

It's understandable that planning commissioners are concerned about conflicts between residential and light industrial uses, but if you take a closer look at the issue, I think you will find that upzoning light-industrial areas is a safe, responsible action supported by the master plan.

Summary

1. Rezoning light industrial areas is safe.

- A. Some transit corridors zoned "industrial," like South Industrial, do not appear to have any industrial uses, so there is no more risk of residential-industrial conflicts there than in commercial corridors.
- B. Businesses in light industrial districts are already required to be compatible with nearby residential districts, which often touch M1 districts.
- C. Other cities have successfully rezoned light industrial areas to be mixed-use.

2. Ann Arbor's master plan supports allowing housing in light industrial areas.

- A. It specifically calls for a new mixed-use light industrial district.
- B. It endorses allowing housing in low-intensity industrial areas.
- C. It calls for mixed use employment centers, including light industrial areas.
- D. It states that light industrial uses are compatible with residential uses.

1. Safety

A - South Industrial is not industrial.

South Industrial is functioning as a low-density commercial corridor, not a noxious industrial area. In fact, there does not appear to be any industrial businesses on South Industrial.

If you go on Google Maps and look at the [southern half](#) of South Industrial below Astor Ave, which is largely zoned M1 (Limited Industrial), you can see what businesses are there. I made a list of these businesses, which is at the end of this document. I found:

- a. 15 building supply or wholesale stores
- b. 11 offices for businesses or nonprofits
- c. 4 auto repair shops
- d. A smattering of retailers, medical services, storage lockers, and a school.

I did not see a single manufacturing business, or any other use that would be forbidden in a C2B or C3 district. I may have missed something, so I encourage you to ask city staff if they know of any businesses on South Industrial that would not be allowed in a C2B or C3 district. If there are not any such businesses, or very few of them, then why would rezoning South Industrial TC1 cause more land use conflicts than rezoning any other corridor?

At last week's meeting, two potentially messy or noxious sites were mentioned, but if you take a closer look at these sites, I think you will find that they do not pose a threat to neighbors.

- a. The Reuse Center

I don't see how outdoor storage would make nearby properties unfit for housing, but the debate is moot, because unfortunately, The Reuse Center has [permanently closed](#).

- b. The AAATA property.

At the meeting, there seemed to be a concern about the sound of busses backfiring, and perhaps a second concern about air pollution. But if you compare the South Industrial site to Blake Transit Center downtown, you will see that it appears to be less noisy and polluting than the transit center, which has a row of busses idling close to the property line.



The AAATA property on South Industrial, left of the neighboring storage business. [[street view](#)]



Blake Transit Center, to the right of a site that will likely be an apartment building. [[street view](#)]

The commission would of course never ban apartment buildings from locating near Blake Transit Center, so why should it ban housing near the South Industrial site?

B - Light industrial uses are already required to be compatible with residential uses.

In some light industrial districts, there may actually be light manufacturing businesses. However, these businesses would be required to be compatible with surrounding residential districts. The city's unified development code [explains](#) that the M1 Limited Industrial district is designed for this kind of compatibility:

“The purpose of the district is to provide suitable sites for such uses while making certain that the allowed uses will be compatible with adjacent or surrounding districts...All uses shall be designed, constructed and operated so that there is no production of noise discernible at the Lot Lines in excess of the average intensity of street and traffic noise at the Lot Lines, nor any production of heat or glare discernible at the Lots Lines.”

M1 districts touch residential districts all over the city, so allowing light industrial uses and housing in the same district would not be a new experiment.

C - Other cities have allowed mixed-use light industrial uses

[Many other cities](#) already have mixed-use industrial districts.



An M1 district in San Francisco that [allows](#) housing and light industry. [[street view](#), [zoning map](#)]



A RIV-IMU district in Pittsburgh that [allows](#) housing and light industry. [[street view](#), [zoning map](#)]

New York City has recently [considered](#) encouraging manufacturing in mixed-use buildings, which is a more extreme level of integration than what is being considered in Ann Arbor.

A Brookings institute [report](#) explains that many U.S cities are converting older industrial areas into mixed-use “innovation districts.” The report says about these districts:

“They are developing in Boston, Brooklyn, Chicago, Portland, Providence, San Francisco and Seattle where underutilized areas (particularly older industrial areas) are being re-imagined and remade.”

This experience of other cities suggests that even if Ann Arbor actually had a substantial amount of manufacturing, there would still be many benefits to allowing a mixture of uses in industrial areas.

If you’d like more information about the history of single purpose industrial districts in U.S cities, check out “The Steep Costs of Using Noncumulative Zoning to Preserve Land for Urban Manufacturing .” Here is [the abstract](#).

2. The master plan supports allowing housing in light industrial areas.

A. it calls for a new mixed-use light industrial district.

The [central area goals](#) section includes the following objective:

“Develop zoning or a zoning overlay that allows for the continuance of industrial or warehousing activities in M1 (Limited Industrial) districts, such as are located in the railroad corridor, but that also allows compatible reuse of buildings in the event that present activity ceases and no suitable limited industrial/warehouse use takes its place.”

Since some transit corridors are in the central area, this section is a mandate for the planning commission to either allow light industrial uses in the TC1 district, or else create a second district (perhaps TC-Industrial) that allows both light industrial uses and other uses.

The same section adds, “It should be noted that few if any of the existing industries are “smokestack” industries and should not negatively affect the suggested new uses. In fact, the conversion of industrial buildings and warehouses have been completed in many other cities with a great deal of success.”

B. It endorses housing in low-intensity industrial areas.

The [central area goals](#) section also endorses housing as a good replacement for low-intensity industrial uses. It states, “Objective 11: To support low intensity industrial and warehousing uses while allowing for innovative future uses...Examples of adaptive reuse include artist’s studios, artist live/work space, condominiums, or any use that will promote continued vitality of the area.

C. It calls for mixed use employment centers, including light industrial areas.

The section on [employment centers](#) specifically includes light industrial areas and calls for “mixed land uses”, including “a variety of integrated residential uses” in employment centers.

D. It states that light industrial uses are compatible with residential uses.

The master plan describes light industrial uses as compatible with residential uses. For example, when describing [site 17](#), east of Stadium, the master plan says:

“Light industrial uses are recommended for this parcel for several reasons: light industrial uses are limited in the West Area, jobs can be created, light industrial uses are more compatible with existing residential uses to the south and with potential residential to the immediate north. Additional commercial retail uses are not recommended because of the proximity to the apartments on the south side of Commerce Drive...”

This section shows that the master plan treats light industrial uses as more compatible with residences than commercial uses, which makes sense, if you consider that light industrial uses are not allowed to generate any excess noise or glare at the property line, whereas bars, restaurants, and other commercial uses can be rowdy and noisy.

Conclusion

The transit zoning project will have a better chance of achieving its primary purpose, encouraging housing near transit, if it includes all transit corridors, especially light industrial ones that currently ban housing. The commission can include light industrial areas in the reform by either:

1. Allowing light manufacturing uses in TC1, and then extending TC1 to all corridors.
2. Creating a TC-Industrial district alongside the TC1 district.

There may be other solutions too. Regardless, I encourage you to include all transit corridors in the "preliminary recommendations for geographic areas to consider" for City Council.

Thank you for your time,

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Office-Type:

Ann Arbor Parking Referee Info
Ann Arbor District Library (office)
Habitat for Humanity of Huron Valley
Mediaspan (software)
Ed's work (corporate office)
Merry Maids of Ann Arbor
ArborStone properties (property management)
Chelsea Brown Photography (wedding photographer)
TeraMetrix (corporate office)
RealPage (software)
Multifamily Support Services

Educational:

Central Academy
Global Educational Excellence

Automobile, Truck, Construction Equipment Repair:

Autobahn engineering
Gerber Collision and Glass
Convenience Auto Service
Steve Seeb
Ron's Garage

Wholesale, Resale, Building Material and Supplies:

Creative Windows
Gross Electric (lighting store)
Painters Supply and Equipment Co.
Behler-Young company (heating equipment wholesaler)
Johnstone Supply (heating equipment wholesaler)
Builders Plumbing and Heating
M and M distributing (musical instrument store)
Napa Auto Parts - Ann Arbor Auto Parts
Hutzel Heating and Plumbing
Floor Trader Carpet Store
Mans Lumber
Rayfresh Foods
YoungSupply Company (Plumbing supply store)
Arlo Metals Outlet
Wolverine Supply

Retail Sales, General Merchandise

Three, Two, One car garage. (handicrafts)
SHAR Music
Gani's Consultation Corp. (confiscated goods store)
Ann Arbor PTO thrift shop

Restaurant, Bar, Food Service:

Roos Roast Coffee
Mothfire Brewing Company (Brewery, [allowed](#) in C3 districts)

Veterinary, Kennel, and Animal Boarding:

Ann Arbor Dog Day Care

Warehousing and Storage:

Public Storage
Affordable Storage
Inn Storage

Medical/Dental:

Christopher J. Maksym, PharmD
Marcia Wilkinson, MD
Homemed (Home health care service)
U of M orthotics and prosthetics center

Government:

US Army Reserve Training
AAATA The Ride
U of M corporate campus.
CTN Television Station