

From:
Subject: Employment, Retail and Innovation Zoning District Updates Feedback

From: Brian Chambers
Sent: Tuesday, November 26, 2024 4:00 PM
To: Lenart, Brett <BLenart@a2gov.org>; Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>; Carolyn Lusch <carolyn.lusch@smithgroup.com>; Stacey <Stacey@interface-studio.com>; jamie@interface-studio.com; Oliver Kiley <oliver.kiley@smithgroup.com>
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Subject: Employment, Retail and Innovation Zoning District Updates Feedback

Brett, Planning Commission and Comprehensive Project Team Leads:

I am writing in response to the recent updates being provided on the Comprehensive Plan for the Retail, Employment and Innovation related districts. I've read the Planning Commission_06_Economic Development Memo_20241126, so understand many of the trade-offs.

My understanding is that the whole premise for the Comprehensive Plan is to simplify our zoning districts so that housing can be done more flexibly throughout Ann Arbor. These Retail, Employment and Innovation Districts seem to be departing from the objective to significantly increase housing at a much higher scale than is currently permitted, and to do so based on principles of placemaking. The new districts should emphasize transit oriented development by connecting the TC1 Districts to the Downtown core, and to provide expanded dense housing in each.

My hope is also that the Historic Districts can be updated so that the buildings can be more flexibly renovated for redevelopment in ways that still preserves the heritage of those Districts, but without all of the constraints to keep them modernized for climate, let alone modern technology.

I want to use this communication to *re-emphasize* the benefits of mixed-income, mixed-use, walkable developments. Each new zoning district should be premised on promoting walkability for mixed-income, mixed-use developments throughout Ann Arbor. Having districts that don't provide for housing at-scale would be a huge miss on that objective. I encourage you to reconsider these, and to modify them in ways that would still permit dense, walkable, housing on each

There are others who've provided more specific feedback on the particulars, so I'll keep it high-level in my statement below.

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Mixed-use developments, which integrate three or more uses within a single project, offer numerous benefits, including fostering walkability, driving economic growth, and optimizing land use.

- *Research consistently shows that neighborhoods with positive urban design elements—such as walkability, access to green spaces, mixed-use areas, and well-connected transit—significantly enhance residents' life satisfaction.*
- *In contrast, poor urban planning, marked by limited connectivity, high traffic density, and insufficient green spaces, undermines well-being and satisfaction.*

Thoughtfully designed mixed-use neighborhoods promote social interaction, reinforce local identities, and cultivate thriving communities while addressing challenges like car dependency, carbon pollution, and inadequate infrastructure.

Such strategies are proven to foster economic growth, innovation, and business collaboration by creating vibrant, accessible communities.

These "live-work-play" environments reduce commuting needs, enhance social cohesion, and boost local economic activity, offering a compelling vision for a thriving, inclusive future.

Sources:

[\[i\]](#) [\[ii\]](#) [\[iii\]](#) [\[iv\]](#) [\[v\]](#) [\[vi\]](#) [\[vii\]](#) [\[viii\]](#) [\[ix\]](#) [\[x\]](#) [\[xi\]](#) [\[xii\]](#) [\[xiii\]](#) [\[xiv\]](#) [\[xv\]](#)

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Brett, would you please share this email with the Planning Commission and it's Comprehensive Plan subcommittee?

Thank you,

Brian

[\[i\]](#) Life Satisfaction and Your Neighborhood Built Environment

[\[ii\]](#) Do Neighborhood Walkability, Transit, and Parks Relate to Residents' Life Satisfaction? - Journal of the American Planning Association 2020

[\[iii\]](#) How does neighborhood design affect life satisfaction? Evidence from Twin Cities - ScienceDirect

[\[iv\]](#) Built environment, urban vitality and social cohesion: Do vibrant neighborhoods foster strong communities? - Landscape and Urban Planning - 2020

[\[v\]](#) Are Cities Decisive for Life Satisfaction? A Structural Equation Model for the European Population | Social Indicators Research

[\[vi\]](#) Exploring how the urban neighborhood environment influences mental well-being using walking interviews - ScienceDirect

[\[vii\]](#) The relationship between urban greenery, mixed land use and life satisfaction: An examination using remote sensing data and deep learning - ScienceDirect

[\[viii\]](#) Perceived Neighborhood Environment Impacts on Health Behavior, Multidimensional Health, and Life Satisfaction - PMC

[\[ix\]](#) Urban planning and quality of life: A review of pathways linking the built environment to subjective well-being - ScienceDirect

[\[x\]](#) Why walkable urban areas are America's efficient economic engines

[\[xi\]](#) How can mixed-use development support local economic development and innovation? (Linked-in Experts)

[\[xii\] Walkability and Its Relationships with Health, Sustainability, and Livability: Elements of Physical Environment and Evaluation Frameworks](#)

[\[xiii\] Urban Villages: The Key to Sustainable Community Economic Development | Planetizen Blogs](#)

[\[xiv\] The Rise of Mixed-Use Developments in Future Cities - Tolj Commercial](#)

[\[xv\] Differences in Experiences with the Development of Mixed-Use Projects From 2004 and 2017](#)