



## MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission  
FROM: Brett Lenart, Planning Manager  
DATE: November 01, 2023  
SUBJECT: 10-12-23 Plymouth Road Area TC1 Rezoning Meeting Summary

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On October 12, 2023, a community meeting was held at the Ann Arbor Public Library, Traverwood Branch, located in the Plymouth Road Corridor area. The focus of the gathering, attended by approximately 36 participants alongside Councilmembers Song and Watson, was the discussion of the rezoning of 45 Plymouth Road area parcels to TC1.

The meeting began with introductions and was swiftly followed by a comprehensive presentation led by Planning Manager Lenart and Planner DiLeo. Attendees were provided with detailed insights into the proposed rezoning, emphasizing that the TC1 changes would primarily affect the form of future developments rather than altering available uses along the corridor.

A critical point of the session was clarifying the meeting's goal, which was not a debate over the established TC1 zoning but rather a collaborative effort to ensure the proposed rezoning boundaries were indeed appropriate. The planning staff sought constructive feedback from community members, affirming the necessity of public insight in the decision-making process.

Below is a summary of questions and answers between attendees and staff, organized topically.

### **Height / Density / Design:**

#### Questions:

- What is the highest can buildings get in this zone?
  - Answer: Up to 300 feet, approximately 29-30 stories.

#### General Comments:

- Concerns about 30% height bonuses allowed across the city for affordable and sustainable projects.
- Dislike for heights and setbacks observed throughout the town.
- Opposition to introducing tall buildings to the area, believing they ruin the neighborhood ambiance.

- Perception that the area is already adequately dense with existing public transport and pedestrian activity.
- Concerns about the aesthetics of certain apartments, such as those on Broadway and Plymouth. Would not like similar buildings to be introduced on Plymouth in areas proposed.

### **Additional Standards:**

#### Questions:

- What does "breaking up" into smaller blocks imply?
  - Answer: Creating a human-scale environment, enhancing the walking experience without navigating massive buildings.

### **Additional Standards Con't:**

#### Questions:

- Is there a required distance between a commercial building and R1 zoning?
  - Answer: Yes, 30 feet, and it's comparable to current standards for commercial zoning.
- Can you clarify how setbacks are used?
  - Answer: The TC1 front setback is currently 0-15 feet, but an amendment is headed to Council for review and vote which would instead measure setback from the curb vs. property line. (Other setbacks described using powerpoint slides based on proximity to residential, etc.).
- What will this zoning allow that isn't possible today?
  - Answer: Building without FAR limits and increasing square footage.

### **Gas Stations:**

#### Questions:

- Can existing gas stations remain?
  - Answer: Yes, but expansion would be limited. Zoning impacts future use.
- Would TC1 allow charging station re-use by existing gas stations?
  - Answer: The approach is to allow distributed charging in any available parking spot.

#### General Comments:

- Concerns about making the area more difficult for driving and reducing the use of private vehicles.

### **Environmental Impacts / Greenery:**

#### Questions:

- Is this initiative 'paving paradise to put up a parking lot'?
  - Answer: The TC1 zone aims to minimize paved parking and make infill development on existing parking lots easier. This would enable additional businesses or housing in the area.
- Can you point out under-used parking lots in our corridor?
  - Answer: Near Holiday Inn, near Busch's.
- Will there be requirements for more green space?
  - Answer: The TC1 district allows for plazas and open space, but there are no minimum requirements for open space.

### **Private Vehicles / Parking:**

#### Questions:

- Is the purpose of this zone to deter private vehicle use?
  - Answer: The goal is to enhance transportation choices in conjunction with other City goals, including buses, walking and electric vehicle usage.
- Will there still be enough parking if this is all built to TC1 standards?
  - Answer: Time will tell if adjustments are needed.
- If we increase business density, how will there be enough parking?
  - Answer: More housing close to jobs reduces parking demand.
- Does this zone change how much parking is required?
  - Answer: Currently, no zone has a minimum parking requirement. TC1 requires parking to be proportional to building size and reduces surface parking in lieu of structures.

## **Public Transit and Mobility:**

### Questions:

- Will there be a need for public transit with an increase in residents?
  - Answer: The zone is only applied in areas adjacent to transit. Service frequency will adapt to demand.
- What are you doing to improve biking and walking access?
  - Answer: Working on ways to make space for all modes of transport and coordinating closely with Public Services team who lead public infrastructure.
- Has new development along Nixon Rd increased transit usage?
  - Answer: Ridership trends in this area have been requested from The Ride. In general, rapid transit requires minimum densities to be successful.

## **Commercial Displacement:**

### Questions:

- Does this zoning allow commercial properties to be fully residential?
  - Answer: Yes, and so does much of current commercial zoning.
- What's the vacancy rate in the area?
  - Answer: Unsure.

## **Other Issues:**

### Questions:

- How is affordable housing defined and enforced (for height bonuses)?
  - Answer: Defined by city ordinance at 60% or below of Area Median Income. Enforcement involves annual checks and verifications.

- What is the likely impact on residential property values?
  - Answer: Ann Arbor housing values are increasing – this is one reason why many are priced out of market and community needs more units at different price levels. Desirable amenities and improved walk scores can increase property values over time.

### General Comments:

- Concerns about commercial displacement and the potential for new buildings without commercial.
- Concerns about the pace of change and the number of parcels being rezoned.
- Worries about the area turning into student housing with limited parking.
- The importance of ensuring affordable developments are completed and not stalled due to expenses.

## **University of Michigan Campus Plan 2050:**

### Councilmember Song Comments:

- Showed campusplan2050.umich.edu on screen.
- Planning effort revealed this morning to councilmembers.
- The university's plan includes proposals for Plymouth Rd, such as workforce housing and conference centers.
- The university is planning for new development and transit.
- Engagement with the University of Michigan's planning process is encouraged.