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Date: 09/24/2023 2:01 PM EDT
Subject: Addendum on Downtown Core Housing Targets Re: Ann Arbor's Capacity for Increased Housing through Zoning Reform

Mayor Taylor, City Administrator Dohoney, and City Council:

Attached is an addendum to my prior working paper on Increased Housing through Zoning Reform. It is only 3 pages in length.

The focus of the update is titled, "Downtown Center and Core Housing Targets for Transit Oriented Development." It takes into account the current downtown population, and then estimates the additional housing needed using the DDA, D1 and D2 districts areas. Since much of the DDA district of 271 acres, or 0.45 square miles, is confounded with the U-M, public rights of way, and the Historic District, it is actually extremely constrained from supporting significant new housing development.

Maybe during the Comprehensive Land Use Plan project, there can be a subcommittee specifically looking at the downtown core area, and how zoning and ordinances may need to be addressed to facilitate substantial additions to housing on a Transit Oriented Development (TOD) basis.

I hope these writings of mine are informative and contribute in meaningful ways to addressing Ann Arbor development challenges.

By the way, you may have heard I've joined the Equitable Ann Arbor (EA2) Land Trust Board. We have a meeting in the next two weeks with U-M's CFO office to review our proposal for employee housing on North Campus, also based on TOD-scaled densities. U-M properties on Fuller and Plymouth roads are part of this scope, as well as the Huron River corridor. We are proposing mixed use housing developments from 1,200 to 4,800 housing units for U-M employees.

Maybe there is a way for EA2 to collaborate in areas where the City and U-M have adjacent property interests, as we are also proposing regular integration sessions with their long range land use plan project leadership.

Brett, would you please share this addendum and communication on it with the Planning Commission? It can be referenced publicly here:

<https://sites.google.com/view/annarborworkingpapers/>

Yours for equity-based sustainable development,

Brian
Ward 3
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On 04/05/2023 5:55 PM EDT BRIAN CHAMBERS <brchambers@comcast.net> wrote:

Mayor Taylor, City Administrator Dohoney, and City Council:

With the upcoming Comprehensive Land Use Plan project, I thought an exercise on Ann Arbor's capacity for increased housing through zoning reform would be of interest. I used the A2Zero plan, TC1 Districts, and Ann Arbor's historical population growth over the past 80 years, as the paper's foundation.

The paper identifies low, moderate and high growth scenarios, and the changes to zoning that could accommodate each scenario over a 40 to 80 year period. It is organized with a Preface, Executive Summary, and a Discussion section, for ease of reading.

In addition, Sarah Lorenz (on copy), co-founder of Equitable Ann Arbor (EA2) Land Trust, wrote a section on the 'market barriers to housing production via re-zoning single family districts for gentle density,' as a complement to the working paper.

While many have advocated for greater housing density, it has been apparent that the scale of housing needed, or feasible for Ann Arbor, has not been explicitly discussed, let alone the market barriers that need to be addressed beyond zoning ordinances themselves.

If we happen to meet individually, I would be happy to discuss it further, or please feel free to respond back individually.

Brett, would you please forward this email and working paper to the Planning Commission, on my behalf?

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours for equity-based, sustainable development,

Brian Chambers
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Addendum

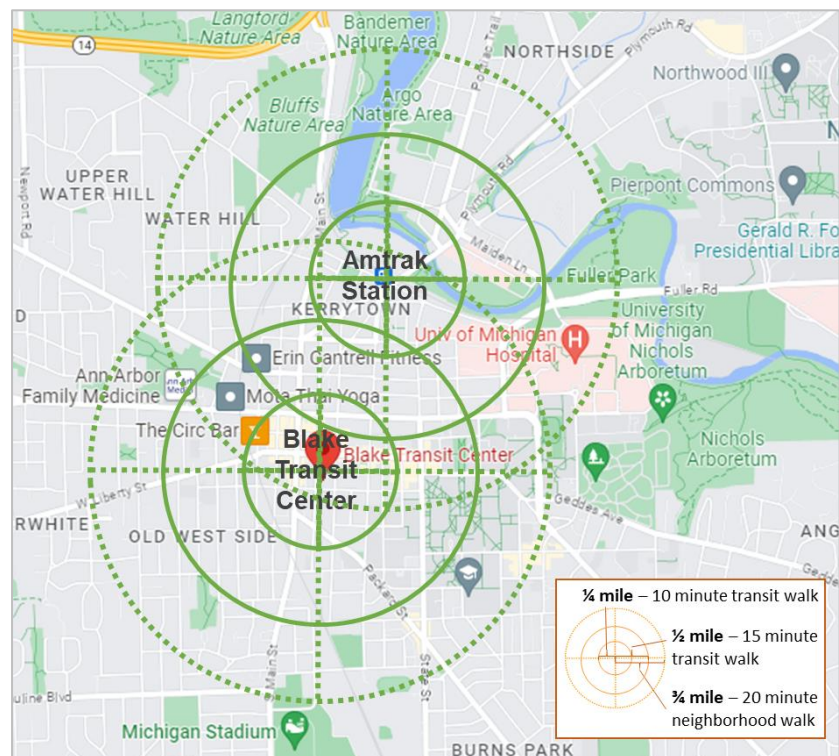
Downtown Center and Core Housing Targets for Transit Oriented Development

Core downtown development based on Transit Oriented Development (TOD) best practices, with walkable neighborhoods, warrants further breakdown. Table 5, “Summary of Transit-based Zoning for Additional Housing and Population Capacity” didn’t decompose the downtown core housing density to adjust for the existing downtown residential population. Hence, the additional housing capacity needed to meet the 10,000 downtown core population for the scale to support the two transit centers, the AAATA Blake Transfer Center and the Amtrak train station, need to be detailed. See Figure 11, below.

The logic is that requisite TOD housing densities need to be within $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ mile radius around the transit centers.^{lxvi} In Figure 11, the inner circle is a $\frac{1}{4}$ mile, and the intermediate one is a $\frac{1}{2}$ mile radius. The dashed outer circle around each is the 15-20 minute neighborhood scale walkability radius of $\frac{3}{4}$ mile.^{lxvii} TOD housing densities increase from the $\frac{1}{2}$ mile to the $\frac{1}{4}$ mile radius.

TOD Best Practices include scale-based housing targets for the areas around each transit center (see Table 3).^{lxviii} With two higher volume transit centers, Blake and Amtrak, there is an argument that that Ann Arbor is of regional importance, and hence the higher housing density of 50 units / acre. Twenty-five units / acre would presumably be a lower floor for minimal targets, or at least for those between the $\frac{1}{4}$ mile and $\frac{1}{2}$ mile radii.

Figure 11. AAATA Blake Transit Center and Amtrak Station Walkability Radii



For the TC1 Districts a mid-point between 15 - 25 units per acre was used (see Table 4). One can also argue that Ann Arbor is more than a 'village' in scale, hence the inclusion of 25 units / acre. Therefore, for the downtown core and center based transit centers housing density targets, an average between the two densities of 50 and 25 units per acre can also be used, see Table 10.

If we use the Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority (DDA) district size of 271 acres,^{lxix} or 0.45 square miles, one would target just over 10,163 housing units, as shown in Table 10.

The DDA District is used as a convenient sizing designation for the TOD-based housing capacity targets in Ann Arbor’s downtown area. However, of the 271 total acres, 80 acres are public rights-of-way,

Table 10. Downtown Core Center TOD Housing Targets

	Target Number of Housing Units
	DDA 271 Acres
25 units / acre	6,775
50 units / acre	13,550
Average	10,163

Ann Arbor's Capacity for Increased Housing through Zoning Reform

72 acres are in public use, 42 acres contain UM properties, and approximately 1/3 of the DDA District is contained within an historic district.

If the current estimate based on the downtown population of 5,080, and 1.5 people per downtown household is used,^{lxx} it derives a total of 3,387 existing housing units in the downtown area. By these calculations, we are short ~6,775 additional units of housing in the downtown around the Blake transit center and Amtrak station. The 1.5 average persons per unit for the downtown is skewed by the high portion of student housing. Ann Arbor averages 2.2 persons per housing unit overall across the City.

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{Target \# of housing units (10,163) - existing units of housing (3,387)} \\ &= \text{balance needed (6,775) [with rounding]} \end{aligned}$$

So, for 6,775 units of additional housing in the 67 blocks (0.45 square miles) of the DDA district, approximately 100 additional housing units / block on average are needed for the requisite minimal TOD-based density in the downtown areas surrounding the Blake and Amtrak transit stations.

$$6,775 / 67 = \sim 100 \text{ housing units / city block}$$

6,775 units of additional downtown housing represents a lower bound if the Transit Oriented Development objectives are to be met over time. If housing is developed that isn't targeted to students, it may be that the average of 2.2 people / housing unit, the Ann Arbor average, is more appropriate.

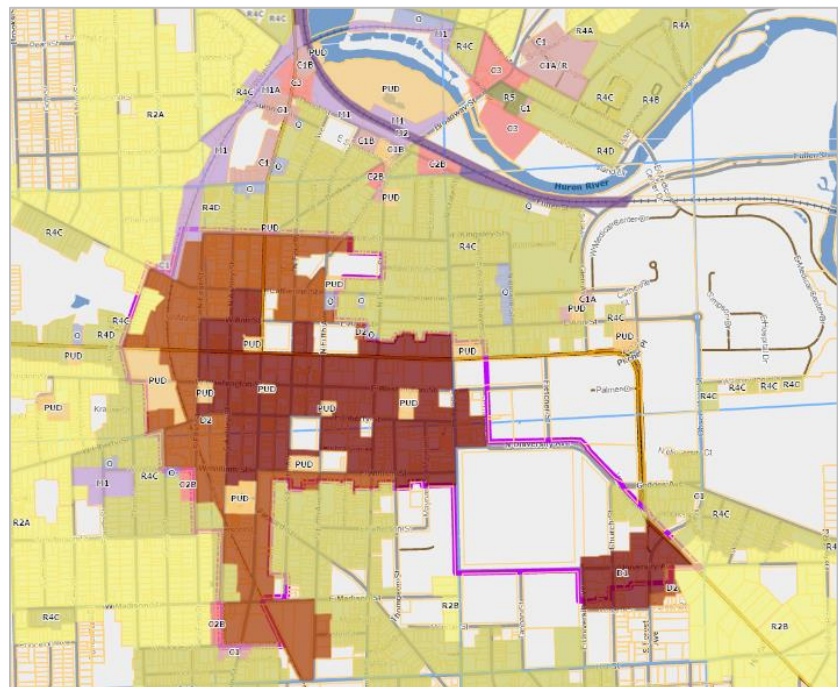
As already stated, a number of downtown blocks are designated Historic Districts.^{lxxi} Therefore, this additional housing density needs to occur outside of these Historic Districts, and would therefore also need to occur outside of the D1 and D2 districts, as there are R2, R4 and other zoning districts available.^{lxxii} See Figures 12 & 13.

The zoning districts in the downtown area, excluding the Historic Districts, will presumably be up for re-evaluation during the ongoing Ann Arbor Comprehensive Land Use Plan project.

While the Historic District designations do present

constraints to additional housing, they also provide a form of settled debate for what downtown areas are available for additional housing densities. Parking lots and parking structures, with A2Zero's emphasis on reduced vehicular miles traveled, also represent options for siting denser housing developments. The sites include the West Ann Street structure, the Ann & Main Street parking lot, and the Liberty Square

Figure 12. Ann Arbor Downtown Zoning Districts – the darker shaded ones are D1 and D2 Districts



parking structure between Washington and Liberty. Housing could be built on these locations, with the existing parking underneath.

The Library Lane structure was also built to support additional housing, but needs to adhere to the 2018 Charter Amendment that restricts the types of development that can occur.

Any development needs to conform to the Charter amendment, that states it shall be *‘retained in public ownership, in perpetuity, and developed as an urban central park and civic center commons known as the “Center of the City.”’*^{lxxiii}

A land-lease model would need to be used, as the City cannot currently sell the property. However, the Council of the Commons also did not endorse housing development within their interpretation of a civic center commons. In May of 2023, the Council of the Commons voted to disband itself, so any planning or programming for that site now is managed by the Ann Arbor Parks Department.^{lxxiv}

The City of Ann Arbor has also designated a set of City owned properties for affordable housing and mixed use development.^{lxxv} The scenarios evaluated across these sites that achieves Council’s goals to include a land lease and a mixture of housing types and incomes, could attain a total of 1,612 housing units, with 675 units at 80% AMI and below, and 937 market rate units.^{lxxvi}

Ann Arbor’s Comprehensive Land Use Plan project will need to address these and other trade-off analyses associated with addressing Ann Arbor’s need for more housing affordability in the downtown area.^{lxxvii}

It may be that the Historic District standards, goals and objectives get revisited, to assure that the preservation of those buildings isn’t so constrained as to circumvent additional housing, and to provide property owners an ability to upgrade the buildings for the best energy technologies for sustainability.

The city has recently experienced significant increases to student housing by developers in the downtown area. Due to the seasonal fluctuation of students, it has been difficult for retail establishments to thrive, especially since downtown businesses have fewer on-site workers, as many are still working remotely. Increasing the economic stability in the downtown will require more housing for permanent Ann Arbor residents.

A TOD-based scale for the downtown housing assures that Ann Arborites will be more likely to function car-free for work, essential services and entertainment, with reduced congestion and better climate performance for the City of Ann Arbor.

Figure 13. Ann Arbor Historic Districts

