

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Jonathon Arntson, Planning Services Intern

DATE: November 30, 2023

SUBJECT: 11-16-2023 Washtenaw Ave Area TC1 Rezoning Meeting Summary

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On November 16, 2023, a community meeting was held at Pittsfield Elementary, located in the Washtenaw Avenue and US-23 corridor area. The focus of the gathering, attended by approximately 40 participants, alongside Councilmembers Disch, Ghazi-Edwin, Harrison, Song and Watson, was the discussion of the rezoning of 63 Washtenaw Avenue area parcels to TC1 (the parcel number was subsequently adjusted to 59). 20 participants signed in on paper-sign in sheets and 12 participants signed in electronically using a QR code. Nine attendees requested email follow from the Planning Services Department on updates on the City's development of a new Comprehensive Plan and general updates about meeting schedules, etc.

The meeting began with introductions and was swiftly followed by a comprehensive presentation led by Planner DiLeo, Planning Manager Lenart and Deputy Planning Manager Kelley. 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.

Planner DiLeo emphasized that the priority of the session was not a debate over the established TC1 zoning but rather a collaborative effort to ensure the proposed TC1 rezoning boundaries were appropriate for the Washtenaw Avenue Corridor Area. In general, height is not proposed to increase significantly from current standards, and TC1 will allow for consolidation of multiple commercial districts under one banner. 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.

### **Purpose of Rezoning to TC1**

#### Questions:

- What is motivating this proposed rezoning?
  - Answer: To control how new mixed-use development looks and functions. We are encouraging human-scale developments. This is a priority of City Council, which has requested staff initiate the rezoning review.
- Why was Washtenaw Ave and E Stadium Blvd added to the TC1 Rezoning?

- Answer: The Planning Commission identified four areas along potential transit corridors, which included Washtenaw Ave and E Stadium Blvd.

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

#### Questions:

- What impact does this have on density?
  - Answer: The density of TC1 is not very different than the existing zones. Washtenaw is one of the highest ridership bus routes in The Ride's system. Locating housing to meet growing demand near transit and within the proximity of major activity and job centers is responsive to City growth.
- How does 300 feet maximum building height translate to stories of a building?
  - Answer: In general, you can assign ~10 feet per floor. A 120-foot building would equate to roughly 12 stories. Because of the proximity to residential areas, the TC1 zone near US-23 has a maximum height of 120 feet.

#### General Comments:

- Concern about buildings heights of 55 to 75 feet.
- Concern that density may contribute further congestion to area intersections (ex: Washtenaw and E Stadium) and may negatively impact quality of life.
- Concern about shadows from high rises.
- Disagreement with requirement that buildings have to be two stories.

### **Additional Standards:**

#### Comments:

- Concerns that buildings should be set further back from the street.

### **Affordable Housing:**

#### General Comments:

- Concern that new development will be expensive and not contribute meaningfully toward affordable housing goals.
- Support for enabling new housing in TC1 corridors to lessen the burden on development further from downtown, freeing up more naturally occurring affordable units and houses.

### **Environmental Impacts / Pollution:**

#### Questions:

- Why is residential being considered and encouraged so close to US-23?
  - Answer: Much of Ann Arbor falls within range of a highway, and many developable sites are located near highways. Because of the housing crisis, residential units are being considered on all developable sites. Within the freeway ring, city residents have access to utilities, public transit, and retail.

There are also strategies for mitigating highway traffic and noise in residential neighborhoods as they develop.

General Comments:

- Desire to see a greenbelt instead of new buildings on fringes of city.
- Concerns about sound and light pollution in vicinity to residential because of proximity to US-23.
- Concern that noise and sound barriers do not work to block highway impacts.

**Parking:**

Questions:

- TC1 parking lots are allowed to be the same size as the building; is that by height or surface area?
  - Answer: There is a limit on the number of spaces overall and a limit on the surface area. Per the Unified Development Code, *"In addition the maximum parking standards provided in Section 5.19.3, the portion of the site devoted to Vehicular Use Area may not exceed the area of Building(s) footprint(s)."* Parking can also be behind, under, or on top of a building, or a structure can be constructed to accommodate the maximum number of spaces.
- Is there a parking minimum?
  - Answer: No Ann Arbor zoning districts require parking minimums, except for bicycles.
- Will parking now be in the backside of buildings on Washtenaw and the buildings in the front closer to Washtenaw (ex: shopping center with Dollar Tree)?
  - Answer: A building can be constructed in front of or on top of the shopping center, or the shopping center can be torn down and something new built, but the new building will be closer to Washtenaw.

General Comments:

- Concerns that change to zoning will increase traffic and add barriers to driving.

**Traffic/Congestion:**

Questions:

- What thought has been put into how we can alleviate the traffic on Washtenaw?
  - Answer: The Planning and Development Services Unit administers the Unified Development Code, which regulates land use. The Public Services Area plans, operates and designs within the right-of-way. We work together side by side and sometimes overlap. They have many transportation projects identified for all modes of travel, including some identified in the Moving Together Toward Vision Zero Plan.
- Driving is required in the proposed area and is the primary mode of travel.

- Answer: Washtenaw Ave is the best option for a high capacity transit corridor and increases the opportunity a resident can use a bus to commute instead of an individual vehicle.

#### General Comments:

- Concern that transit discourages the building of new housing.
  - The proposed rezoning areas are not pedestrian-friendly and Ann Arbor is not a city of pedestrians.
  - Concern about whether localized traffic problems are being addressed and/or being elevated to City Council by Planning Commission.
  - Difficult to access Washtenaw from Woodcreek.
  - Several residents voiced concerns about congestion outside normal commuting hours.
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Some feedback was received via a tabletop exercise which attendees left behind with their comments added. Below is a summary of feedback on maps of proposed TC1 areas of Washtenaw Avenue at US-23 and at East Stadium Boulevard in response to the question: “Do you agree with the proposed outline? Tell us why or why not:”

#### **Collected Responses**

Two participants agreed with the proposed changes at Washtenaw Ave and E Stadium Blvd.  
Two agreed with the proposed changes at Washtenaw Ave and US-23.

Four participants disagreed with the proposed changes at Washtenaw Ave and E Stadium Blvd.  
Four disagreed with the proposed changes at Washtenaw Ave and US-23.

#### **Affordable Housing:**

##### General Comments:

- Concerns about likelihood of affordable housing being developed in these two areas.
- Concerns that new development will negatively impact the affordability of the area.

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

##### General Comments:

- Resident does not wish to see high rises in area.
- Concerns about buildings heights and setbacks.
- Concern that the E Stadium area has different characteristics from Washtenaw Ave at US-23.
- Taller buildings should be near US-23 and get shorter going west from US-23.

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

##### Questions:

- Why no requirements for sustainability/solar?

General Comments:

- Concerns about noise pollution, especially from traffic.
- Concern about light pollution.
- Disagreement with loss of green space.
- Resident does not want to see green spaces in the neighborhood developed.
- Concern about lack of sustainability requirements.
- Concern about air quality due to increased traffic.

**Mobility:**

General Comments:

- Concerns about increased risk to pedestrians.
- Students use this area; will TC1 affect education?

**Parking:**

General Comments:

- Concerns about increased parking congestion.

**Traffic Volume:**

Questions:

- Has TC1 considered the impacts on traffic from development?
  - Although we are not transportation planners, we work with the city services to consider and plan for impacts.
  - TC1 is aiming to encourage multimodal commuting to address traffic congestion.
  - TC1 also aims to increase housing opportunities for those who can only afford to commute to Ann Arbor.

General Comments:

- Concerns about increased traffic congestion over what is currently experienced.
- Concern about impacts and timelines of construction projects.
- Traffic from University of Michigan sporting events will impact congestion in the area.