

**VOTE FOR ANN BANNISTER FOR MAYOR**  
(written by Kim Winick a Longtime Burns Park Resident)

Dear Burns Park Neighbor,

I am a 67 year old, retired, University of Michigan Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, who has lived in Burns Park for 38 years. My wife and I have three grown children, who attended Ann Arbor public schools, and two of them still live in Ann Arbor. We have lived in our current 2000 square foot home, located on Olivia Ave on an approximately 8000 square foot lot, since 1989. I would like to remind you of the upcoming Ann Arbor primary election to be held on August 2, 2022, where 11 candidates are running for City Council and Mayor. All of these candidates are running as Democrats. and I too (not that it should matter) am a lifelong Democrat. In our third ward, Ayesha Ghazi Edwin, is running unopposed to replace Julie Grand, one of our two current third Ward Council Members. There are two mayoral candidates, Christopher Taylor, our current mayor and a Burns Park neighbor, and **Anne Bannister**, who was a City Council Member for Ward 1 from 2017-2020. Whoever wins the primary will serve the next four years as Ann Arbor's mayor. The last mayoral primary was held in August of 2018, and the voter turnout in our Ward 3 was on the order of 30% of the registered voters. Thus the election outcome will be determined by a minority of registered votes, and so it is important to vote.

I think elections are important and have consequences. Because many of us are understandably busy with our personal lives, we may not be completely informed or totally engaged with city business and politics. Also it is difficult to understand the issues and weigh conflicting policy proposals. I would encourage you, however, to seek out information and vote in the upcoming primary on August 2, 2022. *Mlive*, the *Ann Arbor Observer*, *Local in Ann Arbor* and the *Ann Arbor Independent* all provide news, election coverage and commentary concerning Ann Arbor politics and policy. Some of this commentary is good and goes behind typical election sound bites, and presents facts rather than simply appealing to emotions.

Personally my involvement in Ann Arbor politics has been minimal, aside from voting and making a few small contributions to candidates for Mayor and/or City Council. **I believe, however, as I will briefly describe below that the City is not headed in the right direction under the current Mayor, Christopher Taylor, and his supporters on City Council.** Of course, given all of the terrible problems the world now faces, including anti-democratic forces, poverty, great wealth inequality, diseases, epidemics, discrimination, climate change, financial collapse in some countries, etc., it would be presumptuous for me to say that the Ann Arbor election results are very important in the greater scheme of things. Nonetheless, the election outcome will have a significant effect on our neighborhoods, downtown, infrastructure, housing, etc. Furthermore, unlike some of the seemingly intractable worldwide problems that humanity faces, we as voters can easily affect the direction of our city.

For those of you who don't know, the Ann Arbor City Council is basically controlled by two "factions," each of which tends to vote nearly in-lock-step. These two groups have been named by various followers of Ann Arbor politics as the "defenders/protectors" and the "disrupters/strivers," which in my opinion is a fairly accurate characterization. **The current City Council is controlled by the disrupters/strivers and is led by our Mayor Christopher Taylor. They favor rapid growth of the city.** There appears to be quite a bit of acrimony, with perhaps both sides sharing some blame, between the two groups and significant dysfunction in City government. Christopher Taylor has served as Ann Arbor Mayor since 2014, after spending 3 terms as our Ward 3 Council Member. I have no personal relationship with either Christopher Taylor or his opponent **Anne Bannister**, though I have met them both, Mr. Taylor a few times at Burns Park neighborhood meetings and **Anne Bannister** once very recently at a neighbor's house. People are complex and multi-faceted, and often our interactions are compartmentalized so that we only explore and get to know one aspect of an individual. I have some close friends, who are good people and whose

company I enjoy, yet I don't deem them suitable to hold public office. Their election would neither, in my opinion, result in good government nor good policy decisions. **For this reason, I look at policy positions and past actions when choosing who to support for Mayor and City Council. Thus I am supporting Anne Bannister.**

There are numerous differences between the disrupters (Christopher Taylor) and the defenders (Anne Bannister), though I believe that the biggest of these, by far, relates to their views on **growth and development** in Ann Arbor. **Roughly speaking, the disrupters, led by Christopher Taylor, support virtually unrestricted growth fueled by relaxing/changing zoning (known as up-zoning) in a crude and unsophisticated manner, while the defenders are against unrestricted growth and crude up-zoning and wish to preserve the best aspects of their Ann Arbor neighborhoods.** The latter group is often referred to as NIMBY's ("not in my backyard"). Of course almost all of us are NIMBY's to one degree or another and would oppose certain changes in our neighborhoods and city. We can all agree that there is both reasonable and unreasonable development/zoning, our differences relate to where the line between these two is drawn and what substantial up-zoning accomplishes, both good and bad. There are clearly some societal benefits for growth. In particular, it provides more business and employment opportunities, think, for example, the construction industry, thus affording more people, both the well-to-do and not so well-to-do, the opportunities to improve their financial situations. It is clear from the record of each, that **Anne Bannister** is a defender/protector, while Christopher Taylor is a disrupter/striver. **Christopher Taylor is a strong advocate of zoning changes to promote growth and development in Ann Arbor regardless of potential downsides, while Anne Bannister supports a more cautious approach.**

One of the principal arguments the disrupter/strivers make in support of up-zoning is that such a policy will make Ann Arbor more affordable. In my opinion, however, up-zoning to fuel housing growth is unlikely to suppress the cost of housing. **Thus if the goal of up-zoning is to make housing more affordable it is very unlikely to achieve this laudable goal.** The surge in housing prices, which is a nationwide problem, is due to a multiple of factors and not simply zoning. These factors include great increases in building costs (excluding land costs), substantial increases in wealth inequality, federal government stimulus, fear-of-missing-out and the significant rise in two-person, high-income earning families, who are able to pay higher housing prices. People want to live in Ann Arbor because the town has a highly educated population, good public schools, a vibrant downtown, significant entertainment options, etc., many of which are due to the presence of the University of Michigan. History has shown that significant up-zoning is likely to make Ann Arbor more crowded, with both people and cars, and diminish the town's features, both architectural and natural, and increasingly make it feel more urban and gentrified, while not lowering housing costs. Some of our neighbors may desire such changes, and I respect their opinions, but I prefer a less urban, "towny-like" feel. Paradoxically significant housing growth will probably increase the cost of housing rather than lower it. There have been many housing units added to Ann Arbor in the last ten years, including some major developments, yet unfortunately housing prices and rents remain exorbitantly high. Most new housing units constructed in Ann Arbor recently are extraordinarily expensive and make Ann Arbor even less affordable (see item 9 below for example). Given the affluence of Ann Arbor, developers will only build expensive housing, since this is what the market will bear and it brings them the biggest profits. The city continues to up-zone properties in disregard and in contradiction to the City's master plan. **It appears that some current members of City Council are even open to the possibility of eliminating single-family zoning in most, if not all of Ann Arbor, as part of a major rezoning process. Unfortunately some zoning changes that have already been made and others that are newly proposed will be irreversible.**

**I disagree with the extremely pro-growth policy of the City Council majority, led by Christopher Taylor, but I also see that City government is not serving us well in many other respects.** I mention just a few of these below:

- (1) The condition of almost all of the roads in Ann Arbor are abysmal. I am afraid of getting injured while riding my bicycle on city streets. Why has the City let the roads get to this state of affairs, where the majority of them are in need of urgent repair and/or replacement?
- (2) There is great dysfunction in City government, with council members suing one another, extremely high turnover of our City manager, which is presumably, a non-political position. Most recently, the firing of our City manager, a career city employee, has led to a lawsuit being filed against the City.
- (3) The City is also being sued over its water rates that may have been set in violation of the Michigan constitution (the Headlee amendment). This case has gone to court, and there is substantial risk that the City will lose, and thus may incur significant costs.
- (4) The City put forth (and continues to push) a poorly thought out, extremely expensive plan to construct a new train station off of Fuller Road, hoping to have the expenses primarily paid by the Federal Government. The Federal Government was not persuaded on the merits of the proposal and has declined to consider it further.
- (5) Our natural landscape is being degraded with the loss of many mature trees. A recent article indicates that a city-wide replacement tree project has resulted in the death or illness of the majority of the newly planted trees.
- (6) One of the principal commercial areas in downtown Ann Arbor, i.e., State Street, is in terrible shape and very unattractive. The strip has no trees nor flower boxes, and the area is often strewn with trash, and poorly maintained. It has been this way for a very long time.
- (7) New construction is often super-dense, super-expensive, in some cases architecturally unattractive, and provides little to nothing in terms of affordable housing. In some cases, these properties have been up-zoned to permit such construction. Furthermore, these properties often do not provide an environment that makes people want to congregate, socially engage and/or shop in the area. Contrast some of these projects to the splendid area of Kerrytown, which is a model of urban planning.
- (8) Mitigation of the Gelman dioxane pollution plume is nowhere near being resolved. This is a longstanding, difficult problem involving multiple jurisdictions, and thus the blame cannot be placed on our current city government. It is not clear, however, whether our current city government has been as aggressive on this issue as is warranted.
- (9) The City up-zones properties in a way that does not confirm to the city's master plan. See, for example, "Ann Arbor residents suing City over the superdense Lower Town development," Mlive, July 9, 2019.

The developer is currently putting in the second or third phase. The apartments are called the Beekman on Broadway.

A studio (435 sq ft 1 ba) rents for \$1,995/month, a 1 bedroom (1 ba 723 sq ft) rents for \$2,320/month and a two bedroom (2ba 921 sq ft) goes for \$2,951/month. The pro-growth faction on City Council vigorously argued to rezone this property for ultra-dense development to fulfill our housing shortage in Ann Arbor.