

Subject: Request to Extend Downtown Core (Hub/D1) Designation to Include N State St and East Ann St Corridor

From: Jim Lewis

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Subject: Request to Extend Downtown Core (Hub/D1) Designation to Include N State St and East Ann St Corridor

Hello,

As a downtown resident myself, I'm requesting that the Downtown Core (Hub/D1) boundary be extended one block east—past N Division Street to N State Street—along E Ann Street and adjacent parcels during the upcoming zoning revision.

This adjustment would correct a long-standing inconsistency between how this corridor functions and how it is zoned. The case is both technical and policy-aligned:

1. The Current Boundary is a Planning Artifact, Not a Reflection of Present-Day Urban Form

The “Transition (D2)” strip between Division and State was drawn when that block contained low-intensity housing. Today it is fully urbanized—multi-unit student housing, institutional buildings, and commercial storefronts. The street wall, traffic volume, and infrastructure mirror downtown conditions west of Division. Maintaining D2 here creates an arbitrary regulatory step-down that no longer serves its buffering purpose.

2. It Advances the City's Adopted Goals on Housing Supply and Climate

Ann Arbor's Comprehensive Housing Analysis and A2ZERO Plan both call for increased housing density in walkable, transit-served locations.

- This corridor lies within a five-minute walk of the Diag, the Transit Center, and multiple bus routes.
- Extending D1 eastward would immediately enable hundreds of new beds or units without new infrastructure investment or sprawl.
- Each additional downtown resident displaces a commuter and supports the City's greenhouse-gas-reduction targets.

3. The “Transition” Label No Longer Protects a Neighborhood

East of Division there are no single-family districts left to buffer—only University and multifamily buildings. Keeping these parcels in D2 does not safeguard neighborhood character; it simply constrains the most sustainable housing market in the region.

4. Economic and Fiscal Efficiency

- Higher taxable value per acre: D1 parcels generate several times the revenue of D2 parcels while demanding no new public services.
- Business vitality: More residents downtown sustain retail and food service, stabilizing the City's tax base against remote-work-driven office decline.
- Public realm leverage: D1 redevelopment funds streetscape, stormwater, and mobility improvements already envisioned in the Capital Improvements Plan.

5. Historic Character Can Be Protected Through Design, Not Under-Zoning

Where contributing historic structures exist, façade retention and design-compatibility standards can ensure continuity without freezing entire blocks under obsolete envelopes. Preservation and density are compatible—multiple downtown examples (Liberty Lofts, Kingsley Condos) prove it.

6. Regional Competitiveness and Long-Term Vision

Peer university cities—Madison, Boulder, Iowa City—have already up-zoned their core-campus interfaces to absorb demand. Ann Arbor's failure to do so forces students and workers into peripheral neighborhoods, driving up rents citywide.

Expanding D1 to State St aligns the zoning map with how the city actually operates—a continuous downtown fabric from Main St to State St.

Requested Action

Include the E Ann Street corridor between Division and State St within the Downtown Core (D1) boundary in the forthcoming zoning map. This change fulfills Council's stated commitments to:

- Expand housing supply downtown,
- Reduce vehicle dependence,
- Strengthen the fiscal base, and
- Align zoning with contemporary land use realities.

I appreciate your comments and feedback. Thank you for your consideration.

Jim Lewis