

Subject: Request for Technical Clarification and Zoning Objection

From: Katie De Voto

Sent: Tuesday, January 13, 2026 6:01 PM

To: Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>; Lenart, Brett <BLenart@a2gov.org>

Cc: City Council <CityCouncil@a2gov.org>

Subject: Request for Technical Clarification and Zoning Objection: REZ24-0008 (Woodbury Gardens)

Dear Mr. Lenart and Members of the Planning Commission,

As a resident in an R1 district directly adjacent to the Woodbury Gardens property, I am writing to request technical clarification and submit a formal Zoning Objection regarding the proposed 7-story development associated with REZ24-0008.

This rezoning request (REZ24-0008) is being reviewed concurrently with the associated Site Plan (SP24-0013), as referenced in the City's public hearing notice. My comments pertain to both the zoning implications and the specific massing and site configuration proposed in the associated plan.

Context on Ownership and Long-Term Land-Use Implications

- The Petitioner, *Botanical Gardens Associates, LLC*, is the long-term ownership entity for Woodbury Gardens.
 - Public filings list the company at 260 E. Brown St., Birmingham, an address associated with Broder & Sachse Real Estate, a firm known for managing mid-rise (5–10 story) multi-family and mixed-use developments throughout Southeast Michigan. Including [The Scott at Brush Park](#) and [The Albert in Detroit](#), which are consistently described in industry reporting as high-end or luxury projects with premium amenities.
 - The ownership group has maintained control of Woodbury Gardens for more than 40 years; this rezoning request therefore represents a permanent regulatory change rather than a short-term transfer or redevelopment by a new entity.
 - The Commission's decision will define the governing zoning framework for both this proposal and any future redevelopment across the affected parcels.
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City Density Goals and Applicability to This Proposal

Ann Arbor's Comprehensive Plan process and related Council directives frame increased density as a strategy for achieving three primary goals:

- **Affordability:** Increasing the diversity and supply of housing to make the city more accessible to residents across income levels.
- **Sustainability and Climate Action:** Supporting transit-oriented development to reduce vehicle miles traveled and advance carbon-neutrality objectives.
- **Equity and Desegregation:** Addressing the historic exclusionary patterns created by single-family zoning and expanding access to housing throughout the city.

While these goals are widely supported, the current Woodbury Gardens proposal does not appear to meaningfully advance them:

- The public hearing materials for REZ24-0008 do not identify any affordability or mixed-income components, and I was not able to locate any commitments disclosed to date. Given this track record and the absence of documented affordability provisions, it is unclear how the proposed redevelopment would advance the City's stated affordability and equity objectives associated with increased urban density.
- The proposed location is situated deep within an interior of what is today a townhome community, rather than on a designated transit corridor, limiting its ability to achieve transportation-related sustainability benefits.
- Because the site is already zoned and developed as multifamily, intensification here does not expand housing opportunities into historically exclusionary areas, a core priority of the City's equity goals.

Request for Line-of-Sight Data

To evaluate contextual compatibility and massing impacts, I respectfully request:

- A **Cross-Section Line-of-Sight Study** from the second-floor window of 1408 Iroquois Place, Ann Arbor MI 48104 to the peak of the proposed 75-foot structures.
- Since the City dissolved the Design Review Board in May 2025, the responsibility for evaluating visual and contextual impacts now rests solely with the Planning Commission.

Formal Objection to Inclusion of R3 and PL Parcels in the TC1 Rezoning

1. Erosion of the Step-Down Gradient

- The current R3 zoning provides a "Missing Middle" transition between 35-foot R1 homes and higher-density R4 districts.
- Rezoning R3 to TC1 eliminates this transition.
- While existing two-story townhomes may currently function as a buffer, this reflects the *built condition*, not the zoning outcome.

- If converted to TC1, the area could be redeveloped with buildings up to 7 stories (height capped only by conditional overlays), creating a long-term pathway for 65–75-foot structures directly adjacent to R1 homes with no step-up, taper, or intermediary zoning layer.
- This would expose adjacent R1 residents, located approximately 20–30 feet from the shared property line, to massing impacts significantly more substantial than those present today.

2. Protection of Public Land

- It is my understanding that Parcel **09-09-33-313-032** is currently zoned PL (Public Land).
- This strip east of Frisinger Park functions as a public-facing horticultural and vegetative buffer.
- Rezoning PL land to TC1 establishes a precedent that could allow private development on land historically designated for neighborhood green space.

3. Building Width Compliance

- Based on available concept graphics, the proposed Phase 2 structure appears to exceed the 300-foot maximum building width applicable in TC1 (UDC Table 5.17-7).
- Approving a rezoning request in which proposed massing exceeds district standards risks undermining the technical integrity of the TC1 district.

Proposed Alternatives for Density Alignment

In addition to excluding the R3 and PL parcels from the rezoning request, if R4 is rezoned, I respectfully request that the Commission direct the Petitioner to pursue one of the following alternatives:

- **Modify Height to 3 Stories:**
Maintain a 3-story “Missing Middle” scale at what we understand is the developers current proposed location (indicated by the red arrow in the attachment) to preserve the intended transition between R1 and higher-density districts.
- **Relocate Massing to the Western Portion of the Site:**
Shift the proposed 7-story buildings to the “starred” location on the site’s western edge, which interfaces with M1 industrial zoning.
This alternative allows the project to achieve maximum density while leveraging existing geography and land-use patterns to buffer residential neighbors.

Closing

The spirit of this communication is to support a zoning outcome that aligns with the City’s long-term goals while maintaining the legal and technical transitions envisioned by the Master Plan. I appreciate the Commission’s attention to these considerations and look forward to continued discussion at the upcoming hearing.

Sincerely,

Katie De Voto
1408 Iroquois, Ann Arbor MI

