

ZONEiN **COLUMBUS**

Proposal for Modernized Zoning on Columbus Corridors

Proposal Summary

THE CITY OF
COLUMBUS
ANDREW J. GINTHER, MAYOR

Let's Zone In on *Equitable Growth*

Columbus is a city on the rise. We're experiencing record job creation in the region, which is creating economic opportunity for longtime Columbus residents and welcoming newcomers to our city. From 2010 to 2020, Columbus grew by 32 people each day - people attracted by great jobs, affordable homes and our high quality of life.

Unfortunately, we're seeing other things rise, too. Homelessness, housing displacement, tenant exploitation and evictions are all trending upward, because regionally, we're not building enough housing for everyone who lives here and for the families who are coming.

We must build 200,000 new homes in Central Ohio in the next 10 years to stay on top of our housing needs.

Columbus must do its part. Modernizing our zoning code is one of the most powerful things we can do to change our trajectory, today.

Our zoning code is more than 70 years old. It's preventing our city from rising upward, and pushing our growth outward. It's shutting out small investors from building in our neighborhoods. And it's making housing more expensive than it needs to be, limiting neighborhoods from their potential.

Residents have told us that they want to live in dense, vibrant neighborhoods where they can easily walk or take transit to a coffee shop, corner store or a new job opportunity. By building taller, denser buildings that combine housing and commercial uses along the primary streets of our neighborhoods, we can accommodate our housing demand, grow our use of transit, support new and existing businesses, reduce energy consumption and reduce household costs.

A modernization of the zoning code can unlock such construction and direct our growth toward a more equitable future.

In the following pages, you'll read about a proposal to holistically update our zoning code along our main corridors to address our housing, mobility and affordability challenges and support quality, sustainable growth.

If we continue on the path we're on, our corridors are projected to create 6,000 new homes. But if we update the code as this proposal suggests, the market will realistically create a projected 88,000 homes. That's 44% of the region's housing demand and enough new homes to start to alleviate the rising housing pressures we're feeling.

It's a tall order, and I mean that literally. But it's one I know we're ready to embrace together to promote a more prosperous future for everyone.

Together, let's "zone in" on this chance to grow not just bigger, but better.



Mayor Andrew J. Ginther



Zone In *Priorities*

- Leverage corridors to create more housing in more places to help address the city's and region's housing shortage by supporting changes that make it easier and more likely to build more housing
- Support “Main Street” jobs and businesses with opportunities to grow their customer base nearby and greater flexibility to adapt to changing market dynamics
- Promote equitable development with a code that relies on clear, objective standards and is easier to navigate
- Expand the role of corridors in creating healthy, connected communities by reinforcing land use patterns that support alternatives to using a car and provide better access to jobs, education, healthcare and housing
- Foster good urban design and appealing “Main Streets” to support investment in communities and ensure high quality of life for residents



Promoting Growth on Our “Main Streets”

A zoning code is a set of rules that regulate what can and can't be done on a particular piece of property - it influences where we live, where we work and how we get around. It can provide residents a clearer idea of what can be built in their neighborhoods, and help developers avoid unnecessary time and cost that slows down or prevents investment.

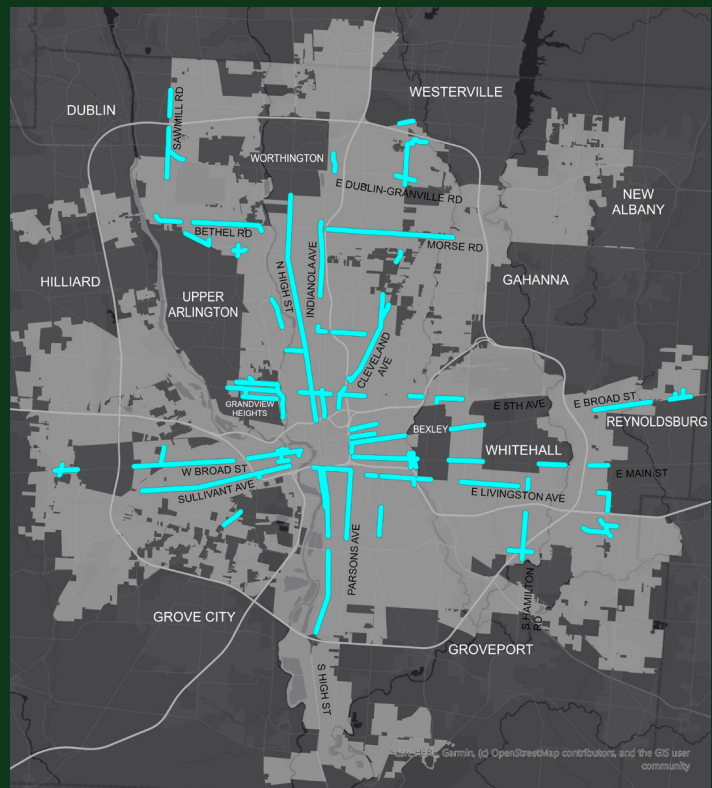
It can also help to create the conditions for smart, sustainable, equitable growth and unlock the economic and development potential of our neighborhoods.

While modernized zoning is needed throughout Columbus, we know from data, policy priorities and public engagement, that our corridors are the best place to start updating our zoning to support the growth our community needs. “Main Streets” like West Broad Street, East Main Street, Morse Road and commercial nodes like The Continent and the Eastland Mall site have the greatest development capacity to deliver

housing, mobility and employment opportunities in ways that are economically and environmentally sustainable.

Area and community plans developed with each neighborhood and adopted by Columbus City Council consistently document residents' desire to see investment along our corridors, for both job and housing creation. Studies such as Insight2050, sponsored by the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), quantify the benefits of dense development along corridors, and the LinkUS mobility initiative sponsored by the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA), the City of Columbus, MORPC and Franklin County is anchored in equitable transit-oriented development along corridors. These conclusions are further reinforced by the Columbus Climate Action Plan, which underscores the environmental benefits of denser development that supports transit.

Corridors identified for new zoning.



To learn more about how the corridors were selected, read “Where Do We Begin?”



***Mixed-use development* is when one property or area includes multiple uses, such as a storefront on the first floor with apartments above.**

All of the city’s corridors are already zoned. However, the zoning in place is commonly out of step with the ways area plans and land use recommendations say the land should be developed in the future. For example, a survey of 140+ miles of Columbus corridors found that 80% of the properties facing the street were zoned with a 35-foot height limit - meaning that by code, a new building there is not allowed to be more than three stories high without a special exception, called a variance, from Columbus City Council or the Board of Zoning Adjustment.

So even though research data and community input both tell us that these streets are the best places for denser, taller offices and housing developments, an applicant would need to go through an expensive, time-

consuming variance or rezoning process to build the kind of building the community wants and needs there.

The Zone In initiative is looking to our corridors to start updating Columbus’ zoning code. This phase of the effort is focused on over 12,000 parcels of land along 62 sections of corridor where existing zoning, community plans, and current and future transit routes all support new, denser development.

Modernizing the code along these important thoroughfares can help us accelerate housing construction, better support transit and cultivate investment in our neighborhoods in a way that matches the growth the community would like to see there.

New Zoning Options

The new code proposes the creation of six zoning districts. Each district has its own set of flexible rules for what a property owner may build there - how tall the building may be, how close it should be to the street, even the minimum ratio of windows to wall space a building should have. When combined, these standards can make a building more attractive, can create more room for housing and businesses and can make a neighborhood more walkable or friendly to using transit.

By creating a clear set of rules for each district, the code also makes development more predictable, both for building owners and for neighbors in the community.



Zone In Code Framework

Zone Name	Regional Activity Center	Community Activity Center
	These are key locations in suburban areas with large buildings and parking lots. The proposed zoning would help these areas change into more walkable areas with housing, offices and commercial buildings.	These are suburban locations with medium-sized buildings and parking lots. The proposed zoning would help these areas change into more walkable areas with more housing.
Sub-District	None	None
Primary Building Height	Stories	7 story maximum
	Feet to top of roof	85' maximum
Footprint	Allowed with Affordability Bonus	10 story / 125' maximum
	Building Coverage	80% maximum
Upper Story Stepbacks	Stepback from Rear/Side Parcel Lines	30' minimum above 3 stories 50' minimum above 5 stories
	Front Setback	Primary Building
Side Street Setback	Primary Building (Interior Streets)	0' minimum, 15' maximum
Side Setback	Abutting Residential	20' minimum
	Abutting Non-Residential	5' minimum
On-site Open Space	Per Unit (Private or Common)	50 sf minimum
Ground Floor Façade	Residential - Front & Side Street	40% minimum
	Non-residential - Front	60% minimum
	Non-residential - Side St	25% minimum



Urban General 1	Urban General 2	Urban Center	Urban Core
<p>These areas are in the older city, on secondary corridors and between major intersections. The proposed zoning would enable construction of housing and retail on empty parcels and parking lots and support the reuse of older buildings.</p>	<p>These areas are in the older city, with houses and offices built back from the street. The proposed zoning would support construction of small shops, housing and offices, and the reuse of older buildings.</p>	<p>These areas are in the older city, at key intersections and by major bus stops. The proposed zoning would enable construction of taller buildings for housing, office and retail on empty parcels and parking lots, as well as reuse of older buildings and taller buildings.</p>	<p>These areas are in the older city near downtown and major activity centers with existing tall buildings. The proposed zoning would create opportunity for redevelopment at the highest densities, reuse of older buildings and construction of taller buildings for housing, offices and retail on empty parcels and parking lots.</p>
	None	None	Restricted
4 story maximum	4 story maximum	5 story maximum	12 story maximum
48' maximum	48' maximum	60' maximum	150' maximum
	N/A	7 story / 85' maximum	16 story / 200' maximum
80% maximum	80% maximum	No maximum	No maximum
20' minimum above 3 stories	20' minimum above 3 stories	20' minimum above 3 stories	20' minimum above 3 stories 30' minimum above 7 stories
0' minimum, 15' maximum	5' minimum, 25' maximum	0' minimum, 15' maximum	0' minimum, 15' maximum
0' minimum, 15' maximum	5' minimum, 25' maximum	0' minimum, 15' maximum	0' minimum, 15' maximum
0' minimum	5' minimum	0' minimum	0' minimum
0' minimum	5' minimum	0' minimum	0' minimum
25 sf minimum	25 sf minimum	no minimum	no minimum
40% minimum	40% minimum	40% minimum	40% minimum
60% minimum	60% minimum	60% minimum	60% minimum
25% minimum	25% minimum	25% minimum	25% minimum

See the proposed code online for additional detail on the Framework of Zones





The Right Buildings, *in the Right Places*

Different zones make sense in different places. Corridors in dense neighborhoods close to Downtown are suited for zones that create tall buildings placed close to the street. Along thoroughfares in more suburban neighborhoods, buildings placed a bit further from the street respond to the current surroundings while contributing to a walkable environment.

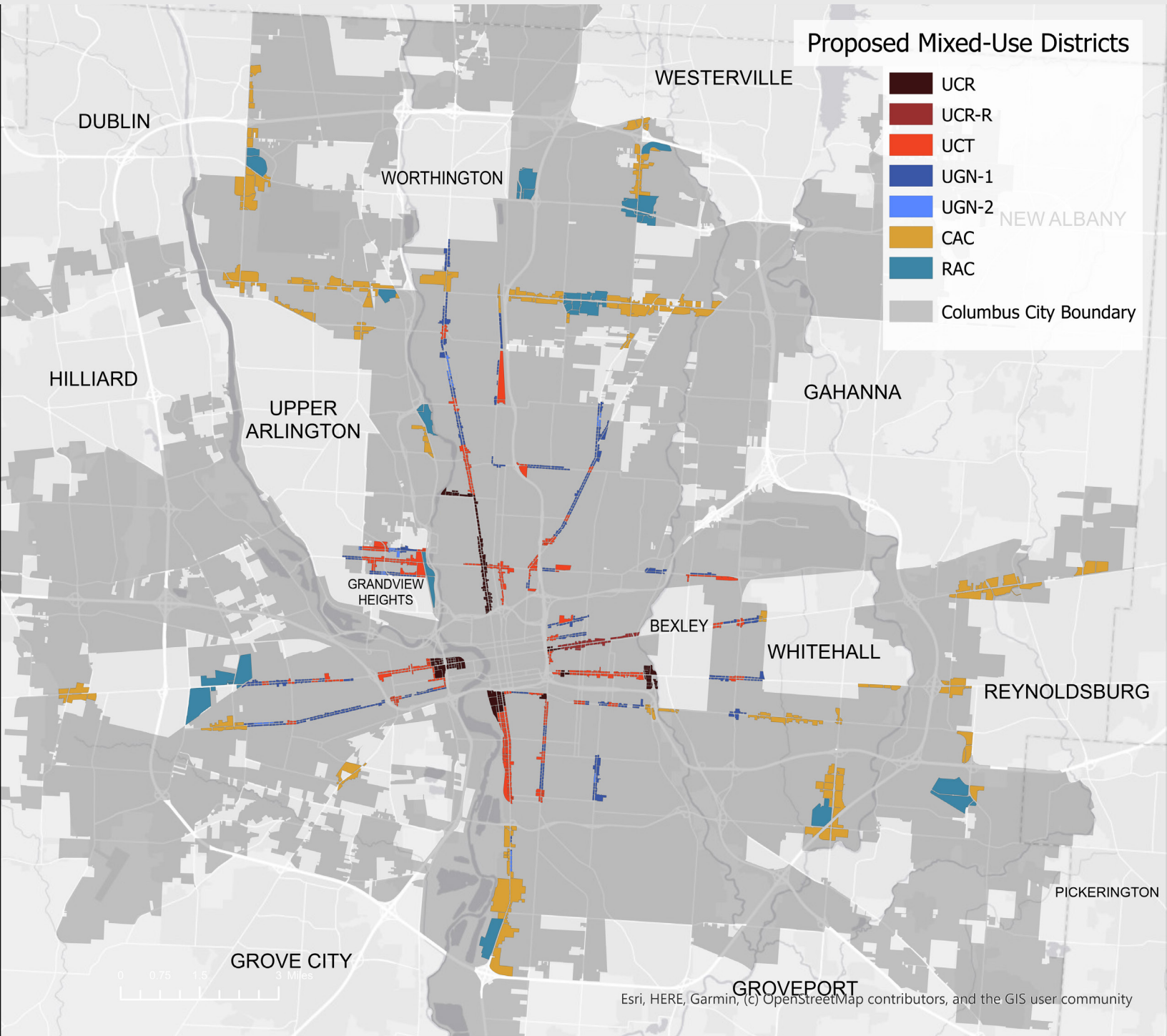
The Zone In proposal recommends one of the new zoning districts for each of the 12,300+ parcels subject to the code update. The recommendation for each parcel is based on existing development, neighborhood plans, future growth projections and input from thousands of Columbus residents.



Visit the Zone In website for an interactive map of the proposed code

Proposed Mixed-Use Districts

- UCR
- UCR-R
- UCT
- UGN-1
- UGN-2
- CAC
- RAC
- Columbus City Boundary



Supporting the Housing We *Need*

Policy Overview *Housing Incentives*

Zoning is a tool that can be used to pursue our city's policy goals around affordable housing.

If the City of Columbus allows a property owner to build a taller building on their land, that land has more value - they can build more offices or apartments there, and therefore collect more rent. But when that happens, the city has an opportunity to request value in return.

Cities like Atlanta and Charlotte have already figured this out - they offer bonuses or incentives that allow a developer to build a taller building than the base zoning allows, in exchange for providing a benefit to the community.

A similar option is proposed in this code. If a housing provider agrees to set aside 20% of their building's units for housing that is affordable to households who make less than the area median income for 15 years, they would be able to build a taller building as a bonus.

For example, in a Regional Activity Center district, a developer may build a 10 story building - three stories more than the base zoning of seven stories - if they allocate 20% of the building's housing units for income-qualified tenants.

The overall capacity of the building grows, but we also make space for residents who might not otherwise be able to afford to live there.

It's a win-win proposition.

Policy Overview: *Market-Driven Parking*

The existing zoning code applies a one-size-fits-all approach to parking requirements in much of the city. The code doesn't distinguish between different types of neighborhoods, availability of transit or how likely residents are to have - or need - a car.

This often leads to excessive parking requirements that waste land and make it harder to achieve the walkable neighborhoods residents want.

When communities are built in a way that makes it easier for people to walk, bike or take the bus, many people will choose not to own a car. In Columbus today, over 30,000 households don't own a car, for a variety of reasons.

Yet our zoning code is designed in a way that assumes everyone owns a car. This means that the costs of building and maintaining parking are often passed along to residents who don't want or need a parking space. It

also creates barriers for reusing older, historic buildings that were built before parking requirements.

Columbus has taken steps in recent years to reduce parking requirements in certain areas. Many major cities have taken the next step, and moved toward a system where minimum amounts of dedicated parking are no longer required by the zoning code, but instead are determined by market demand. Austin, Raleigh,

An analysis found that with existing zoning, the corridors selected for the first phase of modernized zoning are projected to create 6,000 new homes over the next 10 years. But if we update the code as this proposal suggests, the market is projected to create 88,000 new homes. *This increase in supply can ease the rising housing costs and pressures our residents are experiencing.*

Housing Incentives

100 units
5 stories



140 units
7 units



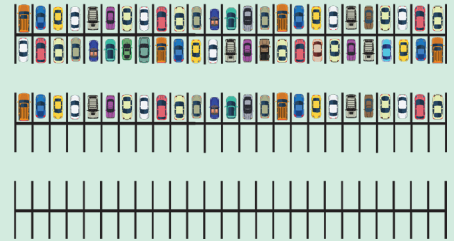
20% of units are income-qualified affordable units

Market-Driven Parking

100 units



50% utilization



125 units



95% utilization



Minneapolis and San Jose are among the many cities that have made this shift in support of goals to become more affordable and environmentally sustainable places to live.

The Zone In proposal allows a developer to choose how many parking spots they set aside - knowing that it's in their interest to create a product that people want. That would mean that the property owner could scale the parking to anticipated demand, but would not be forced by the code to create a specified number of parking spaces that might not be appropriate for the location and type of development.

Cities that have implemented similar policies have found that in most cases, developers provide enough parking to meet the needs of their tenants and to remain competitive with other development projects. This has proven to be the case in Downtown Columbus, where minimum parking requirements were removed

over 20 years ago. The ability to right-size parking has helped to reduce the costs of housing by not forcing every resident to pay for a space they don't need.

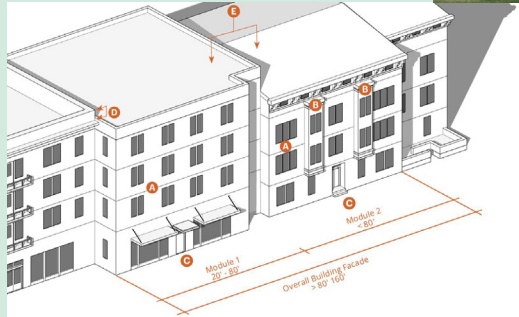
We've heard from residents that walkable neighborhoods and better transit are important to them. Continued growth along our corridors and support for transit access might also mean that residents will choose to get by with fewer cars. As transit service, bike lanes and sidewalks are improved throughout the city, developers and neighbors alike will continue to rethink how much parking they really need.

As the City continues to grow, there may be areas that experience increased demand for the use of public parking spaces on city streets. To help support this change, the City of Columbus is committed to ensuring that public parking is managed in a way that balances the needs of existing residents while also supporting new construction.



Design allowed by
the current code

Design achieved
through negotiation



Design required by
proposed code

Creating a More *Fair and Equitable* Process

Policy Overview: *Clearer Design Standards*

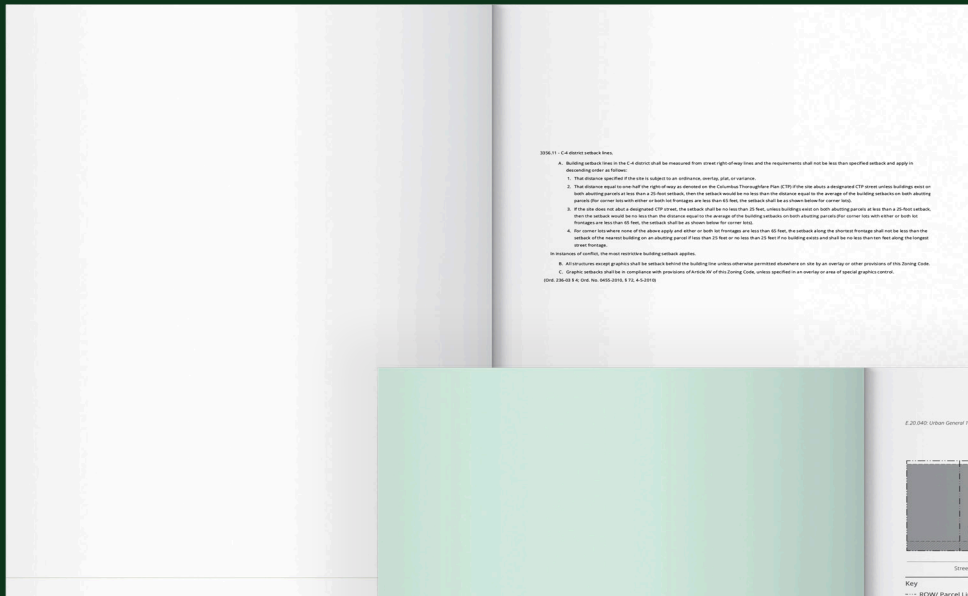
The existing code relies heavily on the regulation of uses – homes placed here, shopping over there, offices over there – rather than how those uses look and work together to make a great street.

The proposed code will continue to regulate uses, but will allow for more flexibility for residential uses on our corridors. This means that existing homes on our corridors will no longer need a costly variance to get refinanced, and that apartment buildings without shops on the ground floor will be allowed. Other types of existing uses will be able to continue, but new commercial uses that are less compatible with a walkable, transit-supported environment will encounter additional hurdles.

The code proposal also introduces new standards for how a building should look and feel. Clear, but flexible guidelines for the design of courtyards, porches and stoops and even the use of windows can help create a vibrant street-scape. “Breaking up” the front of wider buildings with pillars, different building materials and other elements can help them contribute to a pedestrian-friendly street-scape.

By clearly describing a community’s expectations for building design and use, we can raise the bar for the design of new buildings in all the corridor areas from the start. City staff and Area Commissions can spend less time negotiating with developers, just to see the quality design we expect.

Code Content: Before



Code Content: After

Policy Overview: A Code for Everyone

Since Columbus' current zoning code is more than 70 years old, it has been updated in bits and pieces for decades. The result is a disjointed and complicated code that is difficult for anyone but experienced professionals to use.

By creating a clear, modernized code with objective design standards, straightforward language and helpful images and diagrams, the new code is easier for small developers, homeowners and community stakeholders to use, so they can propose quality development in all of our neighborhoods.

Clear expectations also make it easier to develop a workable proposal the first time, without negotiating with the city to design the kinds of buildings our neighbors want. This ultimately saves applicants money - savings they can pass on through lower rents for the residents and businesses that will eventually use their buildings.

By introducing a clearer set of rules for everyone, we can help more people invest and live in our community now and in the future.

Tell Us What *You* Think

The Zone In code proposal was informed by regional studies and data, dozens of community and area plans and input from thousands of Columbus residents. We've connected with more than 51,800 people from every Columbus zip code to talk about our future, and how we should modernize our code to promote the kind of growth our community would like to see.

Our engagement process continues with the introduction of this proposal – public comment is open through June 10, 2024 on the policies and proposals put forward here.

There are multiple ways you can learn more and tell us what you think:

- View the map and draft code and provide feedback on our website
- Visit our interactive gallery to learn more about what the new code will do for our city
- Register for email updates to receive notices about upcoming public hearings

Zone In Gallery

141 N. Front St., Columbus OH 43215

Open 6 days a week in April and May 2024

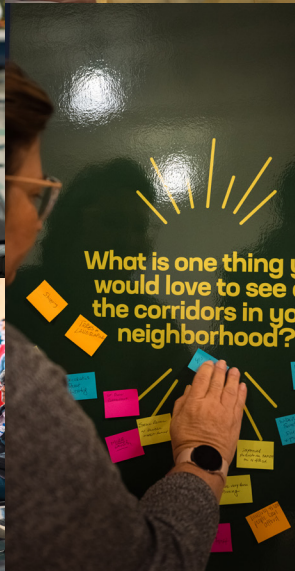
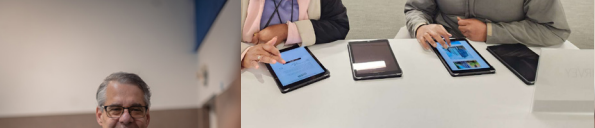
columbus.gov/zoningupdate

zoningupdate@columbus.gov

614-845-5343



Visit the Zone In website for more information





Cities are always changing.
Columbus is changing faster than most.

WE ARE GROWING

BUT OUR BUILT ENVIRONMENT ISN'T KEEPING UP.

Zone In proposes updating Columbus' outdated zoning code to address the needs of an evolving city.



Together, we'll create a new set of rules that make development smarter and more forward-thinking, so we can grow, better.



WE ENVISION A MODERNIZED CODE THAT...



Helps us build homes that we can afford



Makes it easier to get to work



Helps our local businesses thrive



Guides the design of buildings that contribute to our community



Supports investment in places that were harmed by the decisions of our past

We'll also create a set of rules that are simpler and fairer to use, so that we can all benefit from the change that's happening around us.

TOGETHER, let's zone in on our chance to grow not just bigger, but better!

ZONEiN
COLUMBUS