

Proposed Rezoning Opposition

[Tract 34 – Lantana Neighborhood Corner of William Cannon & Rialto - NPA-2025-0025.03 C14-2025-0087]

Why Removing Transitional Zoning Conflicts with Austin's Neighborhood Compatibility Standards

Austin's land development framework relies heavily on **transitional, or buffer zoning**, to prevent abrupt changes between land uses that would create conflicts or diminish livability.

Office zoning in this location is functioning exactly as intended — it provides a **low-intensity, daytime-driven use** that steps down from the busier roadway toward single-family homes. It limits trip generation, noise, late-night activity, and lighting spillover in a way that protects adjacent residential areas.

Commercial zoning removes that buffering function and replaces it with a district that allows:

- high trip-generating uses
- later operating hours
- on-site alcohol service
- larger structures
- amplified lighting and signage
- event-oriented or transient-oriented businesses

This creates a **direct adjacency of incompatible intensities**, which Austin's long-standing compatibility standards are meant to prevent.

From a planning perspective, **this is a leap, not a step** — a direct escalation from low-impact, professional daytime use to open-ended commercial entitlement less than 500 feet from homes and a creek corridor.

Austin's compatibility model — reaffirmed repeatedly through Imagine Austin, Small Area Plans, and corridor studies — rests on three core principles:

1. **Transitions in height and intensity matter.**
Office zoning operates at a height, traffic, and noise profile similar to civic or institutional uses — compatible with nearby homes. Commercial zoning authorizes much more intense activity that violates gradual transition principles.
2. **Buffers protect health, safety, and quality of life.**
Transitional zoning avoids late-night noise, loading docks, bars, drive-throughs, and event venues where houses are sleeping, children are playing, or wildlife is nesting.

Health of residents is also impacted, with studies showing air quality impacts from nearby construction and high-traffic commercial uses have negative effects on breathing, lung health, asthma, elderly, and children.

3. **Where you place intensity determines whether it succeeds or fails.**

Compatibility-driven land use ensures **high-intensity uses thrive where appropriate**, and neighborhoods remain stable where intended. Eliminating the buffer destabilizes both.

Therefore, **removing Office zoning here is not just a change — it contradicts the City’s own planning structure** by eliminating the intended “step-down” layer between commercial activity and residential/environmentally sensitive land.

At minimum, if Council moves forward, a **Conditional Overlay and/or Restrictive Covenant must re-constitute compatibility protections**, including but not limited to the below. Neighbors have a proposed Restrictive Covenant with greater detail on specifics (also submitted for record).

- strict use limitations
- height controls (60 feet or less including architectural elements)
- dark-sky lighting standards
- wildlife and watershed protections
- traffic and delivery hour mitigations
- environmental studies for the Lantana dam and watershed protections
- restrictions on created pollution and air quality impacts
- forbid on any toxic materials used on the property, including for landscaping, lawns or rodent protection (no roundup or materials like it that may be dangerous to health)

This preserves the fundamental planning principle Austin relies on: **growth is welcomed where it fits, but not where it overwhelms the context it enters.**

Thank you,

-Whitney Cupp-Lee, neighborhood resident within 500 feet of this site