

Subject: Westphal Chapter 5 suggestions summary
Attachments: Chapter 5 feedback only chart.pdf

From: Kirk Westphal
Sent: Monday, May 12, 2025 3:30 PM
To: Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>
Subject: Westphal Chapter 5 suggestions summary

Dear Commission:

Thank you for the thorough work on the draft plan. Here is a thematic summary of my remaining suggestions. I have re-attached my page-by-page edits for Chapter 5.

Map

1. Add all non-R1/R2 parcels to Transition
2. Change Ann Arbor Golf and Outing and private cemeteries from Parks to Transition
3. Change the Trader Joe's and Baskin Robbins areas to Hub like other TC1 parcels
4. Consider Hub in Lowertown
5. Change the "Parks/Open space" map label to "Parks" (or define what private "Open space" means)
6. Include all municipally-owned land in "Public" category (some city and county parcels downtown are missing)

Other

1. Prevent division of Transition into subdistricts; all uses should be compatible with residential and schools
2. Remove all mentions of nodes, transit stations, and character
3. Eliminate requirements for district-wide ground-floor commercial uses; reserve for a limited number of core downtown shopping streets and major TC1 intersections
4. Get clarity on the difference between Hub and Transition and the rationale for its placement. I could envision wanting some differences in regulations, e.g. how the ground floor is treated (transparency, uses, limited setback) for walkability purposes. But I do not think these regulations are as important in the newly-expanded Hub area a few blocks south of William, for example, as they would be in Lowertown. Why is one Hub and the other not?

Thank you for your consideration!

Kirk Westphal
Ward 2

Chapter	Page	Original		Type of change			Reason
		Text	Graphic	Replace With	Omit	Add	
5	100	"Residential District: Provide diverse housing options that reflect the character of Ann Arbor's traditional neighborhoods... "			X		Strike the phrase about "reflecting the character." Words like "character" and "context" can mean too many things to different people and can be weaponized.
5	100	Transition District	X			Transition graphic should allow development scale to go to "Large" in the graphic.	Transition heights should not be arbitrarily capped overall; it should be unlimited height, except forced to taper down to Low Rise.
5	100	Flex District	X		X		Eliminate Flex district text and graphic.
5	101	Flex District	X		X		I thought this was a settled question.
5	101	Parks/Open Space		Parks			Eliminate the nonspecific term "Open Space" and only use "Parks" with parcels that have been officially designated as parkland in city code. This has been a major problem in the past, eg. people claiming the Fuller parking lot by the hospital that's rented to UM is a "park" and repurposing should be subject to vote of the people.
5	101		X			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Label ALL non-park, non-public, non-R1/R2 land as "Transition" or "Hub" - The TC1 areas near Trader Joe's (Washtenaw) and Baskin Robbins (Stadium) should be "Hub" not "Transition." - Several city and county parcels downtown are missing the "Public" designation. - The Ann Arbor Golf and Outing property should be "Transition" - Cemeteries should not be labelled "Parks." - Old Fourth Ward and private land north and east of it should be "Transition"; historic districts have their own rules but should not be exempt from upzoning in the event they lose historic status. - Extend "Transition" all the way up South Industrial to Stadium. 	<p>It is much safer to start from the assumption that only R1 and R2 areas should be "Low Rise," and then selectively include some other parcels as necessary into Low Rise. Everything else should be "Transition" or "Hub."</p> <p>The current map only designates commercial/mixed-use/near-downtown multifamily — and corridors — as "Transition" and shows many R3 and R4 townhouse and multifamily areas as "Low Rise." This must be fixed as a) it does not start from an assumption of housing abundance, b) it could make very large communities nonconforming, depending on what the zoning ends up being, c) it could cause a "need" to customize Low-Rise zoning neighborhood by neighborhood, and d) when some of these apartment communities reach the end of their lives soon, it would require Low-Rise redevelopment.</p>
5	102	Transition District building form currently says "Low- to mid-rise buildings"		"Low- to high-rise buildings"			Allow unlimited height in "Transition" when not next to "Low Rise." It should not be arbitrarily capped in height, just taper to Low Rise residential. The height caps that have been floated for "Transition" would make Beekman (Lowertown) and Five Corners (State/Packard) nonconforming.
5	102	In Residential District building uses: "Small-scale neighborhood- serving services on corners, minor arterials, and collector streets. "		"throughout the district."			Some of the city's best-loved neighborhood retail isn't on corners. Restricting services to corners limits opportunities by an order of magnitude; how does this help the community?
5	102	Flex District			X		
5	102	Public/Open Space		Public			
5	103		Transition District photo	Show images of high-rises when not next to Low Rise			Why would we want to exclude high density when not next to Low Rise?
5	103	Flex District			X		
5	104	First set of bullets: "Medium scale (Transition)"		"Medium to large scale (Transition)"			Transition should be allowed to be tall away from Low Rise

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5	104	"Residential District: Buildings are limited to four stories in this district. Commercial spaces should be directed toward arterials and collectors, rather than local streets "					Strike commercial restriction. Also will create many months or years of disputes about how many parcels should be considered a "corner," should they be on every corner, which streets, etc. It is simpler and allows more opportunity to not define.
5	104		"Transition" graphic			Include high-rise buildings in "Transition."	
5	104	"Higher-intensity uses should be concentrated at key nodes and major intersections."			X		No distinction should be made between uses at major intersections and elsewhere on the corridors, aside from preserving some limited corner ground floor space for commercial uses (as is partially contemplated in TC1). The concept of "node" is limiting.
5	105	Call-out box on "nodes"			X		Eliminate all mentions of "nodes."
5	105	"Hub District: Building heights within these districts vary depending on their proximity to Residential District areas. The most intensive uses and tallest buildings should be located near major transit stations, and key commercial nodes. "			X		Strike all language about transit stations and nodes. Again this implies changing zoning along corridors.
5	107	" Improving the public transportation system needs to be an upfront investment before and during increase in density, as opposed to a response to perceived demand. "			X		Delete. This quote make the case to limit residential development in parts of the city that have less frequent transit than others. We have excellent transit and a housing crisis.
5	108	" There is strong resident support for more housing of various types and prices, but also concerns about maintaining neighborhood character and [and concerns about] the rising cost of living. This district would allow an incremental increase in density that helps recreate the scale of the walkable, historic districts near downtown that people love. "			X		- Omit all mentions of "neighborhood character," which is an unhelpful term. - This is a plan, not a focus group debrief. If you want the neighborhoods to evolve, do not insert language that pushes for preservation. The choices that participants made in engagement sessions were not "incremental" nor did they reflect the "scale of historic districts."
5	109	Under "Secondary Uses," " Stacked flats - on corners, collectors, or arterials "			X		Omit location mandates.
5	109	Under "Neighborhood Commercial," " corner store " - on corners, collectors, or arterials"			X		Omit location mandates.
5	110	Nodes			X		Omit all mentions of "nodes"
5	110	" However, some residents have expressed concerns about noise, overcrowding, and traffic. "			X		Again: not a focus group. Unless this indicates a specific action to take, language like this is very problematic to include.
5	111	In "primary uses/buildings"				Add "mixed-use/apartment buildings"	Apartment buildings should be allowed in "Transition"
5	112	" There is strong support for higher density in areas of the city aligned with major transit infrastructure, though concerns remain about affordability and environmental impact. "			X		- Do not restrict housing to "major transit infrastructure" - Do not platform fundamental misunderstandings about housing supply and density in the Comp Plan.
5	112	"ultimately reducing vehicle miles traveled and lowering carbon emissions"		"immediately reducing per-capita vehicle miles traveled and carbon emissions."			
5	113	" new public space "			X		Omit this from graphic. Inserting random open spaces in downtown is contrary to prior PROS recommendations. Instead, recommending a process by which high-quality, privately-constructed public space lined with active uses would be a valued addition to the work plan.

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5	115	"Shopping centers often have complex ownership structures and long-term lease agreements, while office parks must balance the need for new development with preserving space for employment opportunities. As these sites evolve into mixed-use environments, it will be important to maintain a strong commercial tax base while adapting to new land use patterns."			X		This all appears contrary to the direction given previously by CPC.
5	116-117				X		Delete all Flex sections. Contrary to previous CPC direction.
5	118	"Residents have expressed strong support for preserving existing open spaces and ensuring that the city can meet the future needs of a growing population."			X		Again, not a focus group report, not the prevailing sentiment, not aligned with PROS plan, and not sustainable or actionable.
5	118	Under "Public," "When city-owned properties are proposed for sale or a change in use, adjacent land use types should be taken into account to help determine their appropriate future use."			X		These are inherently political decisions; language like this is unhelpful.

