

**MEMORANDUM**

<b>To:</b> Ann Arbor City Planning Commission Brett Lenart, Ann Arbor City Planning Manager
<b>From:</b> Commissioner Daniel Adams
<b>Re:</b> Execution Proposal – Comprehensive Land Use Plan Zoning Reform
<b>Date:</b> March 12, 2026

**I. Introduction**

On March 16, 2026, the Ann Arbor City Council (“**Council**”) will consider the Resolution to Adopt the City of Ann Arbor’s Comprehensive Land Use Plan - 2050 (Resolution 26-0367) (the “**Resolution**”), which would adopt the Comprehensive Land Use Plan as amended and approved by the City Planning Commission (“**CPC**”) at its February 18, 2026 meeting the (“**CLUP**”).

Section 1.1.1 of the CLUP’s Implementation Matrix directs CPC and City Planning staff to “[r]eview and rewrite the zoning code to remove barriers to housing development and redevelopment for needed housing types,” and to “[m]odify zoning to allow housing in all areas of the city.” The Implementation Matrix directs CPC and Planning staff to complete city-wide zoning reform within three years of CLUP approval. The CLUP does not direct this zoning to occur in any specified priority or sequence.

If the Council approves the CLUP on March 16, 2026, this memo requests CPC support to (a) prioritize the execution of the CLUP’s Hub category, along with the limited adjacent Transition category areas necessary to fully activate the rezoned Hub areas, as soon as possible in 2026; (b) model these zoning districts on the recommendations in the comments submitted by University of Michigan Professors Jonathan Levine and Noah Kazis and resident Will Leaf in December 2025 and January 2026; and (c) adopt certain procedural recommendations to support the timely and effective completion of this work,

**II. Proposed 2026 Reform Priorities**

- A. Prioritize the development and execution of the Hub category and the immediately adjacent “halo” Transition category

The 2024 city staff report titled “A New Approach to Economic Development” concluded that Ann Arbor is experiencing a severe housing supply shortage, and urged the city to “prioritize housing development at all income levels in support of affordability” and adopt “an organizational imperative that housing development at all income levels is a priority.”<sup>1</sup> The City Council formally

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<sup>1</sup> A New Approach to Economic Development at 5, 22.

endorsed this report’s findings and conclusions on April 1, 2024,<sup>2</sup> and the CLUP expressly “incorporate[s] and align[s] with” the report.<sup>3</sup>

The CLUP’s Hub category offers the highest potential for short-term housing creation to help alleviate the city’s housing crisis. The Hub category “allows for the highest-density residential development,” “expands opportunities for Ann Arbor residents to live and work near downtown and along key corridors,” and “presents the greatest opportunity to significantly increase housing supply, helping to improve affordability . . . .”<sup>4</sup> Expanding housing options and increasing permitted density in the Hub category also enjoys robust public support: “There is broad support for increasing density in areas aligned with major transit infrastructure, especially around multimodal hubs.”<sup>5</sup>

For these reasons, this memo requests CPC support for the following CLUP execution initiatives:

1. Prioritize Hub. CPC should begin CLUP implementation with the Hub category. The remaining CLUP categories will be developed and executed in the following sequence: (1) all other Transition category areas; (2) the Residential category; and (3) the “Residential or Transition” category areas on the Future Land Use Map.<sup>6</sup>
2. Execute Appropriate Supporting “Halo” Transition. To avoid new Hub zoning automatically tapering to mid-rise where adjacent to legacy R3/R4 zones (effecting an unintended downzoning), this memo requests the development of either: (a) a second mixed-use “halo” Transition zoning district intended for use in areas on the Future Land Use Map where Transition separates Hub from Residential (the “**Halo Transition Area**”); or (b) the combination of this separate Transition zoning district into a single mixed-use Hub zoning district that, as it approaches R1/R2 parcels, tapers in height and permitted density in the manner the CLUP contemplates for the Transition category.
3. Zone the Hub Category and Halo Transition Area in 2026. This memo further requests that Planning staff zone the Hub category and the related Halo Transition Areas as soon as possible in 2026. Because the Hub category overlays over legacy zoning that permits the highest density in the city, the process of developing zoning districts and executing changes to the land use map to execute the Hub category will likely be the least complex and time intensive of the three CLUP land-use districts. Prioritizing and completing Hub as soon as possible will reserve the balance of the CLUP’s three-year execution window for the remaining Transition areas and the Residential category; this is prudent, as these categories may be more

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<sup>2</sup> Resolution 24-0511

<sup>3</sup> CLUP at 6-7.

<sup>4</sup> CLUP at 124.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> If City Council requests that some other CLUP category or category area take priority over Hub, this schedule will automatically adjust in accordance with Council’s direction without further CPC action.

complex to develop into zoning districts and may also merit additional public engagement.<sup>7</sup> Delaying the execution of the Hub category, or executing Hub or another CLUP category in piecemeal fashion, would put the CLUP’s three-year implementation target at immediate risk.

B. Model Hub and Halo Transition Area zoning on the Kazis/Levine/Leaf proposals

On December 9, 2025, University of Michigan Professors Jonathan Levine and Noah Kazis submitted a presentation and a memo to the CPC that, among other things, recommended that the city follow a “terraced” approach to the CLUP rezoning process, starting with “one zone for hub and transition” based on “self-adjusting text-based rules,” and creating new zones only where those rules do not “produce desired results.”<sup>8</sup> On January 12, 2026, Professor Levine and resident Will Leaf submitted a written public comment to CPC that contained two proposals for executing the Hub category, including a proposal to “[c]reate one new mixed-use district for Hub and key Transition areas.”<sup>9</sup> The comment included, among other things, links to documents containing suggested UDC changes,<sup>10</sup> analyses of potential height tapering options, comparisons to approaches used in other cities, and detailed revised zoning maps.<sup>11</sup>

This memo seeks CPC support to use this thoughtful, detailed public input as a model for the execution of the Hub category and the Halo Transition Area, with the following modifications and instructions:

- The district(s) should prioritize simplicity and ease of use, removing unnecessary barriers to housing construction, and avoiding the use of overlays wherever possible. If the district can be properly executed as a single mixed-use zone (“MU1” in the documents linked in the January comment) as opposed to separate Hub and Halo Transition Area zones, it should be executed as a single zone.
- CPC and Planning staff should consider an upper height limit recommendation for Hub that will activate the potential for Hub to create high-density housing options while remaining sensitive to resident concerns regarding building height.

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<sup>7</sup> See Noah Kazis, *Implementation of Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2-3* (Dec. 3, 2025), available at <https://a2gov.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=15010375&GUID=1CCC043F-9DA9-4B33-9BDC-4368F1122F5E> (discussing how Kalamazoo advanced a “major zoning text amendment” based on earlier public input during the comprehensive plan engagement process, whereas other aspects of plan-related zoning changes involved supplemental public engagement).

<sup>8</sup><https://a2gov.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?GUID=F702BBA2-0319-4532-8E40-2FA8E47EA5ED&ID=7774240&Options=&Search=>

<sup>9</sup><https://a2gov.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=15091242&GUID=489C11DA-315A-41F7-B5DE-0B175F2523A0>. Because the links in the Legistar version of the comment are not accessible, I have included a link to the Google Drive document that was originally submitted to CPC. [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LqnisfNU\\_tpa77Lv1bQGMMt97FV-\\_Z3sufObmHZ2SHI/edit?tab=t.0](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LqnisfNU_tpa77Lv1bQGMMt97FV-_Z3sufObmHZ2SHI/edit?tab=t.0)

<sup>10</sup> [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XBrVQfQ\\_9YP\\_whoQO1EJE2XJtg3M2xUJ/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XBrVQfQ_9YP_whoQO1EJE2XJtg3M2xUJ/view)

<sup>11</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xgJHJHBMKlmopN8ofAk5m-i1Tswfkbgi/view>

- Other modifications to the recommendations in these documents will be appropriate or required. These changes should be specifically identified and supported in the supporting staff memoranda.

C. Procedural recommendations

To efficiently accomplish these objectives, support effective CPC review, and facilitate meaningful public engagement, this memo further requests CPC support for the following procedural recommendations:

- Prioritize the rezoning of the Hub category and the Halo Transition Area over other work relating to CLUP execution and, to the extent permitted by law, any pending or future rezoning applications that relate to parcels in these areas.
- Regard the current CPC Work Plan as modified by any resolution adopting this memo's recommendations.
- Develop and review discrete components of the new district(s) (permitted uses, dimensional standards, a redline of proposed edits to the UDC, etc.) with CPC in phases and on an ongoing basis, as opposed to a comprehensive review of the complete draft district.
- Schedule reviews to occur during full CPC meetings and work sessions (as opposed to limited-participation ORC meetings) to permit full CPC awareness and participation in district development and execution.