

Implementing The Comprehensive Plan

From Principles to Policies

*12-09-2025 | Jonathan Levine and Noah Kazis
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What Principles Should Guide Rezoning?

1. Health and safety: Don't allow hazards or nuisances anywhere.
2. Abundance: Housing and commercial space should be abundant, and restrictions are justified by mitigation of real harms
3. Quick action with iteration

4. Terraced approach



Image from [insideasiatours.com](https://www.insideasiatours.com)

A Principled Rezoning Process

1. Start with one zone for hub and transition (or one for hub, one for transition)
2. Develop zoning specifics for the future-land-use category based on the general principles in the CLUP
3. Develop self-adjusting text-based rules to provide for different desired outcomes in that future-land-use category
4. Only where text-based self-adjusting rules can't produce desired results, create new zone with the minimum rules needed to produce the desired outcome

Self-Adjusting Rules Exist Throughout the UDC

TC-1 Height Limits	Section 5.17.7
Setbacks Determined by Average within 100 feet	Section 5.18.5
Noise Standards Determined by Average Intensity	Section 5.13.4B.3
Fraternity/Sorority Screening Adjacent to Single-Family or Duplex	Section 5.16.1E.1.d
Wireless Communication Facilities Setbacks Determined by Tower Heights	Section 5.16.5D.2.v
Mobile Food Vending Services Excluded from Sight Distance Triangle Requirements	Section 5.16.3H

Self-adjusting standards elsewhere

Building heights tied to street widths (Washington DC)

Setbacks tied to building heights (Iowa City)

Setbacks tied to lot widths (San Diego)

Side wall heights tied to neighboring wall planes (Raleigh)

Why Self-Adjusting Text-Based Rules?

- Force ourselves to articulate the principle at work
- Minimize arbitrary line drawing and its associated politics
- Ensure that wherever the principle holds, the standards kick in equally
- Self-adjusting over time (if linked to built environment)

Possible starting points for a terraced approach

	1. Apply existing zones (possibly modified)	2. Apply custom-made mixed-use zones
3. One zone per category (hub, transition, then residential)	Alternative A	Alternative B
4. One zone spanning high- potential areas in hub and transition*	Alternative C	Alternative D

*Downtown; student neighborhoods near Central Campus and Michigan Medicine; commercial and light industrial areas)

A Principled Process in Ann Arbor

Apply the terraced approach:

1. Start with A, B, C, or D
2. Extend zone(s) across Hub and Transition areas, modifying with self-adjusting rules as necessary
3. Can't resolve anomaly with self-adjusting rules → New zone
4. Repeat for residential with a more restrictive starting zone

Why Start with a Single Zone*?

- To limit the scope and complexity of the reform, allowing for a faster response to the housing shortage.
- To set a baseline that other Hub and Transition zones can be derived from.

*or single for hub and single for transition

Option 1: Modify and Extend an Existing District

Possible Districts to Modify

1. D1/D2

- a. Remove character overlays and make height limits self adjusting
- b. Rename for use outside of Downtown

2. TC1

- a. Remove maximum building widths, transparency requirements, and other barriers to new construction.
- b. Remove restrictions limiting district to Transit Corridors

3. C1/A

- a. Rename and replace FAR maximums with self-adjusting height limit

Option 2: Create a New District

Summary of Changes:

1. Create a [purpose statement](#) for a new MU1 Contextual Mixed -Use district that replaces several mixed -use and special purpose districts.
2. Update the [Permitted Use Table](#). The MU1 district permits all uses in the districts it replaces but not heavy industrial uses.
3. Update the [Dimensional Standards Table](#). The MU1 district has self-adjusting height and setback rules near Residential districts.
4. Remove the cap on [unrelated persons per dwelling unit](#) in mixed-use districts. Maximum occupancy will still be limited by Ann Arbor's [minimum space and facilities requirements](#) and the [overcrowding section](#) of Michigan's Housing Law.
5. Remove or replace references to obsolete districts.

Heavy Industrial Uses

There are currently two areas of the city zoned M2 heavy industrial:



North Main

Categorized as Transition



Hoover and Greene

Categorized as University of Michigan