

Subject: In support of Plymouth Road TC1 zoning

From: Mary Garton
Sent: Monday, October 16, 2023 12:56 PM
To: Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>; Lenart, Brett <BLenart@a2gov.org>
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Dear A2 Planning Department,

I am writing in support of TC1 zoning wherever it has been proposed in Ann Arbor, and definitely for the Plymouth Road transit corridor. I live in the neighborhood north of the Plymouth & Green / Plymouth & Nixon intersection.

My husband and I moved to Ann Arbor 24 years ago because of its vibrancy — all the things to do, places to go, and parks nearby. We chose our neighborhood at the time because it was walking distance (or 1 mile from): a grocery store, the post office, the library, a bookstore (which is now gone), a toy store (White Rabbit is now gone), a veterinarian, our pediatrician's office, a hardware store, a super Chinese Restaurant (shout out to Evergreen), a bank, a bus stop, and an ice cream shop (Baskin Robbins is now gone to my continual dismay). Being a family with young kids, I did NOT want to spend all my time in the car, and the proximity of everything we could need without having to rely on a car is what directed us to the Orchard Hills neighborhood.

Studies show that when foot traffic goes down, crime goes up — and you feel it instinctively: one of the ways you immediately know that a place is a nice place to live is if you see people outside: on foot, on bikes, on benches. The more pedestrians, the more reason for flower pots and other beauty enhancements. I learned to love density when we moved from an urban sprawl situation with blocks of ugly strip malls to Vancouver, where we could suddenly get to everything by walking or biking, even though we lived in a house on a residential street — the transit corridors were full of shops. It was such a beautiful lifestyle: alive, safe, neighborly, community-focused, and pretty: the atmosphere got me out of the house and out of my car more than ever before. It led to a real sense of community to see your neighbors walking or biking past your house on the way home from an errand and stop to say hello.

People travel to Europe because they love the feel of European cities and towns, which are walkable and social. This was a decision made by city planners in Europe: to encourage and facilitate the use of public transit — it wasn't predestined to be this way. We should perhaps stop the dead-eyed look and feel of endless parking lots and embrace walkability, likability, and public transit.

I'm not advocating eliminating cars, which would be a disservice to freedom and a disability for many — I'm advocating the possibility of having one's errands be closer to home and the freedom to choose to reduce one's own miles driven. Cars have ruled all by themselves for a long time, and denser zoning with parking lots along the back instead of along the curb would make it much safer and easier to use non-car ways to get things done.

There is a feeling by many older people (I'm older as well), that they don't want ANY change to Ann Arbor, but Ann Arbor will die if the people who work here can't afford to live here. Young people with more limited means at the start of their careers need to be able to live here, shop here, eat here. People who work the businesses, restaurants, and theaters that make Ann Arbor such a vibrant town need to be able to live here, too. This is what keeps Ann Arbor so great, so alive.

Lastly, I'm keenly aware of the climate concern. Mother Nature is screaming at us, and we know what we need to do. Not all of our neighbors have yet realized the relationship that denser, more pedestrian-, bicycle-, and transit-friendly zoning along transit corridors has to the need to reduce emissions. But we should ALL care about climate change as the emergency it is . . . and if one of the solutions to climate change is to zone for nicer, safer, friendlier, more affordable cities, then it ought to be an easy choice to make.

Sincerely,

Mary and Hugh Garton
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Ann Arbor