

## MEMORANDUM

To: Zack Adams  
From: Michael Murphy  
Date: February 28, 2022  
Re: Comp Plan Scoping Input

Although staff and Council want to have a surgical approach and leave the plan mostly as is, it may be appropriate to expand the agenda to reflect current reality. Our current situation is dramatically different from the time it was originally written. For example, the environmental threats of climate change, the pandemic, and the socio-economic regional pressures creating broad-based housing insecurity are factors that should be considered in connection with nearly every element.

1. General Scoping Considerations.
  - a. General review of existing Comp Plan for relevancy to current reality and future impacts from climate change and the socio-economic regional pressures creating broad housing insecurity.
  - b. Make the Comp Plan a true high level governing document rather than a check box to meet State Requirements filled with general feel good statements. Make it something that is actually adhered to when considering revisions of the MICC so that those revisions have a consistency throughout City policies.
2. New Element: Emergency preparedness, resilience and recovery given the impacts of climate change.
  - a. Water system
  - b. Sewer system
  - c. Communications: internal and external
  - d. Wildfire suppression
  - e. Power: interim emergency/restoration.
3. Critical Areas Refinement: our Comp Plan and Critical Areas Code should reflect that MI seeks to have a symbiotic relationship between the natural systems and the built environment, maintaining our high quality of life and natural amenities, but recognizing that the Island is for all practical purposes entirely developed with most “new” development being redevelopment or improvements to existing structures. As such, we need to balance protecting and enhancing the natural environment with facilitating use, redevelopment and incremental improvement of the built environment in a realistic manner.
  - a. For example, there have been a number of cases in which citizens have been shocked to discover their homes are burdened by draconian rules because their existing homes are near a storm pipe (piped watercourse) or a drainage ditch (open water course) that is part of our storm drainage system. The existing regulations may have been well intentioned, but are unreasonable and are not based on any articulated policy of the City or any plan to improve those facilities. Moreover, the excessive setbacks and buffers do not do anything

to actually enhance the function or even appearance of these elements of our storm drain system.

- b. The City should first identify what if any the problems are with those facilities and what our policy objectives should be for these facilities. From there we can then develop programs and regulations that address the problems and objectives, and actually promote true enhancement of those facilities by the City and private property owners. For example, rather than have excessive buffers and setbacks that do nothing to enhance function, people could be incentivized to make meaningful enhancements to a drainage course/stream. In the interim, certain existing code provisions should be amended or eliminated.
4. Town Center and (New) Economic Development Element: The Town Center Goals and Policies update for proposed code changes aimed at preserving and promoting commercial businesses should be integrated with the new economic development element. These subjects are closely related and should be addressed together, along with parking.
  5. Housing Element: MI needs to be part of the solution, not a recalcitrant manifestation of the problem.
    - a. Establish an ability to create additional dispersed density without undermining quality of neighborhoods. While this will not create housing for homeless or low-income people, it will increase the overall inventory of housing, and likely create some more “affordable” (by MI standards) housing.
    - b. Ensure MI is permanently committed to providing true support to ARCH for off island development of low income housing – taking on our fair share of the responsibility.
    - c. The existing Comp Plan pays lip service to providing a range of housing options, but has no specific policies or code provisions that promote housing that would actually help accommodate older and/or disabled citizens. I recommend that the City more clearly articulate that it is the City’s policy to make it easier to develop and build housing that would accommodate older and/or disabled citizens, and that the City evaluate its Code to identify roadblocks to such development and create options that remove those road blocks. For example, lot coverage/impervious surface limits on smaller lots make it harder to design and construct 1 story homes suitable for disabled or persons over 65 who seek to age in place.
  6. Transportation Element: Consider inverting the priorities so that the more vulnerable are prioritized over convenience for automobiles.
    - a. Promote significant improvements for active transportation: bicycle infrastructure, sidewalks, and other pedestrian amenities.
    - b. Consider reducing speed limits on the Mercers by 5mph to make inevitable collisions between automobiles and pedestrians or bikes less deadly.