

**From:** BRIAN CHAMBERS <[brchambers@comcast.net](mailto:brchambers@comcast.net)>

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**To:** CityCouncil <[CityCouncil@a2gov.org](mailto:CityCouncil@a2gov.org)>; Planning <[Planning@a2gov.org](mailto:Planning@a2gov.org)>; Fournier, John <[JFournier@a2gov.org](mailto:JFournier@a2gov.org)>; DiLeo, Alexis <[ADiLeo@a2gov.org](mailto:ADiLeo@a2gov.org)>; Lenart, Brett <[BLenart@a2gov.org](mailto:BLenart@a2gov.org)>; Stults, Missy <[MStults@a2gov.org](mailto:MStults@a2gov.org)>; Delacourt, Derek <[DDelacourt@a2gov.org](mailto:DDelacourt@a2gov.org)>; Hall, Jennifer (Housing Commission) <[JHall@a2gov.org](mailto:JHall@a2gov.org)>

**Cc:** A2 Equitable Engagement <[A2EquitableEngagement@a2gov.org](mailto:A2EquitableEngagement@a2gov.org)>; Schopieray, Christine <[CSchopieray@a2gov.org](mailto:CSchopieray@a2gov.org)>

**Subject:** Ann Arbor Vision2030: Equity-based, Sustainable Development that Embraces the Knowledge Economy

Mayor, City Council, interim-City Administrator, Planning Commission & Department Leaders:

After some local dialogue on a vision for Ann Arbor, aligned with the recent City and Council initiative, I was encouraged to share my thoughts.

Attached is a 6 page vision statement with a few charts covering:

1. Ann Arbor's Land Use Plan Update
2. Achieving A2Zero Targets
3. Policing and Mental Health Services
4. Home Ownership Financing Program
5. The City Administrator search
6. Council Meetings

I am very hopeful about Ann Arbor's direction, but am concerned that there is a need for a unifying vision that can effectively pull our community together across these topics.

The attached is my humble attempt to put this into a consolidated statement for what I believe will be compelling.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Ann Arbor, patience in reading what I wrote, and any comments you may have on what I shared.

Best wishes for the coming holidays and for the start of the coming school and university calendars! I wish everyone good health.

Brian Chambers, Ward 3  
c: 734-604-9367

We are at a transformative threshold. Ann Arbor's City Council and City Administration have proposed and approved many progressive items over recent years, including:

- a) Establishing an Independent Community Police Oversight Commission;
- b) Targeting year over year baseline funding of the Office of Sustainability and Innovation and then adopting A2Zero unanimously;
- c) Initiating Capital Improvement Plans for housing and mixed-use development on City-owned land for affordable housing, to retain many sites on a land-lease basis;
- d) Proposing and securing an Affordable Housing Millage to fund Affordable Housing;
- e) Creating a Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Office;
- f) Passing the Transit Corridor Zoning ordinance;
- g) Expanding the scope and criteria for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), and
- h) Forming the Ann Arbor Equitable Engagement Steering Committee; among others

How does the Ann Arbor City Council top this and what is its long-term vision for Ann Arbor?

Consider this a modest proposal. A multicultural ethic that enables all Ann Arbor cultures, on an equitable and ecologically sustainable basis, is the next frontier, I believe.

The diversity of Ann Arbor is reflected by race, age, gender, ethnicity, economic status, neighborhood and downtown dwellers, established residents / new entrants, technology professionals, students, and service and union workers (trades, city/county, police, fire, teachers, university faculty and staff, healthcare, graduate students, etc.).

Progressivism, to me, is about instituting systemic, long-term structural change in our local systems that benefits ordinary people (i.e., minimally those below the City's median income). Minimally, this is about reducing the cost of living in ways that equitably benefits everyone with improved livelihood.

What I envision is a form of **equity-based, sustainable development that embraces the knowledge economy.**

Similar to Ann Arbor's 340% post-WWII housing growth (1940 - 1980), the density increases initiated by Ann Arbor Council and further ones, described below, address growth positively, both for climate sustainability, and increasing economic dynamism and wellbeing of residents.

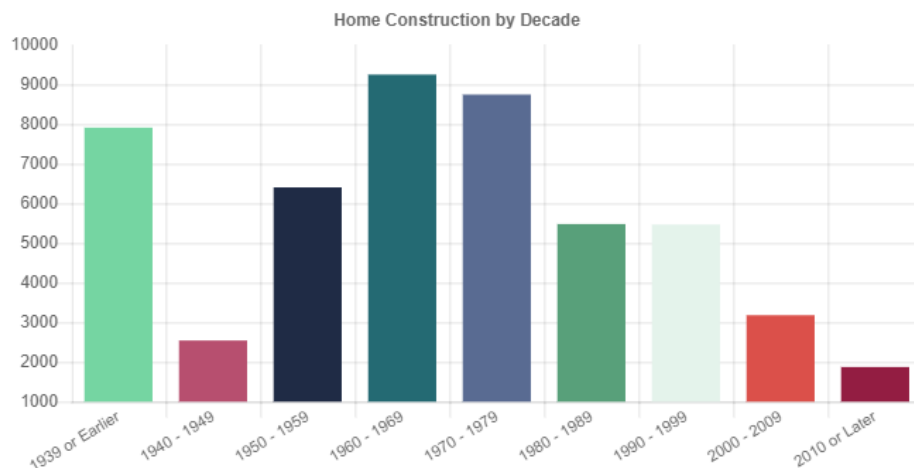


Figure 1. Housing Construction in Ann Arbor by Decade, over Time

See: <https://www.point2homes.com/US/Neighborhood/MI/Ann-Arbor-Demographics.html>  
 See also: <https://www.infoplease.com/us/census/michigan/ann-arbor/housing-statistics>

Here is a list of related actions envisioned between now and 2030, stretching to 2060. [That is, I plan to retire in Ann Arbor by 2030, and assume I will not live beyond 2060, if even that.]

1. Ann Arbor's **Land Use Plan Update** is completed in the early 2020's

The project drops the term 'Master,' as it reflects the 'old way' of the so-called master defining the plan for the land they control.

The City secures funding from the Administration's infrastructure and reconciliation bill.

- a) The **Steering Committee** is broadly representative of the demographics of Ann Arbor, with an over-emphasis on previously marginalized groups by race, age, gender, ethnicity and income, and includes union representation across all local union (Trades, City, County, University, Schools, Healthcare, etc.)
- b) **Neighborhood engagement** is enhanced and is not viewed as an interference. Family support services are provided for all events and meetings, so no one is marginalized.
- c) **Hybrid Form-based and Performance-based zoning** is established for all appropriate R1 districts. It provides an ability to increase the housing diversity across Ann Arbor, with 2-plex, 3-plex and 4-plex units and mixed use commercial allowed within the current residential (R1) building envelopes. This is in areas not within a Transit Corridor District.
- d) Full **Transit Oriented Development (TOD)** is established for targeted densities, building on the radial and freeway ring, with connectivity to downtown, arterial connections to the center, and radial systems connecting the perimeter. [More TOD below on A2Zero.]

Housing densities increase incrementally, allowing phased investments in AATA. Ann Arbor residents and employers no longer have the costs of financing personal automobiles, garages, carports and parking lots, for where they live and work.

Due to the cell-based radial designs established, people can walk, bike or ride to local services for groceries, pharmacy/health services, parks, hardware and entertainment (pubs, coffee, theater, restaurants, etc.).

Rapid transit bus lines are established as appropriate densities are reached, with service extended to cover working hours for service workers, and service stops maintained with 10 - 15 minute frequency.

The Ann Arbor Train Station is aligned with the expanded AAATA system, and light-rail regional transit lines connect Ann Arbor to Detroit, Chicago, Lansing, Flint, Jackson and Traverse City. The Administration's Infrastructure Funds are leveraged.

- e) Major **developers, apartment and other building owners** become inspired to transition to **net-zero investments** for new development and retrofits of existing facilities, based on the business benefits and higher market value achieved by net-zero buildings.

Community engagement with developers is fostered, and developers are no longer the object of scorn and ridicule, as they are partners in how Ann Arbor invests in its future.

Zoning changes that increase residential and commercial property values are viewed as a positive for Ann Arbor.

- f) **The City Commons** is jointly developed around a new main **Ann Arbor District Library (AADL)** building complex, aligned to the downtown transit center.

The AADL system is augmented, based on: (1) the heritage of US libraries going back to Ben Franklin who innovated on US libraries for community access to books the average person could not afford, improving literacy; and (2) Andrew Carnegie who viewed libraries as a key engine for economic development, and financed the first Ann Arbor library on Huron near State Street after the City Council agreed to fund its operation.



Figure 2. Ann Arbor Carnegie Library and High School (portion), 1907



Figure 3. UofM North Quadrangle and entrance to the Department of Human-Computer Interaction, with the Carnegie Library facade retained.

- The Main AADL library is rebuilt to offer equitable access to information systems and resources, as well as community-based innovation services.
- The City Commons becomes the central meeting center for open, public gatherings, concerts, plays, and other community art forms.
- Washtenaw Community College establishes a downtown campus on the perimeter of the City Commons.

On this basis, Ann Arbor, as part of the global, **knowledge-based economy**, building on its legacy for equity-based economic development, embracing the AADL library system, higher education, technology, life sciences, and start-up, entrepreneurial communities.

- g) The **Equitable Ann Arbor (EA2) Land Trust** is leveraged for local investments in housing affordability for those between 60%-80% AMI to address the Missing Middle

Parcels are procured through innovative EA2 Land Trust investments, with land retained on a land-lease basis to control rents. Both ranges of affordable housing are addressed. The Home Ownership Financing Program (see below) is leveraged for home ownership as people are able to transition out of the social-housing arrangements.

- h) **Property Tax Assistance Program** - Those on fixed incomes or below specified household income thresholds are provided property tax relief similar to Detroit's Homeowners Property Tax Assistance Program (HPTAP). Renters have tax credit relief of a comparable form. These policies are established to mitigate the tax burdens of the Affordable Housing, Climate and any Library / City Commons millages.

## 2. **A2Zero Targets** are achieved by 2030:

- a) **Community Solar/Ann Arbor Public Power (A2P2)** utility buys out DTE's infrastructure. Staying dependent on DTE's network and power generation restricts Ann Arbor's ability to attain the 2030 carbon neutrality goals of A2Zero. Public Power creates a Community Owned Utility (COU) not an Investor Owned Utility (IOU) like DTE. Renewable-based, higher reliability and lower rates. See: <https://annarborpublicpower.com/>

- b) A **Climate Millage** is secured in 2022 and local revenue-based mini-bonds finance additional investments necessary to achieve A2Zero and A2P2 objectives.

Climate Millage expenditures are equity based to support climate conversion and infrastructure not affordable by the average Ann Arbor resident. Community (City) owned solar and neighborhood geothermal, resiliency hubs and other investments are made for targeted neighborhoods based on 2020 US Census tract income data.

- c) A comprehensive **Transit Oriented Development (TOD)** is approved in the **Land-Use Plan Update** (see above) with targeted densities for a financially independent AAATA. Funds are secured through the Administration's Infrastructure or reconciliation plan.

See: <https://www.c40knowledgehub.org/s/article/How-to-implement-transit-oriented-development>

To reach A2Zero carbon reduction goals, reducing 50% of miles driven will require switching away from personal transit and going to public transit and other non-automotive forms. That is only possible by increasing housing densities to targeted thresholds along transit corridors that foster public transit ridership.

For example, for bus-based Transit Districts for village style development (appropriate for Ann Arbor's scale), the best practice recommendation is for 15 housing units/acre in the 1/4 mile radius around the bus transfer stops. This ¼ mile radius defines any one **Transit District**. See: <http://www.2030palette.org/residential-densities/>

For the ½ mile square area along neighborhoods that the ¼ mile radius each Transit District would total, a housing density of 4,800 housing units could be the target.

Below, in Figure 3, is a representation of this level of housing density.

See: <https://www.theurbanist.org/2017/05/04/visualizing-compatible-density/>



*Notable features: A variety of housing types, pedestrian-friendly street frontages, alleys and auto courts, and common open space with trails.*

Figure 4. 15 Dwelling Units Per Acre (Gross)



Mixed use development is not necessary for every project in the Transit District, but for neighborhood walkability to services, it should be required within the  $\frac{1}{4}$  radius from each transfer node that establishes the Transit District. Projects located with pre-existing walkability above 80 would not require mixed use development, as a part of the project.

The  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile radius around the **Blake Transit Center** could be at 25 housing units/acre, or 8,000 per  $\frac{1}{2}$  square mile total for the **Downtown Center Transit District** or up to 50 housing units/acre, or 16,000 per  $\frac{1}{2}$  square mile.

Transit Districts become de facto **Climate Resiliency hubs**, connecting neighborhoods to the rest of Ann Arbor, on a car-free basis.

A California study found that among those who drove to work when they lived away from transit, 52.3% switched to transit commuting on moving within a 1/2-mile walking distance of a rail station. On balance, research to date shows that TOD yields an appreciable ridership bonus: well-designed, concentrated, mixed-use development around transit nodes can boost patronage as much as five to six times higher than comparable development away from transit.

See: National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2004. Transit-Oriented Development in the United States: Experiences, Challenges, and Prospects. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/23360>

Below, in Figures 5 - 7, are representations of this range of housing density.

See: <https://www.theurbanist.org/2017/05/04/visualizing-compatible-density/>



Figure 5. 27 Dwelling Units Per Acre (Net)

*Notable features: Single and double-single family lots redeveloped with condominiums. Each building contains between three and seven units and has front-loaded parking at the street level beneath the dwelling units. All are built within a strict 30-foot height limit; hence, the flat roofs.*



Figure 6. 44 Dwelling Units Per Acre (Net)

*Notable features: New urban townhouses and live-work units served by underground parking and containing private patios and a centralized, shared courtyard space.*



*Notable features: The whole block site transitions from four-story buildings with ground level retail to townhomes that rise only one level above the street at the northwest corner of the site. While the L-shaped, mixed-use apartment building is over 100 dwelling units per net acre, the surface parking area and townhouse building bring the block's average density down to 59 units per net acre.*

Figure 7. 59 Dwelling Units Per Acre (Net)

3. **Policing and Mental Health Services** - the County collaboration on mental health services becomes ingrained in our basic personal security services. [More should be stated on this. I defer to the Independent Community Police Oversight Commission (ICPOC) for elaboration.]
  - a. Police job and promotion candidates are required to respond to questionnaires designed to identify anti-social personality traits and implicit biases.
 

This is done to identify and filter out those with such traits, as a more direct means of addressing systemic racism and other social biases across the Ann Arbor Police Department.

See: [https://www.medicinenet.com/antisocial\\_personality\\_disorder/article.htm](https://www.medicinenet.com/antisocial_personality_disorder/article.htm)  
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247530295> The Antisocial Police Personality A View from the Inside  
[https://post.ca.gov/portals/0/post\\_docs/publications/psychological-screening-manual/Peace\\_Officer\\_Psychological\\_Screening\\_Manual.pdf](https://post.ca.gov/portals/0/post_docs/publications/psychological-screening-manual/Peace_Officer_Psychological_Screening_Manual.pdf)
4. **Home Ownership Financing Program** - The **HOME Investment Partnerships Program** has a major Ann Arbor City focus which facilitates home ownership for those below the A2 median income range (60 – 80% AMI). The program is established with initial A2 City funding leveraging the \$1.5B Federal funds currently available.
 

See: <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/home/home-overview/>
5. The **City Administrator**, as the leader of City Departments, is no longer prone to ready dismissal. They (gender neutral) are recruited based on their ability to engage the diverse constituencies of Ann Arbor, with a history of strong financial management, conflict resolution, mediation and transformational leadership skills.
 

See: <https://www.governmentresource.com/about-us/servant-leadership>
6. **City Council** meetings are more conciliatory, celebrating and building on its tendency for 85%+ unanimous approvals of agenda items. When emotions do rise, the Mayor leads everyone in a group meditation with deep rhythmic breathing for 5 minutes to clear the air. (just seeing who reads this far . . . )