

Overview of Zoning Code Assessment & Update Strategy

Background

As Columbus looks to the future, it is important that the City's Zoning Code be positioned to help guide growth and promote equity. Recognizing this, the City engaged a consultant team led by Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. (LWC) to undertake a third-party Zoning Code Assessment and Update Strategy.

Existing Zoning Challenges

Zoning regulates and influences development through standards that establish the use of land, the locations where residential or non-residential buildings may be built, and the size and scale of new development. The Zoning Code can be used to help attract new businesses, incentivize the construction of new housing, and protect natural resources.

Columbus' Zoning Code has not been comprehensively updated since the 1950s. It relies on the separation of land uses; site-by-site negotiation; and, at times, subjective design review procedures to approve development projects. Nationally, zoning has a history of excluding underrepresented community groups with intended and unintended discriminatory outcomes. Because of this, the City is interested in understanding alternatives to implement equitable, modern changes to the Zoning Code.



Community Survey

City staff conducted a community survey in 2021 to gather input on the project. Over 3,000 people participated, representing a range of perspectives. While staff recognizes the limitations of a non-scientific survey, it provided insight into stakeholder perspectives and helped expand community awareness about the Code assessment and future Code update. The direct responses and over 5,300 write-in comments demonstrate strong interest in the effort and provide important information as the City prepares for the next phase of the update.

Zoning Code Assessment Findings

Based on stakeholder interviews, the community survey, meetings with City Staff, and review of City documents, the Consultant Team developed the following findings on the pitfalls and inefficiencies with the existing Zoning Code.



Standards are not tailored to local conditions



Code does not prioritize future housing and transit needs equitably



Code is not user-friendly



Overreliance on site-by-site negotiated zoning actions



Multi-layered and scattered decision-making process creates uncertainty

Priority Update Recommendation: Comprehensive Code Update with an Emphasis on Equity

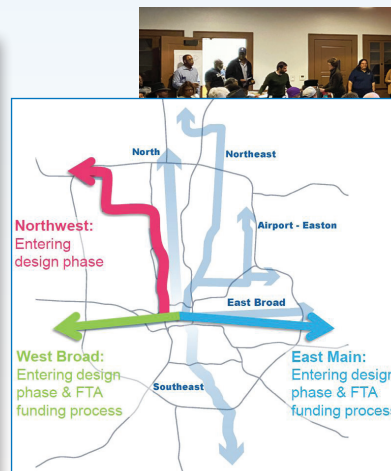
To address the challenges addressed in the Zoning Code assessment and align with City growth priorities, the Consultant Team recommends a Code update that:

- 1 Emphasizes Equity.** Consider the impacts of proposed Code changes on segments of the community that have traditionally not had a voice in the decision-making process. Engage the community directly to design for intended outcomes.
- 2 Is Comprehensive.** Conduct a comprehensive review and update the Code, as needed, to guide growth in line with adopted policy and City growth initiatives.
- 3 Focuses on Transit Corridors Early On.** Columbus, COTA, MORPC, Franklin County and other partners are pursuing enhanced mobility corridors through LinkUS. Active planning is underway for three corridors: West Broad, East Main, and Northwest. Build on adopted planning policy, Insight 2050's Corridor Concepts, and related efforts to focus change and increase development capacity along designated transit corridors consistent with the envisioned and expected pedestrian environment and sense of place.
- 4 Incorporates Best Practices.** Depending on direction from the City on additional policy initiatives, the Code update should include best practices and innovative approaches to prepare for growth and leverage government investments.
- 5 Uses a "Hybrid" Approach.** Utilize a combination of zoning approaches, including use-based and form-based regulations, that are calibrated to different places in Columbus. Modern cities, like Columbus, are complicated and need to address a wide array of issues and existing conditions. In terms of the Code, some areas may benefit by establishing higher standards, such as form-based regulations, that provide greater predictability, while less regulation may be needed in other areas. A hybrid approach to the Code update emphasizes working with the community to understand the needs of each area and calibrating an appropriate zoning strategy.
- 6 Is Modern and Reorganized.** Comprehensively reorganize and restructure the Code to be more user-friendly and facilitate navigation. Insert more graphics and create a new numbering structure that provides for seamless integration of use-based and form-based components and sets up the Code to easily accommodate future amendments.
- 7 Is Based on Robust and Creative Community Engagement.** Develop a grassroots engagement strategy to create broad awareness and understanding of what the Zoning Code is and how communities are impacted by development regulations, with a particular focus on engaging communities that have traditionally not had a voice in the decision-making process.

Land Use Type	
Agriculture and Animal Uses	
Community Garden	
Kennel	
Veterinary Clinics and Hospitals	
Civic, Recreation, and Community Ass	
Adult Day-care Facility	
Child Day-care Center	
College or University	
Community Assembly	
Entertainment - Indoor	
Entertainment - Outdoor	
Indoor Recreation	
Library and Museum	
Park and Outdoor Recreation	
Public Service Facility	

Examples of building placement standards and use regulations in a hybrid code

C. Building Placement	
1. Principal Building Setback	
a. Front	Average of the front setbacks on the 6 closest developed lots on the same side of the street as the subject site; 30' max; 10' min.
b. Side	5 ft min.



LinkUS Framework Strategy



Creative in-person community engagement

Zoning Code Update Imperatives

Columbus is at a critical juncture as the City prepares for the future, and it is vital to have an updated Code that:

- Works effectively and equitably for all people;
- Aligns with City priorities for growth management, affordable housing, job creation, neighborhood vitality, sustainability, and transportation; and
- Efficiently utilizes City resources and capacity.

Key Areas of Consideration and Opportunity

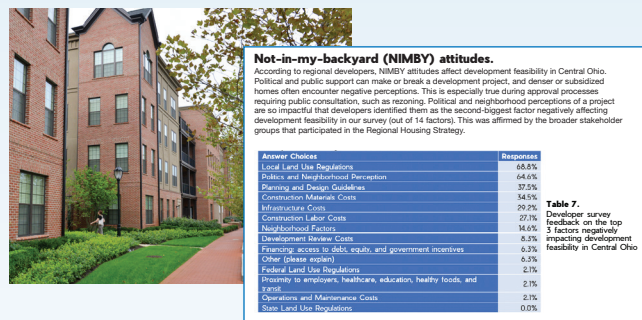
Mixed Use Transit Corridors and Centers



Neighborhood Design and Infill Development



Growth and Affordable Housing



Economic Competitiveness and Resiliency



Sustainability and Open Space

