

**Subject:**

Eliminate the Flex, Expand the Transition

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**From:** Bennett Stein**Sent:** Monday, April 28, 2025 8:22 PM**To:** Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>**Subject:** Eliminate the Flex, Expand the Transition

Dear Planning Commission,

My name is Bennett and I grew up in Ann Arbor (Pioneer 2008 graduate!). Today, I'm hoping to raise my family here too. I'm deeply grateful for what Ann Arbor gave me growing up — and I want my kid to have the chance to live in a city that is economically diverse, welcoming, and vibrant. We need a major rewriting of our land use map to encourage and allow for housing development of all types and prices - and I'm grateful that you are taking up this charge. The comprehensive plan draft is a good start, but I'm asking you to please please go further and seize this critical moment.

To support a future where Ann Arbor is a place where anyone can afford to live and my kid gets to grow up in a dynamic, exciting city, I urge you to make the following changes to the Comprehensive Plan:

- **Eliminate the Flex District** and instead reclassify those areas as part of the **Transition District**. This change would encourage both housing and job growth, and prevent speculative land banking.
- **Expand the Transition District** to include all land currently zoned R3-R5, including areas like the Old Fourth Ward and near the hospital, to better align zoning with our city's actual housing needs. We should also consider more transition districts in land currently zoned R1-R2.
- **Allow high-rise buildings** in appropriate Transition areas by revising the description from "low- to mid-rise" to "low- to high-rise." Especially near downtown and Briarwood, we should welcome more housing options.
- **Create more Hub Districts** that have the potential for new living, working, creating, and playing areas outside of the already-established zones.
- **Remove mandatory active first-floor commercial requirements** from the Hub and Transition districts. These requirements would make it harder to create new housing and could displace important community services like daycares, urgent cares, and homes.
- **Rely on strong citywide performance standards** to manage nuisance uses, rather than trying to segregate them into specific industrial-only zones. Good standards protect residents across all neighborhoods, not just by drawing maps.

I would also ask the City Council to reconsider its resolution to restrict building heights to three stories. To encourage more multi-family homes, we should allow these buildings to be at least four stories. Cambridge, MA just allowed for four floors in its low residential housing districts.

Finally, in all zones, allow for more flexibility for 100% affordable housing. This includes building higher, building denser, etc.

I hope you will prioritize policies that promote housing abundance — and ensure that Ann Arbor remains a place where families of all backgrounds can thrive.

Thank you for your work on this important plan and for considering these changes.

Thanks,

Bennett