

Subject:

10.-2 Ann Arbor Community Land Trust Amendment Request

From: Brian Chambers**Sent:** Tuesday, August 19, 2025 11:19 AM**To:** Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>; Taylor, Christopher (Mayor) <CTaylor@a2gov.org>; City Council <CityCouncil@a2gov.org>; Dohoney Jr., Milton <MDohoney@a2gov.org>; Lenart, Brett <BLenart@a2gov.org>; Carolyn Lusch <carolyn.lusch@smithgroup.com>; jamie@interface-studio.com; Oliver Kiley <oliver.kiley@smithgroup.com>; Stacey <Stacey@interface-studio.com>; Bennett, Michelle <MBennett@a2gov.org>; Giant, Joseph <JGiant@a2gov.org>; Higgins, Sara <SHiggins@a2gov.org>; Delacourt, Derek <DDelacourt@a2gov.org>; Manor, Courtney <CManor@a2gov.org>**Cc:** Sarah Lorenz**Subject:** 10.-2 Ann Arbor Community Land Trust Amendment Request

Chair and Planning Commissioners, Mayor, Council and City Administration:
(please share with the Commission)

Thank you for your time on this important matter for improving Ann Arbor's ability to develop and foster more community-based affordable housing now.

I want to emphasize why the Land Trust's amendment must move forward now—not years from now when the Comprehensive Plan rewrite is complete.

Staff's recommendation to deny our petition rests on three main points: that a 1,700 square foot ADU conflicts with the definition of "accessory," that deed restrictions are unenforceable, and that density changes should wait for the Comp Plan. Respectfully, we see these differently.

First, on size and scale. Staff worry that our homes would blur the line between accessory and primary. In practice, our Annie and Townie models are smaller than many new single-family homes being built in Ann Arbor today. They mirror the beloved two-story homes of old Ann Arbor—well within neighborhood character—while avoiding the large, luxury-scale houses that are rapidly replacing modest ones.

Second, on deed restrictions. Staff caution that the City lacks the ability to enforce permanent affordability. That's exactly why community land trusts exist. Nationwide, CLTs in places like Madison, Burlington, and Durham have stewarded thousands of permanently affordable homes for decades. Enforcement is not a burden on city staff—it's built into the mission and governance of the Land Trust. Our board, with homeowner representation, is designed to ensure these homes remain affordable forever.

Third, on waiting for the Comprehensive Plan. We fully support the Comp Plan process, but we cannot wait until 2028 or 2029 for new zoning. Families are ready now—teachers, nurses, and young families who want to stay in Ann Arbor. Financing is ready now—banks and individual lenders support by-right projects but hesitate with rezoning. Without this amendment, these homes will not get built.

Staff also suggest **rezoning to R2A as the alternative**. But rezoning adds cost, time, and uncertainty—precisely what prevents small-scale affordable development from happening. A by-right

amendment, modest in scope, creates the predictability that makes financing and construction feasible.

We know Ann Arbor is not alone. **Portland and Oregon** now allow duplexes and triplexes on single-family lots. **Minneapolis** ended single-family-only zoning. **Cambridge** ties additional units directly to affordability. **Madison** has directly partnered with the Madison Area Community Land Trust to create permanently affordable homes in single-family neighborhoods. Each of these cities recognized that permanent affordability and gentle density can coexist with neighborhood character—and strengthen it.

This amendment is not about replacing long-term zoning reform. It is a bridge—a practical, immediate tool to unlock affordability today while larger reforms unfold.

Commissioners, tonight you have the chance to act. By approving an ordinance for permanently affordable housing, at scale, will ensure homes are delivered now—permanently affordable, rooted in our neighborhoods, and available to the people who make Ann Arbor strong.

Thank you.

Brian Chambers
3rd Ward, Ann Arbor