
From: Watson, Chris <CWatson@a2gov.org>

Sent: Monday, August 18, 2025 12:58 PM

To: Lenart, Brett <BLenart@a2gov.org>; Bennett, Michelle <MBennett@a2gov.org>

Cc: Disch, Lisa <LDisch@a2gov.org>

Subject: Letter on Transition Category

Hi Brett and Michelle,

After consultation with CM Disch, I wanted to share this letter with you with my thoughts on Transition and in support of the "New Residential" Category. It is okay for you to share it with Planning Commission, in whole or in part, as you see fit.

Thanks,

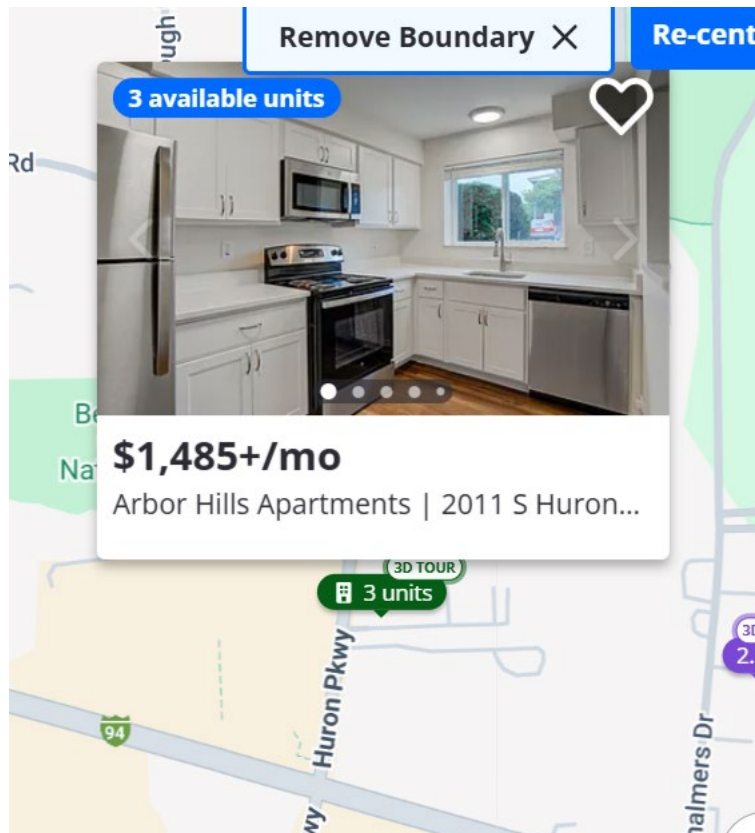
Chris

Dear Planning Staff,

One of the fundamental goals of the CLUP is its commitment to affordability and to providing a wider set of housing options for people at all stages of their life. Council spoke on this in its resolutions related to TC1 zoning, which has given some inspiration to the “Transition” Future Land Use category. I have been following Planning Commission’s discussion of how to treat areas that form “islands” of R3 and R4 and currently provide greater density than that afforded by “Residential.” I have heard the concern among planning commissioners that keeping these areas out of the transition category would result in a downzoning. It’s important to recognize that a lot of the R3 and R4 areas identified are either naturally occurring affordable housing or already contain housing typologies that we hope to see more of... rowhouses, townhouses, and condos... that have been attractive to first time buyers and elderly people looking to downsize.

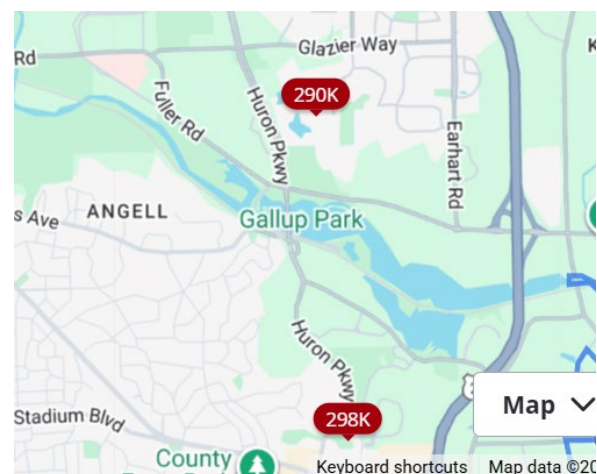
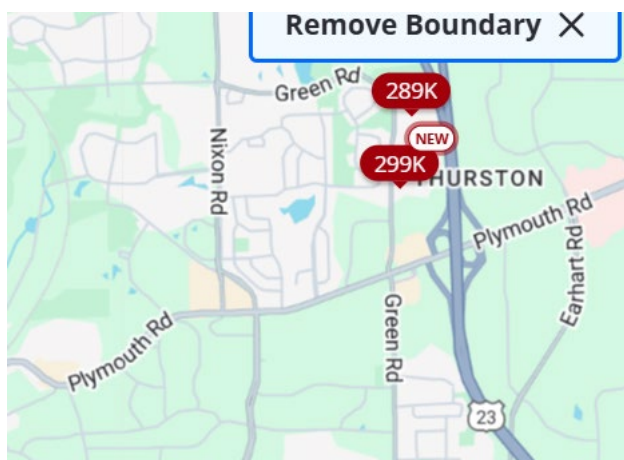
Speaking for myself as a Ward 2 Councilmember and lifelong Ward 2 resident, I support Staff’s proposal to assign these sites to the “New Residential” category, rather than to “Transition.” Some properties within these sites are among the most affordable properties, to rent and even to buy, in Ward 2. In addition, some sites consisting of condos, like Chapel Hill, are covered by HOAs and are unlikely to be redeveloped. Others, along Washtenaw, are the kind of aging multifamily buildings that have affordable rents. This makes them susceptible to development pressure if a new potential owner wanted to demolish a 3-4 story building for a much larger one that could charge new building rents. I know that these areas are racially and socioeconomically diverse from growing up here and from knocking these neighborhoods and buildings. I don’t think moving these areas into transition is necessary to achieve affordability and equity goals, they are already some of the most affordable in Ward 2.

Let’s take the example of the Arbor Hills Apartments in Site 7. According to Zillow, shown below, there are multiple listings for two-bedroom apartments, ranging from about \$1500 to \$1700.



Above shows \$1485/mo for a 2 bed one bath. This is notably affordable when a one bedroom affordable unit at 80% AMI is \$1700/mo at the Legacy downtown. I can specifically vouch for the diversity of this building, having knocked doors there.

The relative affordability within these sites also applies to properties for sale. Using Zillow with the filter of “houses for sale under \$300,000” only gives 4 results in Ward 2. They are all in areas under consideration for transition, seen below.



These 4 listings are in Chapel Hill (Site 4), Geddes Lake (Site 6) and Brentwood Sq (Site 7, north of the Huron Parkway and Washtenaw intersection).

I am only speaking on sites in Ward 2 because I know them well. It is possible this applies to other areas in the list of sites being considered. I urge CPC to support staff's proposal assigning sites 2-8 to new residential.

I am of course in favor of denser housing and a more diverse set of housing options, but moving these areas to a denser category is unlikely to gain the City anything, and in fact, risks some naturally affordable housing that is also a goal of the plan. There is precedent for this type of thinking within Comp. Plans elsewhere, Charlottesville broke out some parts of the General Residential land use area as "Sensitive Community Areas," which allow for "tools to mitigate displacement within existing residential neighborhoods that have high proportions of populations that may be sensitive to displacement." Areas that provide multifamily within the residential land use portion of the map could be made more sensitive to displacement if they are moved into the Transition category, which allows much more density than currently exists at these sites. It's my experience that many of these "islands" of multifamily within residential are among the most socioeconomically and racially diverse within the City, and that is why I felt it necessary to give my perspective on the current discussion of the transition category.

Chris Watson

Ann Arbor City Council Member, Ward 2