

Subject: Won't You Be My Neighbor?
Attachments: Won't You Be My Neighbor - Brian Chambers Statement to Council - 12-16-19.pdf

From: Brian Chambers
Sent: Sunday, February 15, 2026 4:52 PM
To: Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>; Lenart, Brett <BLenart@a2gov.org>; Bennett, Michelle <MBennett@a2gov.org>; Manor, Courtney <CManor@a2gov.org>
Cc: Taylor, Christopher (Mayor) <CTaylor@a2gov.org>; Dohoney Jr., Milton <MDohoney@a2gov.org>; City Council <CityCouncil@a2gov.org>; Giant, Joseph <JGiant@a2gov.org>; Delacourt, Derek <DDelacourt@a2gov.org>; Carolyn Lusch <carolyn.lusch@smithgroup.com>; jamie@interface-studio.com; Oliver Kiley <oliver.kiley@smithgroup.com>; Stacey <Stacey@interface-studio.com>; Higgins, Sara <SHiggins@a2gov.org>
Subject: Won't You Be My Neighbor?

Chair and Planning Commissioners (please forward)—thank you for bringing the CLUP forward for a final review.

I love Ann Arbor, and I want more people to be able to call it home—without needing family wealth, perfect timing, or a lottery win.

This Comprehensive Plan matters because it does two simple but powerful things.

First, it tells the truth about where we are: a city shaped by opportunity, but strained by scarcity—scarcity of homes people can afford, scarcity of options for seniors who want to downsize, for young families trying to stay, for workers and students who keep this community running.

Second, it gives us a responsible way forward. The Plan is clear about what it is—and what it is not. It's not a law and it doesn't change zoning by itself. What it does is set direction—so that when we update the Unified Development Code and make public investments, we're guided by data and shared community values, not just by who can hire the best lawyer or yell the loudest.

The CLUP, as drafted, also reflects what many residents have asked for: a practical *"missing middle"* strategy—duplexes, triplexes, townhouses, and cottage courts—paired with universal design so more people can age in place and live with dignity. And it's honest about what it takes to make this real: streamlining process and supporting mission-driven partners, including community land trusts.

I also want to name something important for the campaign season: people will try to turn this Plan into a culture-war proxy—*"developers versus neighborhoods," "renters versus homeowners," "change versus stability."* We don't have to accept that framing, and it would be wrong to.

A better frame is: **Ann Arbor's housing strategy is not a slogan—it's a system.** We build, but we also protect and measure. Our city has already been pairing housing reform with renter stability and equity tools, energy cost protections, dedicated public funding leveraging the Affordable Housing Millage, the Ann Arbor Housing Development Corporation and Trust Fund, and permanently affordable homeownership through the community land trust model.

The Plan is the integrating framework that helps those tools add up to something residents can actually feel.

And finally: this is a living document. State law requires regular review, and the CLUP itself points to that ongoing cycle.

So, I'm asking you to move this forward—confidently and calmly—with a commitment to implementation that the public can verify. Not “trust us,” but “judge us by outcomes.”

Won't you be my neighbor—now, and in the Ann Arbor we're building for 2050?

Yours for equity-based, sustainable development,

Brian Chambers
Third Ward Resident

p.s. - attached is my 2019 statement to Council when the project was first being reviewed, where I outlined the proposed project framing. I believe this has been a well managed and effective project. Thank you, again, to everyone who led and managed it.

Statement to 12-16-19 Council Meeting on
Master Land-Use Update Project and Contract,
and the Council Appointed Team Recommendations

I am Brian Chambers of 2815 Ember Way in the 3rd Ward, and was appointed by the Mayor to the contractor selection committee for the Community Visioning and Master Land Use Update.

First and foremost, I want to state my appreciation for the opportunity that the Mayor and Council provided to me and the other members of the Council Appointed team.

Personally, I believe that the selection process led by the City Planning manager, Brett Lennart, was clearly framed with understood criteria and decision making approach. The City deserves great credit.

Through scoring and open dialogue, I believe that Interface, is the right and best fit for the City. There were no objections to them, nor anyone stating that they could not work with them on the project. This itself, as a form of consensus, speaks well for the City's RFP and selection process.

The Appointee team continued to meet to hammer out an agreed list of recommendations to bring to the City and Council, based on best professional practices, and hence cost-value for the City.

It was not necessarily our intent to delay the project by submitting them when we did. We knew the proposed contract would be to Council for the 16th. We wanted to take our time, rather than rush a watered down version.

Tonight, I only speak for myself, to convey my intent for forging an agreed list of recommendations.

First and foremost, is demonstrating that agreement is possible across these complex topics. This is not easy given the current political climate here in Ann Arbor.

Second, for me, are the recommendations calling for alignment with related City initiatives on Climate, Affordable Housing, Transportation, Flood Plain Management, among others. We want assurances these will be integrated efforts.

Third, is to instill in the project a commitment to equity. This emphasis was made in our recommendations on outreach and public engagement, Steering Committee structure, communication plan, statistical sampling methodology, and value model framework, overall.

Equity is critical, as over 40% of Ann Arborites spend more than 30% of their income on housing; families below the Area Median Income often cannot afford new construction; and, while over 70% of residents have a 4-year degree or more, it is only 55% for 20 & 30 year olds. As a result of all of these economic factors, the Ann Arbor area is the most economically segregated in the mid-west.

Fourth – on a related basis for Ann Arbor is the 'missing middle' - both in housing architectures and economic brackets. This can be addressed in major ways, for example, by incorporating union members from professions representative of the missing middle – Police, Fire, Teachers, University faculty and staff, Hospital staff, Trades, etc. – and organizations that focus on integration, into the process, and especially on the Steering Committee.

Who gets a seat at the table, and with what decision making breadth, determines the degree to which equity-based sustainable development can be the basis of what emerges for Ann Arbor.

A potential slogan for the project could be, "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" – It's inviting to others, and envisions a welcoming and neighborly Ann Arbor. It applies to homeowners, renters, commuters, business, the University and tech community, and those who choose to live in dense high rise structures.

Thank you, Mayor and Council