

MEMORANDUM



TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Brett Lenart, Planning Manager
Michelle Bennett, Principal Planner
DATE: December 16, 2025
SUBJECT: Future Land Use Map's Relationship to Rezoning

Planning Commission Request

During the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (Comp Plan) process, some residents have raised concerns about residential areas that are proposed to abut denser areas, for example, residential next to transition or hub. They have expressed apprehension that unwanted density will encroach on their neighborhoods through a series of rezonings over time. In response, the Planning Commission (Chair) requested that staff outline the following:

- The relationship between the Future Land Use Map and zoning implementation
- How staff treats rezoning requests prior to a newly adopted Unified Development Code (UDC)

Staff recognizes the benefit of clear public communication about how the Future Land Use Map guides zoning updates and how rezoning requests are evaluated.

1. Future Land Use

The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) is a Comp Plan tool to graphically illustrate the plan's vision. It provides a picture of how the plan recommendations could develop over time. As such a tool, it will be used to consider future changes to the City's Zoning (Michigan Planning Enabling Act 125.3833 Sec 33d). Chapter 5 of the Comp Plan explains how the FLUM and a future Zoning Map are linked.

Unlike a Zoning Map, the FLUM is not envisioned on a parcel-by-parcel basis. The broader land use categories in the Future Land Use Map will be the basis for updating and applying the zones in the Unified Development Code (UDC). It is not designed to be a one-to-one translation of the FLUM to the new Zoning Map; it is likely that each land use category will result in multiple zones or modifications as implemented. For example, the "transition" land use category in the FLUM shows which corridors to upzone to align with The Ride's goals for improved bus service and frequency. It does not yet detail the exact boundaries or dimensional standards, which may vary depending on the section of the corridor and the proposed realization of land uses along the transit routes. This is the exacting, time-consuming, and necessary work done with the Zoning Map. The zoning phase occurs after plan adoption, and is the proper stage to refine boundaries, evaluate transitions, and address context-specific questions raised by residents.

2. Zoning Map and Text

The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (PA 110 of 2006 as amended) states that “a zoning ordinance shall be based upon a plan.” Once the Comp Plan and its Future Land Use Map are approved, they are implemented through the zoning map and text amendments to the UDC. Updating the zoning map and text will require examining existing conditions and contextual factors to define boundaries, uses, and dimensional standards for each zone citywide. This refinement occurs during the zoning phase, where block-level or corridor-level adjustments are made to ensure logical transitions and alignment with the adopted plan.

Until this update is adopted, the current Zoning Map boundaries and regulations continue to apply. For the creation of new zones, staff will look at existing zoning requirements, existing conditions, and Comp Plan goals, strategies, and actions to draft language that meets the plan’s proposed direction and values. Considering that the Comp Plan has taken 2.5 years to get to the adoption phase, it is likely the UDC update will take years to adopt.

Adopting the Zoning Map is an amendment to the UDC that requires a public hearing with Planning Commission and City Council approval. If approved, the Zoning Map will be updated to reflect the changes, and the new regulations will apply.

Notifications

Because these amendments are subject to a public hearing, then notifications are required to be posted in the Washtenaw Legal News for the public hearing. When new zones are written, then properties within 300 feet of properties proposed for rezoning will be notified by mail.

3. Process for Rezoning

Petitioner Initiated

In addition to a city-initiated rezoning, property owners may request a rezoning. This is a request to change the zoning classification of their property to another. While the UDC is being updated, requests for rezonings will continue to be submitted. In this period, the UDC will inevitably not perfectly match the desired direction of the Future Land Use Map. Approvals will continue to be based on the “criteria” below from the current rezoning process, however, the Future Land Use Map will also be consulted for decision-making. The rezonings process is deliberate, criteria-based, and not an automatic entitlement; staff review remains required. While the final decision will be context-specific at the time of the review, the Future Land Use Map will carry some weight in how a property is rezoned.

The UDC writes that the purpose of a rezoning is to address an error, a change in municipal policy, or changing conditions in an area or the municipality (UDC Section

5.29.10). In this case, one of the municipal policies that would be referenced is the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Changing conditions will increase with time from an approved plan. Staying as consistent as possible with the plan's policy recommendations would encourage a regular five-year update to the Comp plan.

All rezoning requests must be reviewed by the Planning Commission and determined by City Council. Petitioners submit an application for consideration. Staff reviews the application and makes a recommendation for approval or denial based on the following:

1. The extent to which the zoning/rezoning request is necessary?
2. How will the zoning/rezoning affect the public welfare and property rights of persons located in the vicinity?
3. How will zoning/rezoning be advantageous to the city?
4. Will the particular location meet the convenience and service requirements of potential users or occupants?
5. Any changed or changing conditions in a particular area, or in the municipality generally which may have bearing on the proposed zoning/rezoning?
6. Other circumstances and factors which will further justify the requested zoning/rezoning?

As a part of any UDC update, these "criteria" may also be updated.