would like to be allowed/encouraged/required, and what I think brief presentations should make clearer so as to pre-empt opposition to higher density.

For example, while I agree that the city shouldn't be proscribing parking spaces, developers must be discouraged (directly or indirectly) from chucking the responsibility for parking into the street, so that there becomes competition for spots. Fingers crossed, naturally [decreasing car ownership](#) will solve this problem reasonably quickly, but it's another "practicality" objection to address.

Thanks,  
Sophie

[SophieArtist.com](http://SophieArtist.com)

On Tue, Apr 22, 2025 at 4:59 PM Manor, Courtney <[CManor@a2gov.org](mailto:CManor@a2gov.org)> wrote:

Hello Sophie,

Thank you for your email. Your comments will be shared with the Planning Commission.

Have a nice day.

**Courtney Manor**  
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**From:** Sophie Grillet <[sophiegrillet@gmail.com](mailto:sophiegrillet@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 22, 2025 4:50 PM  
**To:** Lenart, Brett <[BLenart@a2gov.org](mailto:BLenart@a2gov.org)>  
**Cc:** Planning <[Planning@a2gov.org](mailto:Planning@a2gov.org)>; Erica Briggs <[ericafora2@gmail.com](mailto:ericafora2@gmail.com)>  
**Subject:** Notes on the Comprehensive Plan

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Hello Brett, hello Planning Department,

Thank you Brett for coming to Erica Briggs's meeting at the Central Library on Saturday, to provide a brief but thorough overview of the A2 Comprehensive Plan.

I realize now that the areas just South of the Old Westside neighborhood (where I am) don't have Neighborhood Associations, so that's something to think about. (Lampost posters or leafleting for the time being?)

Anyway, here are my thoughts on the Comprehensive Plan.

## Why

It seems that most people love the abstract idea of equity, but not the demands of equity. I once heard someone say, "there *are* no exclusions, anyone can buy a house in this neighborhood." But since young families move in and very often the parents spend the rest of their lives here, (as we are), it doesn't leave room for much demographic variety, let alone economic variety. Ten years ago, there were three grade school teachers on our very short street (near Eberwhite school) - can't see that happening again for a while. But since no one wants to be elitist, opposition will be based on other objections. The mental image of apartments and multi family dwellings is different in America than in Europe, and here people are accustomed to more homogeneity, especially outside of the larger cities.

## How

I was alerted to the Comprehensive Plan by a leaflet on my door that made a lot of dubious claims in alarmist language, with some possibly suspect photoshopping of what the new regulations would allow. On the bright side, it prompted me to check at Erica Briggs's newsletter and attend the meeting!

The question about water, sewage and utilities is an important one. Buried cables and gas-free new homes (unless a variance is needed) are a possible part of the solution, but it must be upfront clear that these issues are addressed so that opposition can't be clothed in "practicality" garb.

## What

On one thing, I do sympathize with the doubters, though - which is the need to preserve some of the more attractive traditional architecture, for example where there is decorative woodwork on porches and over the windows, or some of the more handsome old red brick buildings. I think that caring and being seen to care about these things (318 E Jefferson is an example) is important to bring in those who are on the fence. It wasn't really clear from your presentation where the Plan is in terms of planning permissions - presumably these aren't ironed out yet, but what ideas are being weighed up? What will the criteria be for granting permission? What input will neighbors have - will it be different than at present? Will [EIFS](#) be excluded? Apart from the moisture issue, its flammability is a disaster waiting to happen. You may have heard of the [Grenfell Tower](#) tragedy in London, and the exorbitant ongoing reverberations of thousands of buildings having to have their cladding replaced.

- What are the criteria to decide height and width?
- Some of the student housing buildings are eye-wateringly ugly, (not least because they've decided that students will throw themselves off any balconies provided, and can't devise a high-sided version for safety that could still house a bicycle and a tomato plant, and even - horror of horrors! - some laundry drying\* ecologically outdoors). In Europe and elsewhere, the psychological and practical need for a little outdoor space is (virtually?) always addressed with balcony provision, even very high up. Ugly buildings with bad proportions and mean windows don't help make the case.
- Restricting the height to four floors for the lifetime of the plan makes no sense. Sometimes it may not be an issue, other times it can be adjudicated. But the future isn't in fact foreseeable.
- People worry about parking. But young people don't always want a car - Zip cars, Uber, May Mobility, eBikes, and better (running later and more frequently) public transportation must be promoted to reduce car ownership. There will be industry pushback - this must be labeled as such.
- Can the front and back yards be accessible to all the inhabitants, or divided between them - how would this work? Well tended but not professionally clipped yards are a beloved characteristic of our old neighborhoods, and certainly good for the environment.
- (How) will "veggie patches" and raised beds be provided, given that apartment dwellers may not be used to gardening?
- There is concern about commercial businesses being allowed in currently exclusively residential areas. But the lack of them isn't an advantage. Those that we have on the Old Westside, Argus Farmstop and Jefferson Market, are

extremely popular. The Friday breakfast club we used to have was so popular that it had to be closed because of inconsiderate parking. So, all around the world people enjoy having a local grocery store and a cafe, and maybe one or two family owned businesses or small arts organizations. It's where they meet neighbors and exchange news. It's an asset.

## Where

### Old A2

A lot of the fear comes from the idea that large (ugly, multiple-car-owning) new buildings will be allowed anywhere and everywhere. Obviously placement matters. Being eight foot northeast and downhill of a three or four storey building is not the same as being 25ft southwest and uphill of one where the top floor is smaller than the lower floors, (and has a terrace).

In addition to finding suitable plots to build multi family units on, there are a huge number of single story commercial buildings that could easily have apartments on top. And flat-roofed commercial buildings above a certain size ought to be required to have either solar panels or a green roof. (They also lend themselves to rainwater and [grey water](#) irrigation). Building on top of these, along W Stadium, for instance, shouldn't upset many neighbors (unless that's their default) ;)

### New A2

Nobody is looking for reproductions of 1950's suburbs to live in, least of all Gen x and Gen z. The new buildings MUST be green, including areas where laundry can hang discretely outside, EV cars can be charged and boxed deliveries can be safely stored so people don't have to be home or rely on a neighbor to take them in. There has to be secure bike, stroller and e-bike parking. Potential or actual provision for vegetable gardening, and overlooked children's play areas should be included, bearing in mind also probable lower birth rates.

P.S. Better wealth distribution makes housing more affordable, with less cost-cutting on quality.