

Business Environment Policy Statement

Revised and Adopted March 24, 2009

Encouraging and fostering responsible business growth is essential for a healthy and vibrant Ann Arbor area community. The following principles support this goal:

By encouraging businesses to locate, grow and thrive in our community, we strengthen the area's economy, ensure diversified job growth and increase the tax base to fund essential services;

Recognizing that a healthy business environment requires an efficient and responsive government regulatory system, we encourage intergovernmental cooperation and consolidation where appropriate to reduce costs, as well as delays and uncertainties in permitting, approvals, inspections and licensing;

Businesses should not be disproportionately burdened with taxes, fees, assessments or licensing requirements;

Higher density development as a means of growing business while efficiently using existing infrastructure should be encouraged in Ann Arbor and corridors outside Ann Arbor as part of a commitment to responsible growth. This applies to both residential and commercial development and should be integrated with a comprehensive transportation network;

Current City planning documents and zoning laws should be reevaluated in light of the Ann Arbor Transportation Plan Update's land use recommendations. Resulting revisions should permit and encourage increased density near current and future transportation corridors in order to more effectively facilitate viable mass transit opportunities;

The impact on local business should be considered when making land use decisions, such as greenspace and development rights purchases, to ensure such decisions are appropriate to location and in keeping with the parallel goal of ensuring sustainable business growth and economic development; and

With specific regard to the development of Ann Arbor's downtown area:

- The downtown area's decades-old present defined boundaries should be reevaluated and expanded beyond those of both the Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority tax increment financing district and the current greater downtown area, thus permitting logical, necessary growth for benefit of future generations;
- The definition of the downtown area, as well as development densities, should be closely considered relative to U-M properties and the appropriate development relationship;
- Development densities should be maximized in the downtown area to increase the City tax base, to maximize existing infrastructure, and to increase walkability and efficient use of mass transit and other alternative transportation modes;
- Further downtown historic district expansion should be curtailed, and current boundaries and policies should be reevaluated to more effectively promote development opportunities;
- City staff and officials should approach the redevelopment of structures and parcels in non-historically designated areas with the same zeal and energy they approach protecting structures in historically designated areas;
- Residential development for all income levels should be significantly increased, with an eye toward replacing aged and outdated housing stock with higher density residential development;
- Residential development of an appropriate density should be achieved to support basic daily commercial needs, including grocery and pharmacy, as well as other basic services;
- Downtown building height should not be arbitrarily limited. It should complement the greenbelt initiative and its corresponding ideal of preserving outlying open space through increased downtown area density, which by its nature requires greater height;
- The downtown development design review process should be clear, defined, timely and efficient, coupled with a reasonable appeals process;
- Current City planning documents should be revised to reconcile inconsistencies; and

- An analysis should be undertaken to determine if the community's vision for the downtown area can be realistically achieved within the confines of the current built environment. If not, densities, planning documents and zoning laws must be revised to reconcile this conflict.

The mission of the Ann Arbor Area Chamber of Commerce is to support our members by promoting commerce in the greater Ann Arbor area through business advocacy and leadership in economic, political and educational development.