

Subject: Adams Proposal vs April 28th Staff Proposal

From: Will Leaf

Sent: Saturday, April 25, 2026 10:34 AM

To: Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>

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Dear Planning Commissioners,

Attached are some suggestions for the meeting this Tuesday.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1IZ5uJhiYbwjL0mVlaomZO9XlyM6vjnS88LXlrmv3Eak/edit?usp=sharing>

Thank you for your continued public service.

Will

Dear Planning Commissioners,

Thank you for your thoughtful comments at the most recent working session. In the coming meetings, I encourage you to discuss, debate, revise, and pass the [execution proposal](#) from Commissioner Adams. The competing April 28 [staff proposal](#) has some good suggestions, like hosting a Break the Code event, but it also has several serious problems:

1. It schedules the implementation of the Residential category ahead of the Transition category.
2. It includes several steps that are redundant or already settled by the Comprehensive Plan.
3. It has no deadlines or timelines.

At the March meeting, some commissioners had reservations about a few aspects of the Adams proposal, including:

1. Whether Transition areas near Hub should be included in the first batch of reforms.
2. Whether the Levine memos should be used as guidance documents.

I encourage you to talk through these issues and, if needed, modify the proposal. If you do not want to include the Transition “halo” areas in the first batch of changes, you could instead simply resolve to implement the Transition category after Hub. If you do not want to use the Levine memos, you could provide alternative guidance to ensure that the new district does not include numerous TC1-style design restrictions that make it harder, rather than easier, to build housing compared to the districts being replaced.

Problems with the Staff Proposal

1. It puts the implementation of the Residential category ahead of the Transition category.

This ordering would be a mistake, because the experience of other cities suggests that there is far more potential for new housing in the Transition category than the Residential one. I go over the evidence in my [previous comment](#) on this topic. The Transition changes could yield hundreds or thousands of units in the next five years. Residential changes would probably only yield dozens.

At the April 14 working session, staff justified putting Residential first by [saying](#) that doing so would increase the variety of housing types in the city. Staff did not provide any evidence for this claim. There is no reason to think that the city has relatively too many apartment buildings and not enough duplexes and triplexes. We have a severe housing shortage, and delaying reform to pursue side goals like increasing the percentage of

units that are duplexes or triplexes, would ignore the severity and urgency of the housing shortage.

2. It includes several steps that either duplicate each other or repeat issues already settled by the Comprehensive Plan.

For example, the Comprehensive Plan already says that the Hub Category should be implemented by one zoning district ([p. 117](#)).

New mixed-use district that permits greater densities and land uses to mimic an urban downtown format with improved safety and functionality for non-motorized users

Reopening the question of how many districts to create will delay the rezoning process unnecessarily.

Other steps are duplicates of each other. It is not necessary to “Conduct permitted uses analysis of underlying districts” as a separate step from “Develop permitted use tables.” Instead it is better to ask staff to start drafting the districts, and staff will necessarily review the existing permitted uses while doing so.

To move with “deliberate urgency,” to use Commissioner Norton’s phrase, the commission should not endorse a plan laying out redundant and already settled steps.

3. It has no deadlines or timelines.

If you approve a plan with lots of preliminary steps that duplicate later ones, with no deadlines, it is highly unlikely that the Comprehensive Plan will be implemented in the 1-3 years called for in the Implementation Matrix ([p. 136](#)).

In contrast, the Adams proposal provides a logical sequence of reforms, a deadline for the first batch of zoning changes, and important procedural recommendations. I hope you will endorse it soon, so that you can move on to creating new zoning districts that will allow for the construction of new homes that will bring down rents and house prices. If you move with deliberate urgency, you can help thousands of people lead better lives.

Public Engagement

In May, I recommend sending out a postcard to the entire city saying that the Planning Commission will begin implementing the Comprehensive Plan in the coming years with a link to a project page for CLUP implementation. The page could offer an email signup, so staff can notify interested members of the public whenever there is an important meeting.