

City of Ann Arbor's Comprehensive Land Use Plan



2050



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A large graphic with the text "Public Engagement 2022" in a white serif font. The "2022" is significantly larger and has a light blue outline. The background is a solid dark blue. To the right of the main title, there are four white rectangular boxes, each containing text about a specific section of the plan, separated by thin white horizontal lines.

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Community Engagement and Outreach Process

Engagement Approach

Over the course of two years, the Comprehensive Plan team sought to gather a wide range of voices to help shape the city's future. To achieve this, the public was engaged through various formats designed to collect input from a diverse cross-section of residents, explore specific topics in depth, and ensure that many voices and experiences were represented. These formats ranged from individual surveys and one-on-one conversations to neighborhood meetings and large citywide events.

Open houses were held at public library locations across the city to maximize accessibility and encourage public participation. Additionally, targeted outreach and small group meetings were organized in collaboration with neighborhood partners to engage underrepresented communities. Depending on the preferences of each organization, these meetings included tabling, interactive activities, and group discussions.

All public meetings were facilitated by city staff, project consultants, and other stakeholders, who moderated activities, engaged in one-on-one conversations with residents, and answered questions about the process.



March 2024 Open House at the Ann Arbor District Library.



October 2024 Open House at the Ann Arbor District Library.

top and bottom image source: Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority



Participants and city staff chat at a 2024 Greenfair pop-up event.

source: City of Ann Arbor

The City of Ann Arbor promoted the plan through a dedicated website, print advertisements, postcards, flyers, and informational tables at events. As part of this effort, interactive materials were adapted into portable formats, such as the Meeting in a Box activities, to facilitate transportation and use at events.



Marketing materials.



Meeting in a Box activities.

Under the direction of the Planning Commission and City Council, the process began with the understanding that the city must grow and evolve to address underlying issues related to affordability and to support its stated sustainability goals.

Building on that foundation, a series of values-driven questions were developed and presented in a variety of formats to guide the community engagement process. As conversations unfolded, new questions emerged, leading to additional activities and discussions. This evolving approach supported a dynamic and responsive process that informed the plan. Through this work, a new core value was identified, and the goals and strategies were refined to reflect public input.

A series of values-driven questions were developed and presented to guide the community engagement process

Are we heading in the right direction?

In-depth conversations were held with the city to identify gaps and priorities, and align with current initiatives

What is your vision for the future of Ann Arbor?

Help us define values in the context of the city and downtown

How and where should Ann Arbor change?

What does density mean in Ann Arbor, and what kind of density is appropriate?

What are your main concerns or priorities?

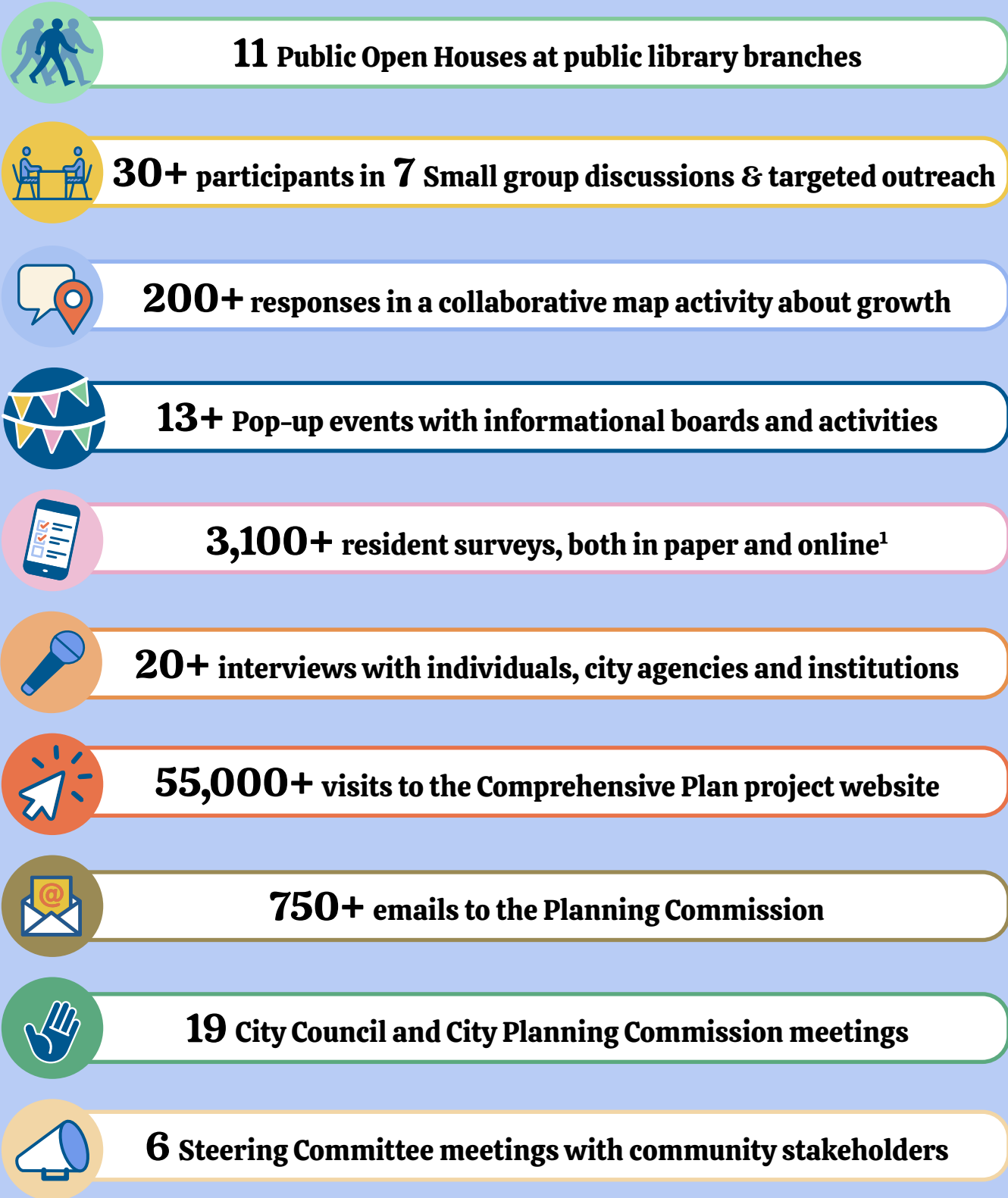
Topic-focused discussions
(Future Land Use and zoning, existing conditions findings, emerging themes from the engagement)

Planning process updates

Outreach by the Numbers:

Numbers as of September 2025.
Please refer to the Engagement Appendix for more details.

NOTE: The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires only a 63-day review period for engagement. The city chose to take a more expansive approach, reaching a broader range of residents through a variety of formats.



1. The resident survey was not designed to be statistically representative and should not be interpreted as such. Its purpose was to gather general input and perspectives from community members, rather than to serve as a scientifically valid sample of the entire population.

Defining the Vision and Values

At the onset of the process, City Council identified affordability, equity, and sustainability as core values. A key outcome of the engagement process was having the public define these core values and envision Ann Arbor's future.

A Vision for the City

Participants were asked to complete Mad Lib-style cards to share their vision for the city. Key themes that emerged included a dynamic and growing population, a vibrant economy that fosters entrepreneurship and opportunity, and public spaces that strengthen community cohesion and sense of place. All of this, participants envisioned, should be supported by social, economic, and infrastructure systems that can adapt to these changes in the coming years.



March 2024 Open House at the Ann Arbor District Library.

source: Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority

A Vision for Ann Arbor | Please help us complete the statements below:

I _____ in Ann Arbor.
(live / work / study / visit / etc.)

Ann Arbor would be better for _____
(type of user: families, workers, empty-nesters, etc.)

if it was _____
(description)

The city could be improved by _____
(physical improvement or amenity)

What does having a more Affordable, Equitable, and Sustainable Ann Arbor mean?

Participants were asked to write their own definitions for each value. Summaries of their responses were generated with assistance from the Atlas.ti conversational tool and are listed below.

Affordable

A range of housing types to accommodate diverse income levels, household structures, and age groups.

Density increase in and around downtown and campuses

Affordable transportation and food

Diverse and welcoming community

Desire for land trusts and public housing

Need for the city to take an active role in affordable housing

Equitable

Access to amenities such as parks and basic necessities regardless of transportation mode

Diverse housing options, including for older adults and lower income individuals

Comfortable public spaces for all

Opportunities for underrepresented businesses

Diverse & welcoming community

Support for disinvested communities

Fair access to essential services and resources

Engagement with diverse community members

Transportation equity and access to public transit

Sustainable

More housing density to support increased public transit, allowing access to daily needs with less car dependence

Increase nature-based solutions

Balancing growth with protection of natural features

More pedestrian and bike infrastructure

Sustainable energy and building efficiency

Carbon neutrality and renewable energy use

Multimodal transportation and complete neighborhoods

Mixed-income, mixed-use developments

Potential negative impacts on affordability

and

Dynamic

A people-centered approach to growth

Creating vibrant spaces through placemaking and economic development

Preparing the city to adapt for future changes

During the engagement process, a fourth value emerged that acknowledged the creativity of Ann Arbor's people and businesses, and recognized that the city is not static but continually evolving to embrace that creativity. This dynamic quality captured those aspects.

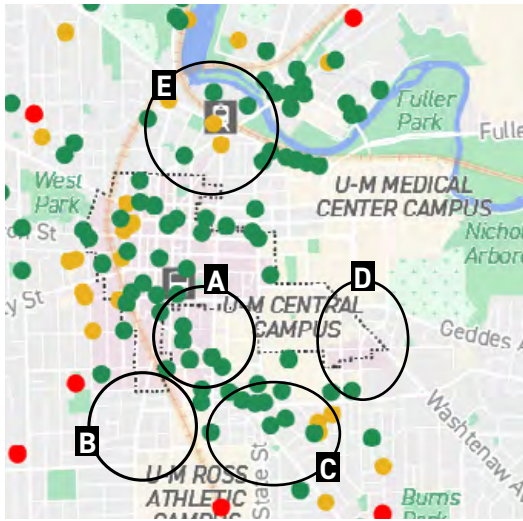
About Density, Growth, and Future Housing

What is the right amount of density?

As housing availability and affordability emerged as top priorities, participants were asked at events from the summer of 2023 to the fall of 2024 to identify areas of the city suitable for new housing and to indicate the appropriate level of density:

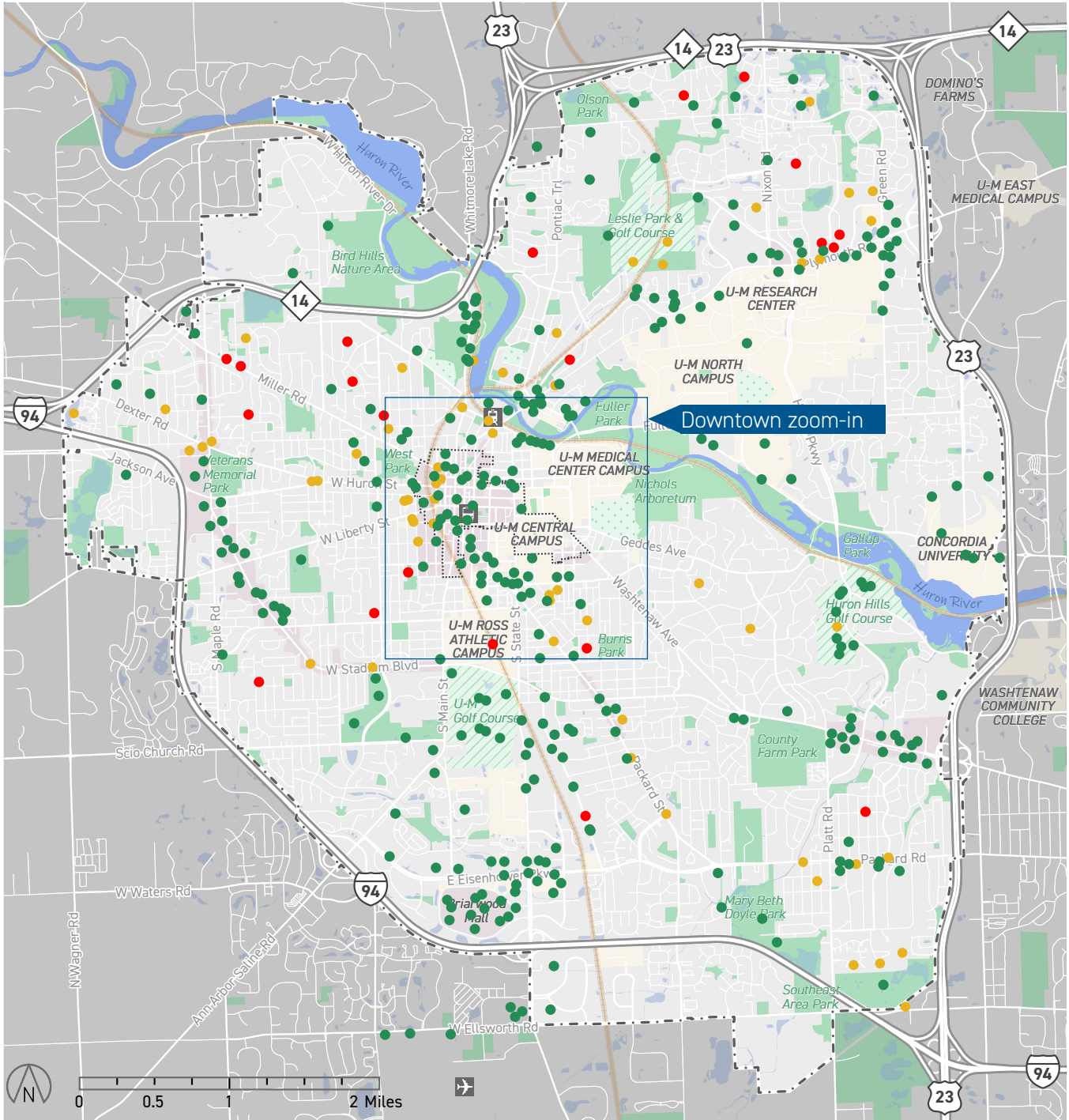
- 79% of respondents favored “building up a lot” in certain areas of the city (green dots - map on page 37).
- Preferred areas for increased density included Downtown, Briarwood Mall and its adjacent areas, and main corridors such as Stadium Boulevard, Plymouth Road, Washtenaw Avenue to the east, and North Main Street.
- At the downtown level, 67% of responses supported “building up a lot”. Participants believe that increasing density downtown can improve housing affordability and enhance commercial offerings.
- 73% of participants at events from 2023-2024 supported allowing up to four units citywide, including in areas currently zoned for single-family homes. Participants at later events were more hesitant of change in neighborhoods.

How would you like to see the highlighted neighborhoods change (or not change) in the future? (216 total votes in downtown neighborhoods)



Downtown zoom-in with highlighted neighborhoods that offered the best potential for future residential or mixed use development.

	Stay about THE SAME	Build up A LITTLE	Build up A LOT
A	9	2	30
B	7	8	29
C	7	7	28
D	10	5	34
E	7	9	24
#	40	31	145
	19%	14%	67%



Activity Public Input About Future Growth Areas

source: A2 Comprehensive Plan public engagement events and online activities, City of Ann Arbor GIS, Washtenaw County GIS

How and where do you think Ann Arbor should change? (390 total votes)

Build up A LITTLE	Build up MODERATELY	Build up A LOT
21	59	310
5%	15%	79%

Summary of Key Themes and Takeaways

Summary of themes from the public engagement process.

Natural Features (p. 98-101)

Ann Arbor is a Tree Town and residents are very proud of the city's expansive tree canopy. Management of natural features is important because it is a part of the city's heritage and remains a strong desire to be a part of its legacy to the next generation.

A Balanced Approach (p. 96-97, 104-105)

Participants called for a balanced approach between development and preserving what makes Ann Arbor a great place to live. While there was general agreement that increased density is necessary to achieve the city's goals for more housing, more walkable (rather than car-dependent) neighborhoods and preserved open space, many also emphasized the need to ensure community amenities, green spaces, historic districts and the scale of new development is considered.

Housing and Affordability (p. 60-65)

Housing was the No. 1 topic of conversation and many shared a desire for additional housing opportunities in all neighborhoods, particularly to provide more "missing middle" housing. Affordability, more housing options for different family sizes and income levels, increased housing density and mixed-use development were among the themes mentioned during the engagement. There was support for focusing higher density on an expanded Downtown and new mixed use corridors and hubs around the city, but there are also some concerns about potential gentrification.

Economic Development (p. 78-83)

There is support for mixed-use development, but also concern about its impact on small, local businesses. Residents want to see more retail options and see new development as supportive of this, but also fear losing diverse small businesses. Regarding growth, some raised concerns about the impact of the University of Michigan's growth on affordability and economic diversity. Residents emphasized the need to create more jobs that pay livable wages and anti-displacement work for existing businesses as an equitable approach.

Quality of Life (p. 66-69)

Residents consistently expressed appreciation for the strong quality of life that Ann Arbor offers—through its vibrant neighborhoods, abundant parks and recreational spaces, employment opportunities, and other valued amenities. However, there is concern that as the city grows and evolves, the very characteristics that make Ann Arbor special could be at risk of being lost.

The major themes and specific takeaways described in this spread were summarized and tallied from multiple engagement events conducted as part of the Ann Arbor Comprehensive Planning process, from summer 2023 to early 2025. Public input includes comments and activity entries from the public Open Houses and targeted outreach events; open-ended comments shared via email, the project website, and the resident survey; as well as input from the online collaborative map, the Meeting in a Box and Mad Libs activities.

Initial themes were identified with AI assistance based on raw activity responses; these were then validated, further analyzed, and developed into main takeaways manually.

Transportation and Infrastructure (p. 96-97)

There is broad consensus that increasing density must be paired with improved transit infrastructure. Residents emphasized the need to align new development with transit access in order to reduce reliance on cars and promote more sustainable, walkable neighborhoods.

Public Spaces and Amenities (p. 66-67)

Participants greatly value public spaces, parks, and natural areas as places for community interaction. In addition to preserving these spaces, there was support for more arts and cultural programming, activating the waterfront, as well as a focus on public space maintenance, safety, and accessibility for all.

Sustainability (p. 94-95, p. 102-103)

Residents expressed support for sustainable development and climate resilience through the use of nature based solutions, energy-efficient building practices, and infrastructure to accommodate future growth.

Equitable Access (p. 64-65, p. 68-69)

Residents emphasized the need to address racial and economic segregation by improving equitable access to essential services and amenities. They called for all residents to have access to safe neighborhoods, quality schools, income-eligible affordable housing, reliable public transportation and recreational opportunities, all key steps toward building a more inclusive and resilient community.

Community Engagement

There is a desire for more public involvement and education about how to participate in the city's decision-making process. Creating opportunities for diverse voices to be heard will help foster a stronger sense of community ownership and agency.

