

**From:** Pat Zabawa <[patzabawa@gmail.com](mailto:patzabawa@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 04, 2021 4:46 PM  
**To:** Planning <[Planning@a2gov.org](mailto:Planning@a2gov.org)>  
**Subject:** Support for Proposed Zoning District for Transit Corridors

Hi Team,

I'm a Ann Arbor resident living at 402 E Jefferson St. :)

As per <https://www.a2gov.org/departments/planning/Pages/Proposed-Transit-Oriented-Zoning-District.aspx>, I want to write you that **I'm in support** of "increasing density along transit corridors" in order to keep housing demand supplied and prices from increasing as well as for walkability and environmental reasons.

Thanks for receiving feedback!

Pat Zabawa  
402 E Jefferson St  
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(215) 687-7127

**From:** Andre Pegeron <[andre.pegeron@gmail.com](mailto:andre.pegeron@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 05, 2021 3:47 PM  
**To:** Planning <[Planning@a2gov.org](mailto:Planning@a2gov.org)>  
**Subject:** T1 District Feedback

Hi Planning Commission,

My name is Andre Pegeron. I was born and raised in Ann Arbor. Currently I attend graduate school in California but one day hope to move back to my hometown. My parents, sister, and many of my closest friends still live there.

Mixed-use, dense zoning is critical to the growth and future of Ann Arbor. The best places I have ever lived (liveliest, happiest, best sense of community) have been walkable neighborhoods with a variety of housing options and nearby stores and restaurants. Unfortunately, not everyone can afford to live in downtown or Kerrytown, and many people don't want to live amid all of the students. Giving more of Ann Arbor this "bustling neighborhood" character would be a boon. As a side benefit, it is also environmentally responsible.

I am in favor of the T1 zoning proposal in general, but I have some specific requests to make sure it is as effective as possible.

First, don't limit its application too much. Instead of picking a single area and waiting a few years to see how it goes, we need to broadly apply it to as many relevant zones as possible. Any area that is not zoned for strict residential or heavy industry should be able to be "mixed use."

Next, don't limit what can be built too much. We want to make sure that the new zone encourages rather than limits development. For instance, I (and I assume many others) have no issue with light industrial uses that don't negatively impact the surrounding area. I have no issues with some buildings falling outside of the 50%-66% residential range, or some buildings being single-story.

Thanks for reading my feedback and I look forward to the continued improvement of Ann Arbor  
-Andre

**From:** Kate Johnson <[katejohnson0@gmail.com](mailto:katejohnson0@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** Saturday, February 06, 2021 10:07 AM

**To:** Planning <[Planning@a2gov.org](mailto:Planning@a2gov.org)>

**Subject:** T1 district feedback

Hello-

My name is Kate Johnson. I was born and raised in Ann Arbor, and I now work as a registered nurse at Mott Children's Hospital. I work with many people that would like to live in Ann Arbor, but can't afford to do so. I would love it if housing was more affordable for these people, and I think a big part of that is increasing the supply of housing. I also would love to have more mixed-use areas in the city, simply because those are always the most enjoyable and practical areas to spend time.

I appreciate what the commission is trying to do with the T1 district, but I feel that only allowing a few areas in the city to be mixed-use is short-sighted. I think that the commission should consider rezoning all of the commercial and light industrial districts to allow for more mixed-use development. In addition, it seems that it would make sense for the T1 district to allow for light industrial uses, as long as they don't pose a health risk to people living in the area.

I think beautiful things can happen in a city when more freedom is given to its people. I hope the commission considers making the above adjustments to the T1 district proposal to allow for more flexibility throughout Ann Arbor.

Thank you for your work,  
Kate Johnson

**From:** BRIAN CHAMBERS <[brchambers@comcast.net](mailto:brchambers@comcast.net)>

**Sent:** Sunday, February 07, 2021 11:42 PM

**To:** Planning <[Planning@a2gov.org](mailto:Planning@a2gov.org)>; DiLeo, Alexis <[ADiLeo@a2gov.org](mailto:ADiLeo@a2gov.org)>; Lenart, Brett <[BLenart@a2gov.org](mailto:BLenart@a2gov.org)>

**Cc:** CityCouncil <[CityCouncil@a2gov.org](mailto:CityCouncil@a2gov.org)>; Stults, Missy <[MStults@a2gov.org](mailto:MStults@a2gov.org)>; Delacourt, Derek <[DDelacourt@a2gov.org](mailto:DDelacourt@a2gov.org)>

**Subject:** Re: Effective Transit District Design - Transit Supported Development - vs - Transit Oriented Development Best Practices

I posted this to the Facebook Ann Arbor Politics forum, and made a few modifications to address the need for mixed-use development within the Transit Districts. Here it is so you have it in the updated version:

Planning Commission & Department Leaders:

cc: City Council

I am sending this note over my concern that the Transit Supported Development District work may be taking a shortsighted path.

My understanding is that the goal is for a more neighborhood friendly style of development that reduces dependency on cars, and the congestion they bring, while increasing the amount of housing units with walkable access to essential services in nearby mixed-use commercial units.

To do this, Transit Districts need to be based on 'transfer-nodes' and walkable neighborhoods, and housing / employment densities that enable financially sustainable bus-transit system growth.

It comes down to whether or not we want to encourage more density based on the actual design of our AAATA system, and its potential for growth, or we look to piece-meal denser growth in particular areas of Ann Arbor, that just happen to be along bus routes and high traffic areas.

My fear is the Transit District framework being developed would be more along the terms of the latter option. The sustainability, carbon reduction benefits and lower living costs that occur when housing development and transit-systems are jointly designed would be lost, or minimally cut short, if that happens.

Living costs are not reduced by increased housing supply, per se, but rather by the reduced need for individual auto-based transportation.

Housing costs will not go down with increased densities, as retail market rates will continue to be the dominant mode for new housing.

Removing car dependency is what lowers living costs from Transit District based development. This makes orienting development to the transit system a key priority, as well as establishing local services through mixed use development projects.

Essentially, Transit Oriented Development, as a best practice, considers the overall structure of the transit system, bus-based in Ann Arbor's case, and builds out greater housing densities at the transfer nodes, to augment growth in the way those transfer points facilitate passenger traffic to the main areas of employment.

A transfer node is where two or more bus-lines connect, and passengers can go from one line to the other (maybe crossing a street intersection). Ideally, the location and basis of the Transit Districts would be based on housing densities in a quarter mile radius around the main transfer nodes that have the most bus-lines using them, and connect to the downtown core-transfer center. For Ann Arbor, this downtown core transfer node is the Blake Transit Center, at the Y-Lot.

Development around the peripheral nodes would be for 1/4 mile walkable neighborhoods at each of the Transit District designated transfer nodes. Walkability is meant to mean for local essential services, shops, etc. This necessitates additional mixed-use commercial development within that 1/4 mile radius.

Tall buildings are *\*not\** necessary for effective Transit District design, and do not need to be specifically targeted - see the links below.

It would be a mistake to make the development of tall structures the basis of Transit Districts for Ann Arbor.

For example, for bus-based Transit Districts for village style development (appropriate for Ann Arbor's scale), the best practice recommendation is for 30 housing units / acre in the 1/4 mile radius around the transfer station. This 1/4 mile radius defines any one Transit District.

For the 1/2 mile square area that the 1/4 mile radius would total, a housing density of 4,800 housing units could be the target, based on global TOD best practices. Logically, one would start with the 1/4 mile areas where the most bus-lines cross.

Mixed use development is not required for every project in the Transit District, but for neighborhood walkability to services, it is *\*required\** within the 1/4 radius from each transfer node that establishes the Transit District.

Per TOD best practices, the 1/4 mile radius around the Blake Transit Center could be at 25 housing units / acre, or 8,000 per 1/2 square mile total for the downtown center district (see links below for 'Center' level Transit Districts).

If this scale is too high for Ann Arbor, I suggest meeting with AAATA and defining more appropriate density targets that would create a financially stable AAATA, that would no longer require significant subsidies through millages.

Effective Transit District policy establishes target densities, based on the location of bus transfer nodes, and fosters mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods in the immediate (i.e. walkable) vicinity.

For this to work, with the greatest public benefit, urban design level (meaning City-level) professional discipline and practices should be pursued to the highest degree.

Going forward with a Transit District plan that treats any one District designation in isolation from the overall bus system design would be a great disservice, and especially if it wasn't anchored around the transfer nodes, where bus lines cross, nor mixed-used, neighborhood scale development.

Below are some good reference sites on Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) that are worth considering on this matter. TOD strategies that take these best practices for public engagement, and tying housing density by transit nodes, are the most effective.

A \*high\* level of public engagement is encouraged for effective TOD systems, which you will see emphasized in the first link. One or two public hearings on this would be a low level of engagement.

Essentially, a public hearing needs to be done based on the location of \*each\* Transit District area, as well as a Citywide public hearing for the overall design of the multiple Transit Districts.

(1) This one makes a strong case for rigorous public engagement on any TOD decisions, hence the Land Use Update: [https://www.c40knowledgehub.org/s/article/How-to-implement-transit-oriented-development?language=en\\_US](https://www.c40knowledgehub.org/s/article/How-to-implement-transit-oriented-development?language=en_US)

(2) This one defines residential densities, in terms of units per acre by transit mode: <http://www.2030palette.org/residential-densities/>

(3) This one provides visual portrayals of the different density types of housing: <https://www.theurbanist.org/2017/05/04/visualizing-compatible-density/>

Taking the easy path, by ignoring the need for mixed use development across Transit Districts, and not locating the Transit District in ¼ mile radii around transfer nodes, is a disservice to Ann Arbor.

The public benefits possible with village scale Transit Oriented Development would not likely occur.

Thank you for your consideration, and best wishes on your efforts, as the future of Ann Arbor is critical to getting this done right.

Brian Chambers, Ph.D. (Ward 3)  
UofM '86 Masters of Urban Planning  
UofM '91 dual PhD in Urban, Technological and  
Environmental Planning and Business Administration

**From:** Katrina Folsom <[katrinajfolsom@gmail.com](mailto:katrinajfolsom@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** Monday, February 08, 2021 10:32 PM

**To:** Planning <[Planning@a2gov.org](mailto:Planning@a2gov.org)>; CityCouncil <[CityCouncil@a2gov.org](mailto:CityCouncil@a2gov.org)>

**Subject:** Transit support district

Hello,

I would like to weigh in with my support for the ordinance on tomorrow's council agenda meeting to create a T1 Transit Support District zone. I am not informed enough about heights, setbacks, etc. to comment knowledgeably on those specific items, but I support the zone in general and for all the identified major corridors.

This shift is long overdue and would significantly yet gradually improve the look and feel of our corridors, accessibility, housing availability, eco-friendliness, and more.

I live in Pittsfield Township because buying a home within Ann Arbor city limits was too expensive, so a) I am pro-housing so that the opportunity to live in town will be available to more people and b) I am well acquainted with the travails of the Washtenaw Ave (in particular) and Packard corridors.

I can SEE the Arborland sign from an upper bedroom of my house, but can I walk over there to do my errands? Not unless I want to cross major roads and then traipse through one parking lot after another, dodging cars, just to visit a few stores. And besides, there's no real appeal to hanging out there, whereas if it were a denser "urban village" of sorts with more people around, locals running into each other and chatting, possibly more local stores and restaurants instead of chains, it would be an actual *destination!* Our current corridors have none of the charm of downtown A2 and make the edges of town feel like Anywhere USA. It could be so much better!

This is just one reason I support the T1 designation. I also support it for the contribution it would make to the city's carbon neutrality goal, active lifestyles, car-free living for anyone who wants or needs it, and so on.

Please don't fall prey to facetious arguments about waiting until the next master planning process (reforming corridors has been part of the existing master planning conversation since 2009) or gathering more community input. Those are simply stall tactics from those who want to preserve the status quo. I view the ordinance as a reasonable, moderate approach and hope you will move forward in a timely manner.

Sincerely,  
Katrina Folsom  
2411 Dayton Dr  
Ann Arbor

**From:** Sanda Sai <[sandamong@gmail.com](mailto:sandamong@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 08, 2021 9:36 PM  
**To:** Planning <[Planning@a2gov.org](mailto:Planning@a2gov.org)>  
**Subject:** T1 District Feedback from A2 resident

Dear Ann Arbor Planning Commission

I'm Sanda Mong, a longtime Ann Arborite writing to you about the proposed T1 zoning district. I've also lived in Madison WI for a few years and I've been very fond of that city's initiative to make it more bike accessible and housing affordable; I've always wondered "Why can't Ann Arbor be like this?!". I'm glad to see Ann Arbor taking a step towards sustainability in our city and promoting alternative transportation modes.

Overall I think the proposed T1 zoning is a step in the right direction and it's very exciting to hear about potential changes that could make our city more travelable and provide more housing opportunities.

However, I have some reservations about the strict requirements around the narrow residential floor area requirements. From what I've seen, the 50% - 66% of the floor area of total development must be used for household living - this seems like a very narrow requirement for developers which could discourage development projects in new T1 districts. I would expect this requirement to be more flexible, such as a 30% - 70% - or not even have a maximum limit.

In addition, it seems like the T1 zone would only be applied to a few areas. We should apply this zone or another proposed mixed-use zone in all commercial and light industrial zones and allow light industrial uses. This is a way to address housing shortages while also promoting unique, interesting, neighborhoods and businesses which can further enhance the character of Ann Arbor.

Thanks!

Sanda



From: Carolyn Loh <[cgloh@wayne.edu](mailto:cgloh@wayne.edu)>  
Sent: Monday, February 08, 2021 5:10 PM  
To: Planning <[Planning@a2gov.org](mailto:Planning@a2gov.org)>  
Cc: Grand, Julie <[JGrand@a2gov.org](mailto:JGrand@a2gov.org)>; [radinaforcouncil@gmail.com](mailto:radinaforcouncil@gmail.com)  
Subject: Transit corridors

Dear Planning Commission members,

I'm writing to lend my support to moving forward quickly with the proposed mixed use corridor districts.

Ann Arbor is a desirable place to live and work. We feel the effects of this desirability through rising housing prices and increasing traffic congestion.

The most effective way to make Ann Arbor a more equitable place to live is to increase the supply of multi-family housing that's accessible through transit and/or non-motorized transportation to retail, jobs, services, and amenities.

Basically, it does not make economic, environmental, or moral sense to allow any more single story, single use commercial buildings to be built in the city, especially not along key transit corridors.

This is an exciting opportunity and I urge the planning commission to move forward on these proposals as soon as possible. I also urge the city council to adopt them as soon as possible.

Best wishes,

Carolyn Loh

Carolyn G. Loh  
Associate Professor  
Urban Studies and Planning  
Wayne State University

**From:** Kirk Westphal <[writetokirk@gmail.com](mailto:writetokirk@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** Monday, February 08, 2021 2:52 PM

**To:** Planning <[Planning@a2gov.org](mailto:Planning@a2gov.org)>

**Subject:** Public comment on corridor rezoning

Dear Commissioners and Staff:

Please find attached my thoughts about the corridor housing discussion. Thank you for your hard work and consideration of how urgent this issue is toward creating a more equitable and sustainable region.

Kirk



## Strip malls vs. apartments

*Will we finally stop suburbanization in the city limits and stand up for housing?*

By Kirk Westphal, former City Councilmember and Planning Commissioner

### Summary

The city must allow more rental housing to be built within its borders as soon as possible. We are preventing that from happening by leaving age-old rules on the books—zoning ordinances that are demonstrably racist, classist, unsafe, bad for the environment, inefficient, and financially self-defeating. These ordinances appear benign because they are so common to many cities. And like in many other cities, residents in Ann Arbor have been asking for many of them to change. It is long past time that we reform the worst of them.

One relatively simple and effective step is to stop the waste of land and airspace along our arterial road corridors and make that land available for higher-density, car-light housing mixed with other uses. It's well documented that this suburban-type development is at the root of much of the city's—and indeed the nation's—affordable housing, segregation, environmental, and financial problems.

The City Council has recently tasked our staff and Planning Commission with producing an ordinance that will help several major corridors in town. This is good, but I sense that the community's pervasive fear and "analysis paralysis" threatens to delay and narrow the scope of this process yet again, dragged down by influential residents and out-of-town actors who advocate for no change.

A lot of good work and reasoned critique has already taken place on the "Transit Support District" effort; mine is below. But conceptually I want to emphasize three points first:

- 1) There are many large societal and economic factors we cannot control as a city, however we do have the means to help make the community significantly more inclusive, safe, sustainable, and prosperous. Changing our zoning rules, including how our corridors function, will have a large and lasting impact on our future.
- 2) There is a serious ethical obligation for our appointed and elected officials to honor the community who has been asking for these reforms for so long. (Their wishes are expressed in official planning documents, see the end notes.) It is also worth considering the wishes of people who continue to be excluded from our community precisely because of our zoning rules.
- 3) The body of evidence for how destructive our current practices are is large and growing. We must err on the side of being courageous and timely; the potential harms of changing the rules "too much" are vanishingly small in comparison to the damage done every day due to our inaction.

### What areas are we looking to fix?

The places people are referring to when we say "corridors" tend to be areas of mostly single-story strip mall shopping centers and stand-alone stores or restaurants surrounded by parking outside of downtown, such

as on the commercial portions of Washtenaw Ave., South State St., Plymouth Rd., Maple Rd., Stadium Blvd., South Main St., Ann Arbor-Saline Rd., Packard St., Eisenhower Blvd., and Jackson Ave. In normal times, many of these places are served by frequent bus service. Many people say they want to make these areas even more “transit supportive,” meaning that enabling people to live in these areas with fewer cars will increase demand for transit even more, enabling more people to live car-light, in a virtuous cycle. (Personally, I think “transit supportive” is a confusing term because: the word “transit” excludes walking, biking, scooters, or rideshare; it begins distracting conversations about the type of transit we might or might not have in the future; and supporting transit is good but not really the main point, housing people near destinations is. Calling it “mixed use” will create complaints about buildings that don’t mix uses “enough.” How about “housing opportunity district”?)

I should emphasize that what’s wasteful about these areas is not the types of businesses we currently see. Many of us value the shopping options we have. Policy changes will not close down business or force existing buildings to change. Rather, new rules would require that new buildings follow a more urban, downtown-like form and result in even more options for conducting daily life closer to where people live.

By virtue of the fact that the strip malls and standalone shops common on these corridors are physically spread out (due to density restrictions) and have very large parking lots (due to parking minimums), they almost exclusively serve automobile owners. It is difficult to access these areas on foot or by transit given the large distances from residences and bus stops. (I know some of us shop via non-car means, but the vast majority do not.) Their layout causes injuries to drivers and non-drivers because they generate traffic and turning movements, they harm air and water quality significantly more than other land uses, and they directly and indirectly are discriminatory against the poor and handicapped.

Stated simply, people should have the opportunity to live above these businesses, especially those who do not want or cannot afford access to a personal automobile.

### **Why we need to interrupt what’s going on**

Right now, because of our regulations, there is little opportunity or motivation for property owners to incorporate housing in their properties in these areas—instead, we continue to see a continuous flow of projects that invest in the status quo. These areas remain locked in a self-perpetuating suburban development cycle; there’s little difference between Ann Arbor and the surrounding townships when driving along these corridors.

Even when the zoning offers opportunities for more dense use, current property owners often prefer not to take advantage of them. They may not have the knowledge or financing to do a mixed-use project, so they continue to opt to pursue development types that do not support the vision of the community. For the most part, we see strip malls being renovated and expanded, rather than transformed.

As each of these investments happen, new leases begin, which in turn reinforce the current undesirable form, and delay the fulfillment of the community’s vision for housing, walkability, safety, sustainability, and vibrancy—for decades at a time. This is unconscionable at a time when 80,000 people commute into town on a normal workday, a significant portion of whom would prefer to live closer to work and school. These are critical members of our community—teachers, health care professionals, restaurant workers, government employees, maintenance and tradespeople, students, among many others—who suffer invisibly from our self-created affordable housing crisis.

This is why these housing-exclusionary practices must be stopped legislatively via rezoning and not given an option to expand. Our ordinances must change, broadly and quickly.

### **What’s happening now?**

Thankfully, back in November, [the City Council voted](#) 10-1 to take definitive action. They directed the Planning Commission to draft ordinances to address common problems on our city’s corridors. Their resolution asks for a “transit-supported zoning district to increase housing density and options along major corridors” that examines the following: increasing allowable density, decreasing or eliminating parking requirements, requiring mixed uses, and reinforcing buffers near pre-existing residential areas. (City Council [rejected a competing resolution](#) that asked them to narrow their focus to the South State Street area only.)

The “additional public engagement” focusing on people “typically underrepresented in the planning process” that is also requested in Council’s resolution sounds like a good idea too. However, as with many feedback

processes, it often devolves into fueling unfounded fears about traffic, parking, and crime among people who already live here. If 12 years of comprehensive planning and outreach is still deemed insufficient, perhaps reaching out to commuters living in Pittsfield and Ypsilanti Townships would lend additional clarity to the needs of the daytime members of our community.

### **What specifically is being proposed?**

Staff and the planning commission have already made an excellent start to this process and drafted an ordinance, currently named "T1 Transit Support District." If a corridor were rezoned to this category, it would effectively stop new strip malls from being built and mandate a more urban street feel, where new buildings would be built up at the street with apartments above and parking behind. (There are very few current examples of this outside of downtown; the Panera at Plymouth and Murfin comes close, or imagine the Sweetwaters building at Plymouth and Green if it were up at the corner.) It would slowly create walkable neighborhoods as more property owners take advantage of building housing for people who need it. A term that my fellow planning commissioners and I came up with in 2009 was "urban villages."

The rules are [neatly summarized](#) and critiqued by former Planning Commissioner Scott Trudeau. I agree with much of his analysis.

### **My recommendations**

#### Geographic area

Rezone all C, O, ORL, RE, and R5 properties that are on or within ¼ mile of every major corridor to a new mixed-use, housing supportive district. This includes Washtenaw Ave., South State St., Plymouth Rd., Maple Rd., Stadium Blvd., South Main St., Ann Arbor-Saline Rd., Packard St., Eisenhower Blvd., and Jackson Ave.

#### Height

I largely agree with staff's recommendations. Those who have been following this debate might have heard that because the proposed ordinance doesn't recommend a height cap for a small number of areas (i.e., areas greater than 300 feet from existing residentially-zoned neighborhoods, like parts of Arborland, the corner of State and Eisenhower, etc.), it has already become fuel for anti-growth forces to scare the public about the "Manhattanization" of Ann Arbor. Personally, I appreciate variety in building heights as long as it's not a burden on unsuspecting neighbors; as currently drafted, the ordinance doesn't afford many ways for a tall building to cast a shadow (even in the winter) on a pre-existing house or apartment.

The rest of the heights are proposed to be limited to 80 feet, but it would be difficult to build that tall in many areas because of the setback rules: the ordinance proposes that for every foot in building height above 30 feet, the setback away from existing residential would have to increase by a foot (on top of the 30 feet setback already required). This creates a situation where buildings are limited in height according to the surrounding context and are pushed back from the neighbors. I think this makes the draft ordinance appropriately self-adjusting, for everything from State and Eisenhower to more intimate-feeling corridors like the northern part of Packard St. I think what would be an incredibly useful exercise in the next few months is to look at parcel maps to identify any potential problems, like the potential for slightly overscaled buildings in more tight-knit residential areas or setbacks that are "reset" because there's a small public street behind the property, and adjust accordingly.

#### Use

The proposed district standards reasonably reflect the need for residential development more than any other. I agree with staff's recommendation to mandate 50% residential uses on every parcel. However, I think some more flexibility should be provided around the current proposed cap of 66% residential in order to allow some 100% residential buildings (and therefore no first floor transparency) that are far from important nodes (see below).

Likewise, I think it's also appropriate to mandate commercial use on the first floor, but again I would argue that this should apply only within a certain radius of major intersections where concentrated walkable commercial activity has the best opportunity for success. I recommend eliminating the residential "cap" to allow purely residential uses on corridors that are further (say, 400 feet or more?) from high-traffic corners/nodes, e.g., if rowhouses or a brownstone neighborhood is desired. I think this should align with an elimination of the transparency requirement for the same distance from a node.

I strongly believe one use criteria should be more stringent. We should take a lesson from downtown and prohibit inactive uses (banks and offices) from occupying more than 20% of the street frontage within a short radius (150 feet?) of a major corner, and prohibit them completely on corners. (This ordinance language exists already due to a previous attempt to implement an active use requirement for shopping districts in the downtown.) It would be a shame if the first example of the new district resulted in a ground floor bank on an important corner.

### Parking

I largely agree with staff's recommendations: no minimums, and maximums at the current minimums for retail and 0.5 cars/unit for residential. I believe parking minimums have no place anywhere; the data is clear that minimums add to traffic and rents. With regard to the maximums, the suggested residential maximum may strike some developers as impractical, but they will be able to take advantage of space-sharing synergy between residential and commercial uses. (As always, if developers feel they can make a compelling case for why more parking is needed, they should take that case to the ZBA.)

There are obviously many successful downtown mixed-use projects with far lower parking ratios, and there are thousands of people living without cars altogether in the city. I believe that until a developer builds a successful, lightly-parked project outside the downtown, there will be no comparables that banks can use to evaluate future projects and no incentive for other developers to invest. I'm optimistic about their potential and believe this is worth implementing; it can always be reevaluated and adjusted if necessary should the parking maximums prove too prohibitive for most developers and we find that too many variance requests are being made.

### Setbacks

I appreciate the proposal's emphasis on a more urban build-to form. I am concerned, however, about creating another situation like the Foundry Lofts, where the lack of setback from fast car travel lanes either precludes outdoor dining or forces an undesirable colonnade format.

I am not well versed in how much the current ROW widths vary outside the curb on each corridor. For example, if we want to allow a wide sidewalk, additional space for sidewalk dining, and a comfortable buffer from 5-lane corridors with fast-moving cars and no parallel parking, perhaps we want to prevent building facades from being closer than, say, 18 feet from an active traffic lane. What I do not know is if it is legal or advisable to tie the setback to a minimum distance from the nearest full-time active car travel lane (say a minimum 20' from the fog line) or the speed limit on the adjoining road. (Obviously speed limits and lanes may change as roads get reconfigured in the future.) If not, perhaps consider an A/B situation where we have a minimum setback that adjusts according to the width of the ROW (and therefore the likely speed of cars and lack of parallel parking). For example, for ROWs less than 70', stick with the currently proposed 10' maximum, but where the ROW is greater than 70 feet, the setback is a minimum 10' and maximum 18'. It would be informative to take some measurements along Stadium Blvd and compare them to Packard St, for example.

### Open space

I do not understand the goal of this requirement. I think providing some flexibility in the front setback as noted above could allow for some interesting usable open space in the public-facing facade.

### **Time-wasting traps ahead**

There are several ways this effort can get derailed once again. Some have expressed hesitation about being too "ambitious" and presenting an ordinance that would apply to too many areas of the city, cautioning against a "one size fits all" approach and inferring that a T1 district would need to be accompanied by "T2" or "T3" districts. I disagree for two reasons:

- 1) The community vision for our corridors is similar across the city: less (and less visible) parking, multi-story buildings that address the street with active doors and minimal setbacks, no more one-story buildings, more residential uses, and buildings that don't cast shadows on the neighbors.
- 2) An ordinance can be written so that it self-adjusts according to factors such as distance from existing residential (which the current draft does). Other variables—like the width of the right of way, speed limit, distance to active traffic lanes, or distance from major intersections—could also potentially help fine-tune an ordinance to its context without needless complexity.

Starting a new process to contemplate multiple new categories of zoning will generate endless debate about which corridor gets what designation. A simple, self-adjusting zoning district that applies to all commercially zoned land along all of our corridors can be implemented city wide.

Other mechanisms like optional zoning districts or optional overlays that developers can “apply for” will not stop undesirable buildings from being constructed and should be avoided.

Lastly, some residents have suggested that any rezonings should wait for a “new” master planning process. I think this is an unforgivable insult to the residents, citizen commissions, and staff that have participated in planning discussions since 2009 when the city began adopting plans asking for corridor reform. (See list below for citations from existing city plans.) I typically take issue with neighbors who say that the city “doesn’t listen” to them; however if this effort is stalled or piecemealed yet again, I will have nothing to say to them.



*I made this a couple of years ago to highlight our aversion to making decisions.*

### **What to do**

Like in most governments, no positive things happen quickly or in a vacuum in Ann Arbor. There are very well-funded and highly-motivated forces within the city who are dedicated to slowing change or thwarting certain elected representatives. The bottom line is this: the pro-housing community has to step up and support our elected and appointed officials’ obligations to change some of our most egregious policies. It starts in earnest at Tuesday’s 7pm City Planning Commission meeting (participation information is here: <https://a2gov.zoom.us/j/99539794201?pwd=enovTE9XOTdhZXFGUm12RU50WmRQUT09> Passcode: 361611 or call 206-337-9723 or 213-338-8477 or Toll Free 877-853-5247 or 888-788-0099 Enter Meeting ID: 995 3979 4201) Just as beneficial is emailing the Planning Commission at [planning@a2gov.org](mailto:planning@a2gov.org) and the City Council at [citycouncil@a2gov.org](mailto:citycouncil@a2gov.org) or calling your representatives (contact information is here: <https://www.a2gov.org/departments/city-council/Pages/Home.aspx>).

## Notes: Adopted city plans referring to corridors

Since at least 2009, Ann Arborites have been documenting their displeasure with our commercial corridors. These feelings are contained in planning documents that were created by the community and adopted by different iterations of City Council over the years. Many plans are a result of literally thousands of hours of volunteer participation, staff work, and political wrangling, so it is truly saying something when an issue gets highlighted multiple times in multiple plans over such a long period of time. We do not need more feedback. Here are some highlights from adopted plans:

“Office or residential uses should be provided above the store fronts to increase the variety of housing opportunities, encourage pedestrian access to the retail use, improve the viability of the retail businesses and encourage a village center. Single story retail buildings are not appropriate for neighborhood commercial centers...The design should emphasize a village center instead of a strip commercial mall... Auto related uses such as gas stations, auto repair shops and car washes should be prohibited and businesses with drive-throughs should be discouraged... Mixing office, retail and residential uses on the same site can encourage pedestrian activity, reduce vehicular trips, reduce imperviousness by sharing parking spaces, encourage a wider variety of housing options, provide services closer to places of work and neighborhoods and use land and infrastructure more efficiently... Evaluate the feasibility of reducing parking requirements or establishing maximum parking limits... Encourage residential densities that can sustain bus transit...” (Master Plan Land Use Element, 2009)

“Support increased density and mixed land uses in signature transit corridors... Create transit-oriented development overlay districts for signature corridors, to incorporate tools such as density bonuses, design guidelines and building form regulations to guide redevelopment.” (Transportation Master Plan Update, 2009)

“Facilitate increased residential density, improved walkability and improved transit service...” (Reimagine Washtenaw, 2014)

“Action includes eliminating all parking minimums and setting low parking maximums through the Plan review process... The Plan recommends investing in land use strategies that allow for denser and mixed use neighborhoods...” (A2Zero Carbon Neutrality Plan, 2020)

“Use zoning to restrict additional development of auto-oriented design such as gas stations, office buildings, or large shopping centers with large amounts of parking in the front. Instead, zoning should encourage more compact development, with buildings closer to the street to increase traveler choices by making it more convenient for walkers, bicyclists, and transit riders... Promote residential and employment densities that support transit for development and redevelopment. This could mean minimum heights rather than maximum heights, and mixed use rather than single-use developments (example, a multistory building with commercial on the first floor and offices or residential above instead of single-story commercial).” (Non-Motorized Transportation Plan Update, 2013)

“Encourage coordinated zoning and redevelopment at transit-supportive densities... Zoning and policies in Ann Arbor can be and are already being modified to allow for transit-supportive density, redevelopment, and infill development that help create a more vibrant city. Continuing to promote infill development, mixed housing types, multiple story buildings, and mixed-use transit nodes will maximize the City’s investments in utility and transportation infrastructure, potentially help reduce travel-related GHG emissions, and create active and vital neighborhoods...” (Climate Action Plan, 2013)



**From:** Nishant Kheterpal <[nishantkheterpal@gmail.com](mailto:nishantkheterpal@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 03, 2021 5:44 PM  
**To:** Planning <[Planning@a2gov.org](mailto:Planning@a2gov.org)>  
**Subject:** Comments on Proposed Zoning District for Transit Corridors

To Whom it may concern,

I am writing in as an Ann Arbor resident, native, and University of Michigan graduate student.

I support the creation of a transit-supportive district. However, there should be **no mixed use requirement**. This prevents the construction of housing-only units that are required for walkable neighborhoods. There should be **no height minimum, but also no height maximum**. The transparency requirement should be lowered to 40%. I support access for nonmotorized transportation. I support parking maximums of 0.5 spaces per dwelling unit.

Thanks,  
Nishant Kheterpal  
48105

**From:** Julie Ritter <[ritter.julie@gmail.com](mailto:ritter.julie@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, February 09, 2021 10:59 AM

**To:** Planning <[Planning@a2gov.org](mailto:Planning@a2gov.org)>; DiLeo, Alexis <[ADiLeo@a2gov.org](mailto:ADiLeo@a2gov.org)>; Lenart, Brett <[BLenart@a2gov.org](mailto:BLenart@a2gov.org)>; Cheng, Christopher <[CCheng@a2gov.org](mailto:CCheng@a2gov.org)>; Kahan, Jeffrey <[JKahan@a2gov.org](mailto:JKahan@a2gov.org)>; Barrett, Jon <[JBarrett@a2gov.org](mailto:JBarrett@a2gov.org)>; Kowalski, Matthew <[MKowalski@a2gov.org](mailto:MKowalski@a2gov.org)>; CityCouncil <[CityCouncil@a2gov.org](mailto:CityCouncil@a2gov.org)>; Stults, Missy <[MStults@a2gov.org](mailto:MStults@a2gov.org)>; Hardy, Galen <[GHardy@a2gov.org](mailto:GHardy@a2gov.org)>; Mirsky, John <[JMirsky@a2gov.org](mailto:JMirsky@a2gov.org)>; Crawford, Tom <[TCrawford@a2gov.org](mailto:TCrawford@a2gov.org)>

**Subject:** T1 Zoning Being Proposed

Dear Administrators and Representatives:

The T1 zoning being proposed for Ann Arbor is too broad and permits buildings that are too large and spread too far from the corridors that you suggest deserve this zoning.

If the City put a lower height cap (lower than unlimited!) and tapered the spread to a lower end point (lower than 8 stories!) and shortened the incursion into neighborhoods to less than 1/2 mile, then there might be a starting point for discussion.

Until that happens the T1 zoning, as presented, is not even worth considering

Since I am a well known "usual suspect" I am, again, attaching the beginning of a chart that I started in 2019 of other cities in the US that have T1 zoning. You will see from this chart, though unfinished, that

The cities are all orders of magnitude larger than Ann Arbor

The cities all have robust public transportations systems already in place

The only city in the US that has managed to increase its public transportation ridership is Seattle, which did so by heavily investing in the transportation system to increase route coverage, and decrease wait times at stops. Only by creating an inviting public transportation system do riders choose transit over private cars. The transit system is in place first.

I understand the unusual bind the City is in at this time. The pandemic, the recession, the creeping scope of University ownership of properties, all contribute to this bind. The shortage of housing units nationwide, the ever increasing costs of these units for a variety of reasons, climate migration, retiring baby boomers, short term rentals, the pressure of foreign and corporate investors, and more, all are moving pieces of this puzzle. The recent tax millage for affordable housing is a helpful step.

Condemning the City to wall-to-wall high rises is not a helpful step.

Constructive Suggestions:

- Downsize the proposed T-1 zoning
- Find grants and other sources of non-tax income to improve the transportation system right away
- Implement a robust public outreach plan despite limitations of the pandemic to promote conversation, idea input, engagement for understanding and solutions
- Entrain the University as an equal, public partner in this process, as a very important part of the solution. It has not happened yet but there must be a way to create a true partnership.

- Continue the efforts on "micro" transportation with healthy streets and A2Zero
- Re-Implement previous neighborhood zoning in existing neighborhoods to allow the return of small businesses and services in the 20 minute neighborhood model.

And perhaps most importantly

Start insisting on sustainability aspects:

- require demonstrable sustainability in all new development
- regenerative architecture and construction
- carbon embedded in existing and future developments
- planning for air flow through the city
- small parks scattered throughout for carbon capture, climate mitigation
- retrofitting existing homes and structures with insulation, weather stripping, etc
- continue to promote single family home solar panels and find a way to work with DTE to make them convenient and affordable, or else crowd source through the City.

There are many more excellent, actionable suggestions lying undiscovered in the minds and hearts of the current citizens of Ann Arbor. Some of them could be game changers.

Stay safe.

Respectfully,

Julie Ritter

City	Population	Metro Area Population	Square Miles	Metro Area Square Miles	Light Rail	Bus	Bus Rapid Transit	Regional	Subway	TOD Zoning
Ann Arbor	121000	350000	28.77	706	no	yes	no	no	no	no
Atlanta	487000	5949951	134	8376	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	Launched in 2018 but \$15 million not enough
Arlington County, VA	234965	6216589	26	5565	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Aurora	366623	2814330	154.1	397.06	yes	yes	no	yes	no	yes
Austin	950715	2168316	271.8	4278	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	in process
Baltimore	609841	2802789	92.28	598.3	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	part of current master plan, not yet implemented
Berkeley										
Boston	698000	3200000	89.63	1422	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Buffalo	261000	1134210	52.51	1565	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	plans and workshops
Camden	163776	1243879	10.34		yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	exploring potential
Charlotte	872498	2569213	297.7	3198	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	adopted concept in 2019. still in planning
Cincinnati	301301	2137406	201.8	4808	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	studies
Cleveland	385525	2057009	82.47	457.19	yes	yes	yes	yes	trolley	yes
Columbus										
Eugene	168,916	374748	43.72		no	yes	yes	yes	no	Plans started 2017. Hiring transit development planner
Dallas	1341000	7233323	385.8	9286	yes	yes	yes	yes	streetcar/trolley	yes
Denver	619968	2932415	155	4532	yes	yes	no	yes	no	in the planning phase
Detroit	673104	4304613	359.28	1337.16	Woodward trolley and People Mover	yes	no	no	No	Studies
El Paso	679000	840545	256.3		streetcars	yes	yes	yes	no	yes but "repealed in 2017"?
Houston	2430000	6997384	669	1660	yes	yes	being built	yes	no	being studied
Jersey City	270753	20300000	21.08	13318	yes	yes	yes	yes	ferry	yes
Kansas City	488943	2340000	319	7952	no	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
Kenosha	99877	in Chicago Statistical Area	27.03	In Chicago Statistical Area	yes	yes	yes	Limited	streetcars	yes, very new in last couple of years
Little Rock	198606	738344	122.02	4090.34	streetcars	yes	yes	yes	no	seeking money for study
Los Angeles	4000000	13131431	503	4850	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	started 2017
Madison	255214	654230	100.9		no: suggested	yes	being planned	yes	no	Planning study in process
Memphis	652236	1330000	324	3013	trolley	yes	planned	yes	nite shuttle bus	Being studied

