City of Columbus

Zoning Code Assessment Report

August 2021

LWC

Prepared by Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. (LWC), with:

OPTICOS Peter J. Park LLC City Planning and Design **MKSK** **W&W**

THE CITY OF **COLUMBUS**

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1 Introduction

1.1 Our Evolving City

Columbus has entered a new phase of growth. The 2020 Census confirms that the city's population now exceeds 900,000, having grown by 43 percent over the past 30 years. Despite the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, this trend is anticipated to continue over the next several decades. As of 2019, Columbus is the second-largest municipality in the Midwest. Beyond its status as the State capital and seat of Franklin County, Columbus is also the urban center of a growing metropolitan area with over two million people, and three million projected by 2050. Regionally, Columbus serves as the primary economic, logistic, and cultural hub. See Figure 1 for a regional context map.

Future growth is less likely to be characterized by territorial expansion. In recent years, a more balanced growth pattern has emerged with infill development playing a prominent role. While this shift is supported by the City's growth priorities, frequent struggles with infill development have revealed shortcomings in Columbus' regulatory tools and have prompted City leaders to reevaluate the outdated Zoning Code.

Columbus' current Zoning Code is the product of 70 years of ongoing piecemeal amendments. The City is at a critical juncture; as the City prepares for the future, it is vital to have an updated Zoning Code that:

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

The current Zoning Code does not support these imperatives and is too often in conflict with key growth priorities for the City and the region. Simply put, it is often more difficult to do development that supports the City's adopted polices than it is to develop in ways that contradict them.
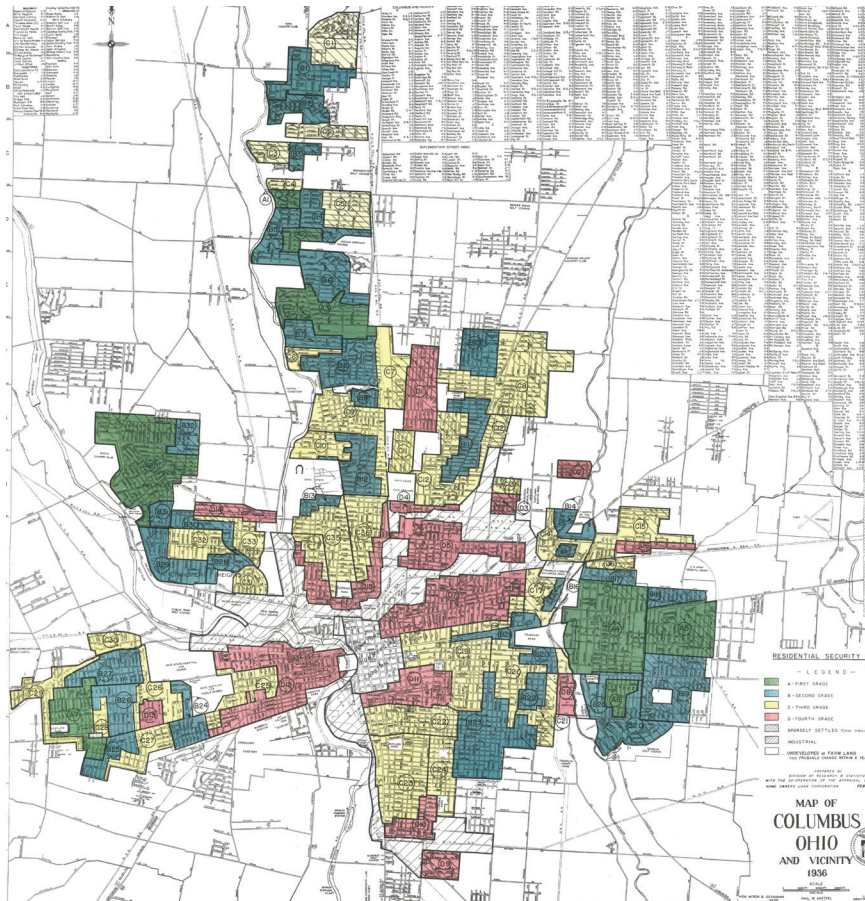
Figure 1: Regional Map
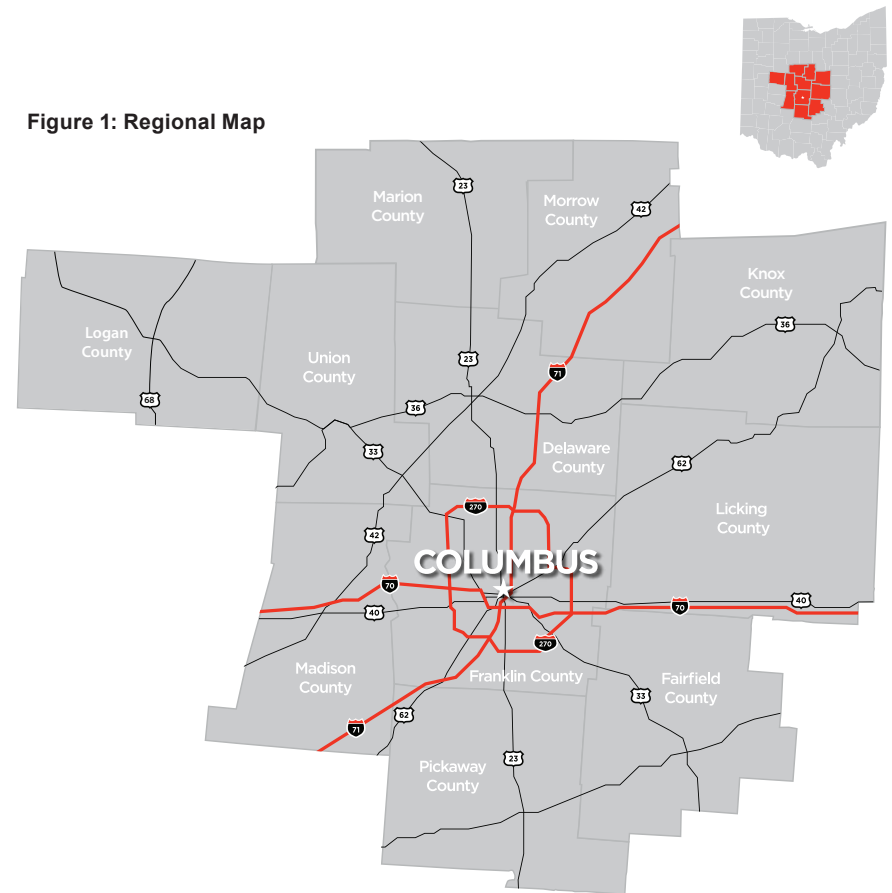
Source: City of Columbus Factbook, 2020

> While the shift away from territorial expansion to infill development is supported by the City's growth priorities, frequent struggles with infill development have revealed shortcomings in Columbus' regulatory tools and have prompted City leaders to reevaluate the outdated Zoning Code.

Source: City of Columbus, June 2021

Restrictive covenants or deed restrictions are rules applying to private property, governing land use, building placement, architecture, or other property attributes. Based on a study conducted in 1994, 44 subdivisions in a specific Columbus study area had race restrictions established in covenants between 1900 and 1929.
(Planning in the Private Interest, Patricia Burgess, Ohio State University Press, 1994; Investopedia.com, July 2021)

1.2   Summary of the Project

A. **Why Analyze the Zoning Code.** Zoning codes establish development and form standards (building height, massing, scale, and placement), use regulations (specifications for what uses are allowed or prohibited in certain areas), and permit requirements and procedures (procedures for administering the Code). Zoning codes are a means to an end. They are not policies, but rather regulatory tools for implementing adopted policies in plans such as C2P2 and the Regional Housing Strategy.

Historically, zoning codes have contributed to redlining by establishing zones that separate land uses, creating areas perceived as "desirable" and "less desirable," controlling where jobs, housing, and services are located, and ultimately perpetuating income inequalities. While zoning codes do not directly establish redlined areas or council districts, they can exacerbate inequity by implementing and perpetuating subjective and exclusionary practices. In addition to exclusionary zoning, early development in many U.S. cities (including Columbus) also included private restrictive covenants or deed restrictions that further shaped inequitable patterns of housing growth, diversity, and accessibility. See Figure 2 for the Columbus redlining map.

Redlining is a discriminatory practice that puts services (financial and otherwise) out of reach for residents of certain areas based on race or ethnicity. Beginning in 1936, the Homeowner's Loan Corporation & Federal Housing Administration provided guidance for issuance of government secured mortgages by mapping U.S. cities, including Columbus, with colors based on perceived lending risk. Yellow and red categories represent a "higher risk" area due to prejudiced and racist perceptions of neighborhoods, often where Black and people of color lived.
(City of Columbus, Investopedia.com, July 2021)

Since the last comprehensive update of the Columbus Zoning Code in the 1950s, land development patterns and priorities in the City of Columbus have changed dramatically. The existing Zoning Code (Code) (Title 33 of the Municipal Code) has seen many major and minor amendments. These amendments have primarily prioritized for suburban development, characterized by height restrictions, separation of uses, high parking minimums, and other requirements unfavorable to denser, walkable, connected, and mixed-use neighborhoods that pre-date the 1950's Code and comprise some of the City's most desirable neighborhoods. As a result, the existing Code inadequately protects the historic character of older neighborhoods. Moreover, it does not serve the diverse needs, priorities, and policies of a large and rapidly growing city, such as varied housing options, protection of job centers, and prioritization of transit-supportive, mixed-use corridors, as established in the City's policy initiatives (see Table 1 for a summary of key policy and vision documents).

Covers of C2P2 and Insight 2050

Table 1: Key Policy and Vision Documents

Policy Document	Summary
Columbus Citywide Planning Policies (C2P2)	C2P2 serve as a framework for neighborhood planning and development review. Based on best practices and policies developed by the City of Columbus over 20+ years of area and neighborhood planning, it includes guiding principles, design guidelines, land use policies, and land use plans for individual areas.
LinkUS	LinkUS seeks to provide a complete mobility system along key regional corridors, including high-capacity transit, transportation technology solutions, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, and new housing and job opportunities. The effort is led by the City of Columbus, COTA, MORPC, and Franklin County in cooperation with additional partners. Planning and design work is underway for a North-West transit line as well as an East-West corridor. The success of LinkUS will require coordinated land use policy and zoning mechanisms to accommodate transit-supportive development.
Sustainable Columbus	Sustainable Columbus was established in recognition of the role a healthy environment plays in Columbus continuing to be America's Opportunity City. A key aspect of the program is development of a Climate Action Plan to achieve the Mayor's goal that Columbus be carbon neutral by 2050.
Regional Housing Strategy	The Regional Housing Strategy, led by Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission in cooperation with regional partners, analyzes the Central Ohio housing market. The effort identifies barriers to affordability and strategies to address these challenges moving forward.
Insight 2050 Corridor Concepts	Insight 2050 Corridor Concepts, led by the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission in cooperation with regional partners, considers infill development and the use of advanced rapid transit for five corridors that served as models for the region. The study recommends mixed-use zoning districts to coincide with such corridors as a strategy for addressing regional growth.
Area Plans	Area Plans, adopted by City Council for much of Columbus, provide land use guidance used in consideration of development proposals. Plans often include design guidelines and area specific recommendations. Newer area plans are developed using the Columbus Citywide Planning Policies (C2P2) framework.

B. **Purpose of this Report.** The City hired a Consultant Team led by Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. (LWC) that includes Opticos Design, Inc., Peter J. Park, LLC, Warhol and Wallstreet, and MKSK, to evaluate the City's current Code and identify improvements to the regulations, land uses, and/or the entitlement process that would better implement City and Regional policies (including Columbus Citywide Planning Policies (C2P2), LinkUS, Insight 2050, Regional Housing Plan, Sustainable Columbus, etc.) and support high quality development that meets community needs.

The purpose of the Zoning Code Assessment Report (Report) is to summarize the analysis of the Zoning Code and related processes and identify how effectively the Code implements the planning and development goals expressed in the City's policy documents, provides user-friendly regulations that illustrate clear direction on the City's priorities, and facilitates equitable development through clear and effective standards and transparent review processes.

The Report is organized around five key findings listed below. The findings are the product of the Consultant Team's analysis, City staff and stakeholder interviews, results from three project studies, and an online survey. The findings are summarized in Section 2. Section 3 provides detail and analysis related to findings 1, 2 and 3. Section 4 provides detail and analysis related to findings 4 and 5.

1. Standards Are Not Tailored to Local Conditions

2. Code Does Not Prioritize Future Housing and Transit Needs Equitably

3. Code is Not User-Friendly

4. Overreliance on Site-by-Site Negotiated Zoning Actions

5. Multi-layered and Scattered Decision-Making Process Creates Uncertainty

1.3   Community Engagement

The Report is informed by a number of community engagement activities conducted in late-2020 and early-2021. The Consultant Team conducted 44 virtual interviews with over 70 stakeholders and City staff members where participants provided feedback on the successes and challenges of existing Code standards and processes. For more information on City staff and stakeholder interviews, see Attachment 2. Community members were also given an opportunity to provide input via an online survey. For more information on the survey, see Attachment 3.

City staff and the Consultant Team will conduct a community workshop to confirm findings and recommendations during the next steps of the project (see Section 1.4).

1.4   Next Steps

At the completion of this Report, the Consultant Team will collaborate with City staff to prepare a strategy to update the Code. The strategy will address and provide recommendations for all the relevant components of the update and approach, including: the type of code, format of the code, updates to standards and procedures, zoning map amendments, outreach and community engagement, and schedule.

2 Key Findings Summary

This Section summarizes the key findings of the City of Columbus Zoning Code Assessment based on the detailed analysis in Sections 3 and 4 on the standards and procedures. Since the last comprehensive update of the Columbus Zoning Code in the 1950s, land development patterns and priorities in the City of Columbus have changed dramatically. The existing Code supports suburban development, characterized by height restrictions, separation of uses, high parking minimums, and other Code requirements inconsistent with the City's vision of a more sustainable and equitable community. As a result, the existing Code is inadequate to serve the diverse needs, priorities, and policies of a large and rapidly growing, forward-thinking city.

1

Standards Are Not Tailored to Local Conditions

The standards in the Code are not tailored to local conditions or "context-based", meaning that they do not align with the historic patterns of neighborhoods dating back to the 1800's or the walkable, mixed-use development patterns envisioned in guiding documents such as C2P2 and area plans. Instead, the Code follows a one-size-fits-all approach, especially for base zoning districts and parking requirements. To compensate for this broad approach so that new development fits in with surrounding context, the City has established numerous overlays, historic districts, and special districts. However, these add complexity and unpredictability to the approval process and do not consistently improve the quality of built results in a sustainable way. The Code lacks standards that regulate building form, inform context sensitive design, foster predictable results, and create a relationship between private development and public spaces.

2

Code Does Not Prioritize Future Housing and Transit Needs Equitably

City and regional policy prioritizes housing and transit, but the Code is inadequate in facilitating affordable housing, protecting job centers, and encouraging transit-supportive, mixed-use corridors. City and regional partners such as the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) and the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) have focused on goals and strategies to encourage housing production and support investment in transit. To successfully implement these goals, C2P2, Insight 2050, and LinkUS recommend increased development capacity along key corridors, place-based standards that acknowledge existing and historic neighborhood development patterns, maintenance of key job centers, and reduced parking requirements in certain areas, among other initiatives. In addition, the Regional Housing Strategy (RHS) identifies barriers and potential solutions to the provision of affordable housing more broadly. Several of these policy efforts specifically identify zoning as a critical implementation element; however, the Code has not been updated to align with these policy goals. Instead, the City has relied on a complex, transactional process to circumvent obsolete regulations and achieve desired results. The transactional process is time consuming for all parties and strains City resources. In addition, the attention to process has drawn focus away from long range planning, contributes to inequity, and impedes housing development.

3

Code is Not User-Friendly

The ability to use and navigate a zoning code is vital to its effectiveness and its efficient and predictable administration. The Columbus Code is disorganized and difficult to navigate, with key information difficult to locate or missing entirely, and an ineffective use of illustrations and graphics.

4

Overreliance on Site-by-Site Negotiated Zoning Actions

To overcome outdated and ineffective Code standards and to align projects with adopted policy and community expectations, the City relies on project negotiations, variances, and rezonings. While rezonings and variances are necessary in some cases to allow property to change over time and accommodate unique site conditions, these legislative approvals should be exceptions rather than the typical path to project approval. A lengthy, time consuming, and highly negotiated process represents an unsustainable system which generates mistrust, reduces staff capacity, and overburdens decision makers with project approvals rather than focusing on broader citywide policy initiatives.

5

Multi-Layered and Scattered Decision-Making Process Creates Uncertainty

According to the findings of the stakeholder interviews, the zoning and development review process is perceived as so complex and byzantine that only those with substantial resources and a thorough knowledge of the process can achieve successful project approval. This makes the Code inaccessible to many, favors experienced developers, and discourages small land and business owners.

When asked "…what is working well…", the first response from stakeholders was City staff expertise and their ability to communicate. City staff handles an enormous amount of communication and coordination in the development process and is successful at finding solutions to complex problems. However, because the process is difficult to navigate and lacks clarity, there is mistrust between the community and City staff/officials. There is a belief that the City listens to and favors some neighborhoods more than others, and a perception that developers are trying to "cheat" or "bully" the neighborhood as evidenced by the high number of variances needed for project approvals.

Zoning Code and Zoning Review Process Performance Summary

As stated in Section 1, the purpose of the Zoning Code Assessment Report is to provide an analysis of the Zoning Code and related processes and identify how effectively the Code implements the planning and development goals expressed in the City's policy documents and facilitates equitable development through clear and effective standards and transparent review processes. More specifically, as the City prepares for the future it is vital that the Zoning Code:

- Effectively works 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.

With that in mind, the Assessment evaluated the Code and process based on the following key metrics:

- **Effectiveness** - How well does the Code or process contribute to or help lead to implementation of the City's policy framework and priorities for growth management?

- **Predictability** - How well does the Code or process provide objective direction, meet expectations, and contribute to dependable and consistent outcomes?

- **Quality** - How well does the Code or process deliver a valuable, long-lasting, attractive built environment that creates a sense of place and builds community vitality?

- **Equity** - How well does the Code or process promote a fair and objective development process for all residents of Columbus?

Using the key findings on pages 6 and 7 as the organizing framework, Table 2 below shows how the development standards in the Code and the zoning review process perform based on the metrics above (effectiveness, predictability, quality, and equity).

Overall, the Code and process do not perform well across the metrics. They were generally found to be inadequate to implement the City's priorities, contribute to consistent outcomes, build community vitality, or provide a fair and objective development review process. See Sections 3 and 4 and Tables 4 and 5 for more detailed analysis and information supporting these results.

The Code and process performance are rated on the following scale:

- Low = inadequate in satisfying the metric

- Medium = somewhat adequate in satisfying the metric

- High = effective in satisfying the metric

- Mixed = satisfies the metric in varied ways

- NA = has no relationship to the metric

Table 2: Zoning Code and Process Performance Summary

Finding	Effectiveness		Predictability		Quality		Equity	
Standards are Not Tailored to Local Conditions (Development Standards Evaluated)	Low	Med	Low	Mixed	Low	Med	Low	
Code Does Not Prioritize Future Housing and Transit Needs Equitably (Development Standards Evaluated)	Low		Low		Low	Mixed	Low	
Code is Not User-Friendly (Code Format Evaluated)	Low		Low		Low		Low	
Overreliance on Site-by-Site Negotiated Zoning Actions (Development Review Process Evaluated)	Low		Low		Mixed		Low	
Multi-layered and Scattered Decision-Making Process Creates Uncertainty (Development Review Process Evaluated)	Low	Mixed	Low	Mixed	Mixed		Low	Mixed

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3 Assessment of the Code

The Code is located in Title 33 (Zoning Code) of the City Code of Ordinances. The purpose of the Code is to protect the public's health, safety, and welfare; ensure orderly, predictable growth; implement community planning goals; and maximize public benefits. To achieve this, the Code controls how private property can be used and developed through regulations that shape and define the built environment, including standards for land use, site development, parking, landscaping, lighting, and signs. This Section of the Report focuses on elements of the Code the create obstacles to achieving City policy objectives and make the Code difficult to use and understand.

Assessment and Findings

The Code assessment is based on:

- Results from three project studies (Attachment 1):
  - The Franklin Condos (1670 East Broad St.)
  - The Yardley (122 Parsons Ave.)
  - The Belmont House (3255 McKinley Ave.)
- Personal interviews with City staff and stakeholders (Attachment 2),
- Consultant Team meetings with City staff,
- Results from the Citywide online survey (Attachment 3),
- Review of the Code, policy documents, and other related documents (including *Emerging Trends and Issues for Consideration*), and
- National best practices for Code and development.

The analysis resulted in three major findings:

- *Standards Are Not Tailored to Local Conditions*
- *Code Does Not Prioritize Future Housing and Transit Needs Equitably*
- *Code is Not User-Friendly*

Section 3301.01- Purpose:
This Zoning Code, pursuant to the Columbus City Charter and Article XVIII, Section 3, of the Ohio Constitution which grants municipalities the legal authority to adopt land use and control measures, is enacted to preserve and promote the public health, safety and welfare by means of regulations and restrictions enacted pursuant to a comprehensive plan designed to, among other purposes, encourage the orderly growth and development of the city; provide for adequate light, air, open space and convenience of access; protect against fire and natural hazards; and maintain and enhance the value of buildings, structures and land throughout the city.
(Columbus, Ohio Code of Ordinances)

Figure 3: Franklin Condos Development Standards Analysis

Example diagrams of Franklin Condos project studies (see Attachment 1)

3.1 Standards Are Not Tailored to Local Conditions

The standards in the Code are not tailored to local conditions or "context-based", meaning that they do not align with the varied, historic, and evolving patterns of development, subdivision, and infrastructure that have occurred since the 1800s[1]. Instead, the Code follows a one-size-fits-all approach, especially for base zoning districts and parking requirements (see Figure 4). In order to support desirable historic and future development patterns, the regulatory system has been modified with a range of overlay and special districts. However, these add complexity and inconsistency to the approval process and do not consistently improve the quality of built results in a sustainable way. The Code lacks standards that regulate building form, inform context sensitive design, foster predictable results, and create a relationship between private development and public spaces.

A. **Inadequate Base Zoning Districts and Overlays/Special Districts.** The Code establishes 41 use districts, including various types of residential, commercial, institutional, and manufacturing districts. The regulations for the districts are spread out in the Code and difficult to navigate. More importantly, the standards are not context based and do not regulate different parts of the City based on historic patterns of

development or future goals for growth and development. For instance, residential districts in urban neighborhoods do not have development standards to reflect smaller parcels and dense development patterns.

In the commercial zones, C-1 to C-4, the development standards (District Setback Lines) are the same, and the differences in the permitted uses are relatively minor between zones. These zones are not supportive of smaller-scale businesses or modern commercial uses. Even though many area plans and C2P2 identify areas for mixed-use development, the only mixed-use designations are tied to Downtown and East Franklinton. While the Apartment Residential Office District (AR-O) allows some office uses, and commercial districts (C-1, C-2, C-3, and C-4) allows some residential uses, these districts were not established to promote mixed-used development with integrated design, access, parking, signage, and other onsite development considerations.

> The standards are not context based and do not regulate different parts of the City based on historic patterns of development or future goals for growth and development. Even though C2P2 and area plans call for mixed-use development, the Code does not have any objective, mixed-use zoning districts.

Figure 4: Selection of Local Conditions in the Brewery District
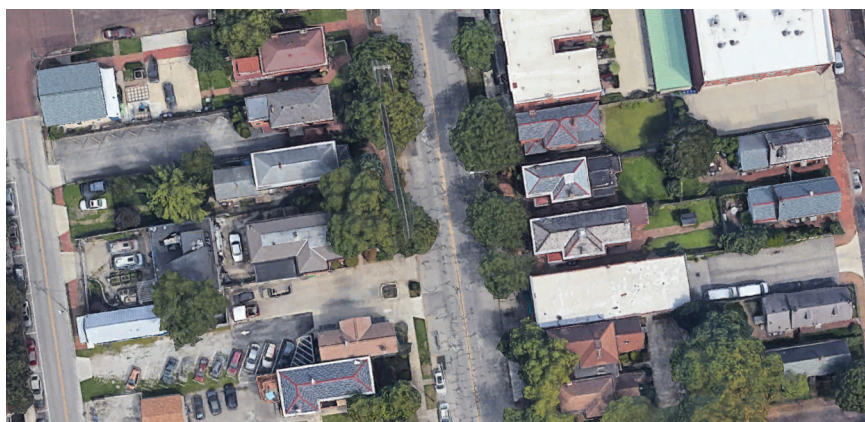
The Code establishes the same standards for very different contexts. The above examples reflect local conditions in two areas with the same base zoning that are two blocks from one another. Source: Google Earth.
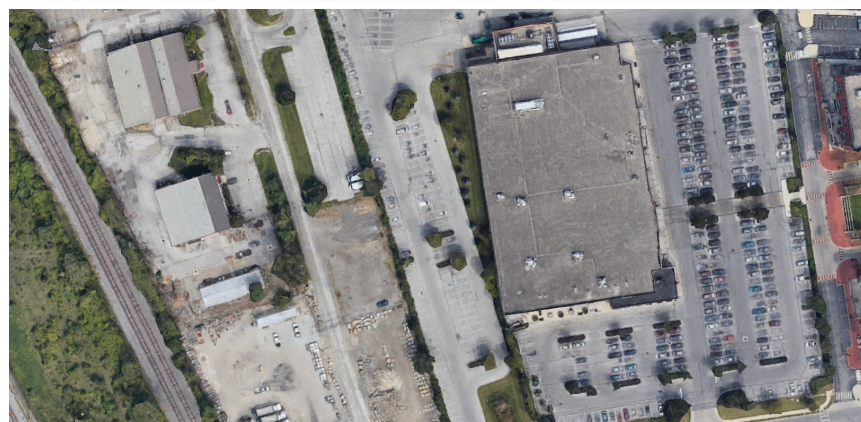
1. The City was incorporated in 1816 (https://ohiohistorycentral.org/w/ColumbusOhio).

In addition to the 41 established use districts, the Code features seven overlay districts: five Planning Overlays (Urban Scenic Byway, Urban Commercial, Community Commercial, Regional Commercial, and Hellbranch Run Watershed Protection), Airport Environs Overlay, and Limited Overlay. There are also four height districts (35 ft., 60 ft., 110 ft., and 200 ft.) and three area specific districts/overlays with their own standards, review procedures, and requirements (Downtown, University District, and East Franklinton).

Generally, overlay districts should establish standards that modify or supplement base zoning provisions due to unique area constraints or opportunities and should only be used in special circumstances (e.g., Airport Environs Overlay). Overlay districts add layers of regulations and contribute to a more complicated process, diminishing predictability and effectiveness.

In Columbus, overlays are often used to fix a problem when a base zoning district is ineffective, instead of rectifying the underlying issue in the district. The Planning Overlays (applied to over 49 distinct geographic subareas) are an example of this problem. These overlays apply a patchwork of requirements without context. For instance, the Regional Commercial Overlay focuses on landscaping and screening on commercial corridors to improve aesthetics. The Community Commercial Overlay (CCO) and Urban Commercial Overlay (UCO) are intended to enhance pedestrian-oriented development patterns. They apply to specific corridors and areas, and regulate retail, restaurant, and office uses with setback, building design, sign, landscaping, and other regulations in addition to the regulations in the underlying base zoning districts. The CCO and UCO are well intended, but the

regulations apply universally to a wide variety of contexts and areas that warrant standards appropriately tailored to local conditions. For more information on the UCO, see Section 3.1.B.

The Limited Overlay (Chapter 3370) provides tools for situations where the minimum development standards of an underlying zoning district are deemed inadequate to protect or maintain compatibility of land uses. Applicants for a rezoning may voluntarily seek limitations on uses, increases to minimum development standards, or the addition of other conditions through a Limited Overlay. These Overlays are used to modify the base zone regulations on a site-by-site basis, as well as to gain community and staff support by narrowing the uses or scale of future development potential that would otherwise be allowed under the base zone. Since there is no minimum site requirement for the Limited Overlay, the result is the creation of hundreds of individual zones with unique sets of regulations and allowed uses, tying project approvals to site specific development regulations that persist when the property is sold or converts to a new use. Custom, negotiated zoning on a site-by-site basis creates uneven property rights that add complexity and uncertainty in Code administration and requires greater due diligence in land transactions.

The Code establishes height limitations through a series of height districts, which are applied according to each base use district. For example, the AR-12, ARLD and AR-3 apartment residential districts and the AR-O apartment office district are designated to be in the 35-foot height district, while the AR-1, AR-2 and AR-4 apartment

Best Practice: Overlay Districts establish standards that uniformly modify or supplement base zoning provisions based on unique area constraints or opportunities (e.g., geographic, topographic, environmental, etc.) and should only be used in special circumstances. Overlays should not be used to fix issues in the underlying base zoning district or accommodate individual modifications.

The vast majority of the 580 rezonings approved from January 2011 through December 2020 resulted in site-specific conditions through the use of limitation text, planned districts or an accompanying Council Variance. Limited zonings and planned districts are used to adapt the Code to site-specific development conditions and achieve community and/or staff support. Each case involves a unique and often detailed set of requirements reflected in the individual ordinance. This presents challenges for zoning compliance and transparency.
(City of Columbus, Staff Analysis, 2021)

residential districts are designated to be in the 60-foot height district. The rationale behind height districts is unclear, because the lot sizes and densities are similar in the base districts and there is no context in terms of location of the height districts in the City. Additionally, the Downtown District does not establish height limitations, but requires individual project review.

The developer of the Yardley project (see Attachment 1) pursued a variance from the 35-foot height district in order to develop a 4-story mixed-use building, consistent with policy direction for this opportunity site in the urban core. The variance allowed for a 52-foot-tall structure. On a case-by-case basis, variances will be needed along this and other corridors to implement area plans, C2P2, and other City policy objectives such as supporting transit and allowing for additional housing.

> **The Code establishes Height Districts that provide height limits at set increments for all new development. Height Districts are applied according to base use district, not by geography.**

Performance Summary: This complex amalgam of zoning tools creates a regulatory system that does not effectively implement the City's policy framework and priorities for growth management. Years of piecemeal zoning amendments to overcome inadequate base zones has further complicated the Code. The development standards are not objective and do not provide consistent and predictable outcomes or clear guidance for compatible development.

> **The Code lacks objective, "form-based" standards and leads to unpredictable results that are ineffective in supporting pedestrian-oriented environments and existing development patterns of the Old City.**

B. **Minimal Form Controls.** The Code establishes development standards for each district, including lot size, lot area per unit (i.e. density), and building lines and yards (i.e. setbacks), but not all districts include workable standards for lot coverage, intensity (e.g. Floor Area Ratio), building size or scale, relationship to other buildings or lots, or more explicit building type or building façade requirements to regulate building form. The lack of these types of objective, "form-based" standards leads to unpredictable results that are ineffective in supporting pedestrian-oriented environments and the existing development pattern of the older city.

As an example, East Broad Street is a primary east-west corridor in the City. The AR-O district applies along much of East Broad Street (see Figure 5), but this district does not establish standards suitable for an urban project along a primary corridor. The standards include a minimum lot size of 20,000 square feet for multifamily projects, a height limit of 35 feet (as established by the accompanying height district), and percentage-based side setback requirements (min. 20 percent of lot width for side yards) that get larger as the site area increases. Taken together, these standards do not reflect the existing pattern of historic development and do not promote walkable, transit-supportive environment as proposed in the applicable area plan and encouraged through C2P2 and other initiatives.

Additionally, there is little difference among zoning districts in the Code. For example, the setbacks in the C-1 through C-4 districts are regulated the same. Since heights are regulated by height districts and no intensity standards (e.g., floor area ratio, lot coverage, etc.) are established, these four commercial zoning districts have the same development standards, with the only difference being permitted uses even though they're supposed to regulate commercial activity from the neighborhood to regional scale. Even the UCO provides minimal direction on building design (Section 3372.605), such as building placement, breaking long building façades into smaller increments, upper story windows, and roof mounted equipment.

The Code is also silent on other important design considerations like specific features of façade design (e.g., shop fronts, galleries, arcades, stoops), upper story stepbacks, parking placement, and the design and placement of open space. While C2P2 and area plans have design policies and guidelines, the Code lacks the standards to implement most of this policy direction. Opportunities for addressing design concerns primarily occur only when applicants are going through an extensive approval process, such as a rezoning, variance, or design review (see the findings on the development review process in Section 4).

Performance Summary: The Code, with minimal form controls, creates a regulatory system that is not effective or predictable in implementing the City's policy framework and priorities for growth management, because the regulations are not objective and do not mirror the policy guidance in C2P2 and other planning documents. As such, the form-controls (or lack thereof) struggle to produce high-quality built results as they are inconsistent and overly complex as well as inequitable due to uneven application of form controls and a complicated and costly process.

C. **Prohibitive Parking Provisions.** Parking has shaped the built environment of American cities for almost a century. Due to the inefficiencies and amount of space required for parking, negative impacts on aesthetics, and cost, many cities are rethinking parking minimums[2] and developing market-based parking strategies to promote economic development, support transit, and encourage more affordable housing.

The off-street parking requirements of the Code (Chapter 3312) were updated in 2010 to reduce minimum parking requirements and create maximum parking thresholds. The stated purpose of Chapter 3312 (Off-Street Parking and Loading) includes "assur[ing] the provision of at least the minimum number of off-street parking spaces for each use." The Code also includes more innovative standards unique to specific areas of the City, such as Downtown and the Short North (listed below). However, the result is a patchwork of parking requirements that are often poorly matched to true parking demand.

> Council Variances (CVs) have become a primary strategy in working around the Code's minimal form controls, adding to administrative burden and diminishing transparency in the review process. For more information, see Section 4.

Figure 5: Selection of Zoning Map on East Broad Street
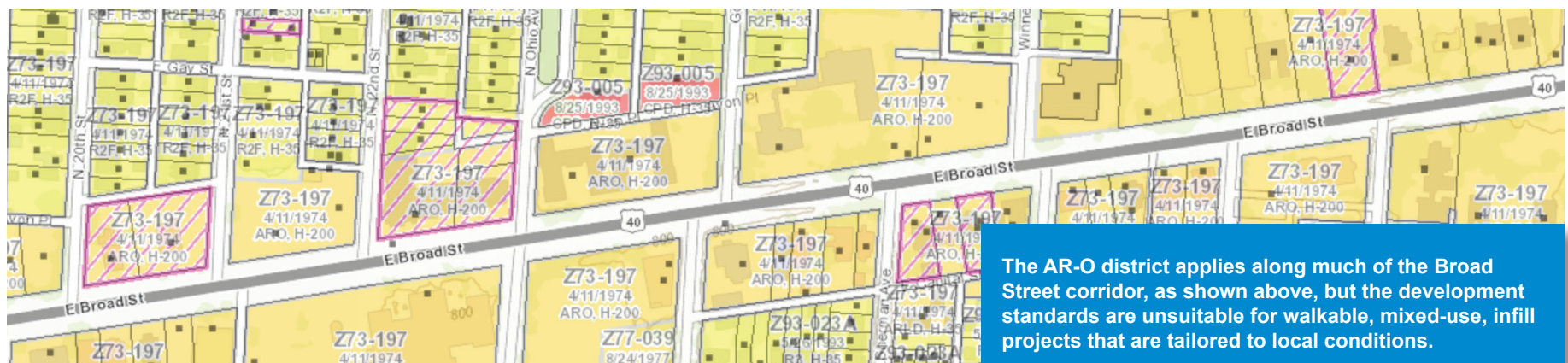
> The AR-O district applies along much of the Broad Street corridor, as shown above, but the development standards are unsuitable for walkable, mixed-use, infill projects that are tailored to local conditions.

2. For more information, see: Minus Minimums, Daniel Baldwin Hess, Jeffrey Rehler, 2021

- Chapter 3359 (Downtown District) has no parking requirements, however each project undergoes design review.

- Section 3312.05 (Special Parking Area) allows parking areas to be created to achieve specific development or traffic objectives. Similar to the Downtown Special Parking Area, the Short North Special Parking Area (Section 33.12.051) demonstrates a place-based approach to parking standards encouraging walkability and businesses by reducing parking minimums and eliminating them completely for art galleries and retail uses 2,500 square feet or less. This provides a useful model for consideration in other parts of the City.

Table 3 provides examples of parking requirements for the same type of development in different parts of the City as compared to the requirements adopted in 1954. With the exception of Downtown and the University area, the parking requirements have increased for these types of development since 1954. In addition, the base zone requirements, which cover 90 percent of the City, are the same regardless of location or context (walkability and parcel size).

This blanket approach to requiring the same number of spaces, regardless of neighborhood density, street network, access to transit, or the historic context, leads to a large number of variance requests from parking requirements in urban neighborhoods. The City has processed hundreds of Council and Board of Zoning Adjustment variances resulting in a reduction of thousands of parking spaces. Parking reductions are the most common variance request. The studied projects (Franklin Condominiums, Yardley, and Belmont House) (see Attachment 1) all received variances for parking placement and/or parking space requirement reductions.

Performance Summary: Overall, off-street parking provisions are not effective in implementing the City's policy framework and priorities for growth management, because of the blanket approach to requiring the same number of spaces in most of the City regardless of the context. Due to the large number of variances in urban neighborhoods, the standards do not provide objective direction or contribute to predictable development outcomes. Except for a few areas where the standards have been more tailored to on-the-ground conditions, the standards do not contribute to quality built results.

Table 3: Parking Requirement Example

Space Requirements	100 1-Bedroom Multi-Family Units	2,500 sf. Retail	2,500 sf. Restaurant
Base Code (applies to over 90% of City)	150	10	34
Downtown District	0	0	0
Urban Commercial Overlay & East Franklinton District	150	5	26
University District Overlay - Regional Commercial Subarea	50	5	17
Short North Special Parking Area	100	0	17
1954 Citywide Standards	100	6	9

Source: City of Columbus, Staff Analysis, 2020

This blanket approach to parking requirements regardless of neighborhood density, street network, access to transit, or the historic context, leads to a large number of variance requests from parking requirements in urban neighborhoods. Parking reductions are the most common variance request.

D. **Historic Preservation and Design Review Challenges.** The Historic Resources Commission (HRC) was established in 1980 and is composed of seven mayoral appointees. The HRC considers applications and issues Certificates of Appropriateness (COAs) for exterior alterations in 14 designated historic districts and approximately 80 individually listed properties on the Columbus Register of Historic Properties, pursuant to Columbus City Code Chapters 3116 and 3117. Many of the landmarks are also listed on the National Register of Historic Places while some are designated National Historic Landmarks.

Four additional historic commissions (Brewery District, German Village, Italian Village, and Victorian Village), outlined in Columbus City Code Chapter 3119, oversee design review in their areas of jurisdiction. The Board of Commission Appeals meets as needed to review contested decisions. While not carrying historic designation, design review is also applied in three special districts covered by the Downtown Commission, University Impact District Review Board, and the East Franklinton Review Board. These bodies are all staffed by the Planning Division and collectively require the work of over sixty volunteers.

As with any community experiencing rapid growth, the historic fabric of the City is vulnerable to loss. Demolition is controlled by the HRC for properties on the Columbus Register of Historic Properties or by one of four area specific historic commissions. While demolition is not prohibited in other areas with design review (Downtown, East Franklinton and the University Impact District), it is often part of the broader consideration of proposals. In all other instances, demolition may be pursued after a sixty-day waiting period.

While there is recognition of the value of historic preservation; design review can be complex, may entail higher up-front costs, and is demanding of City staff resources (for more information, see Section 4.2.B). Adopted planning policy, such as C2P2, prioritizes preservation and adaptive reuse of older buildings. However, outside of properties on the Columbus Register of Historic Properties or within a designated historic district or design review area, the City does not have a legal framework to identify historic resources (such as contributors to historic districts) during the entitlement process to determine if the proposal would have an adverse impact on the historic resource. Currently, this is only achieved as part of the negotiation process when other zoning changes (e.g. rezonings or variances) are requested. Preservation is used as a negotiating tactic for parking reductions or density increases (see Section 4.2.B).

Performance Summary: The historic preservation and design review requirements contribute to a process that is generally effective, but not always predictable in implementing the City's policy framework and priorities for growth management. The requirements help to deliver a high-quality built environment that supports a sense of place and neighborhood vitality. However, historic review and design review require substantial staff resources and cover a small portion of the City, leaving most areas without a more consistent, predictable review process to preserve historic resources.
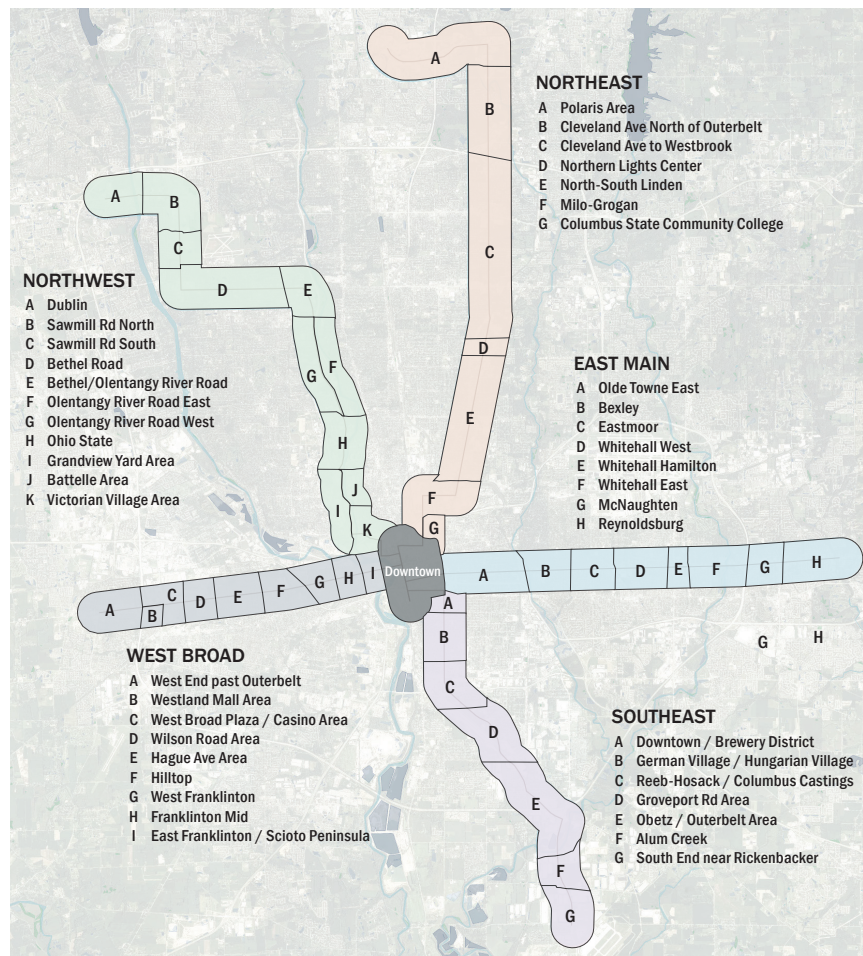
> **Outside of properties on the Columbus Register of Historic Properties or within a designated historic district or design review area, the City does not have a legal framework to identify historic resources (such as contributors to historic districts) during the entitlement process and to determine if a proposal would have an adverse impact on a historic resource.**

> **Consistent with national best practices, the procedure for design review and the review of historic resources/structures should ideally be conducted as two distinctly separate review methodologies. While there is some overlap between these procedures, design review should focus on design standards for such elements as built form, color, materials, and neighborhood context, while the review of historic structures will emphasize historic integrity and compatibility consistent with Department of Interior Standards.**

NORTHEAST
A   Polaris Area
B   Cleveland Ave North of Outerbelt
C   Cleveland Ave to Westbrook
D   Northern Lights Center
E   North-South Linden
F   Milo-Grogan
G   Columbus State Community College

NORTHWEST
A   Dublin
B   Sawmill Rd North
C   Sawmill Rd South
D   Bethel Road
E   Bethel/Olentangy River Road
F   Olentangy River Road East
G   Olentangy River Road West
H   Ohio State
I   Grandview Yard Area
J   Battelle Area
K   Victorian Village Area

EAST MAIN
A   Olde Towne East
B   Bexley
C   Eastmoor
D   Whitehall West
E   Whitehall Hamilton
F   Whitehall East
G   McNaughten
H   Reynoldsburg

WEST BROAD
A   West End past Outerbelt
B   Westland Mall Area
C   West Broad Plaza / Casino Area
D   Wilson Road Area
E   Hague Ave Area
F   Hilltop
G   West Franklinton
H   Franklinton Mid
I   East Franklinton / Scioto Peninsula

SOUTHEAST
A   Downtown / Brewery District
B   German Village / Hungarian Village
C   Reeb-Hosack / Columbus Castings
D   Groveport Rd Area
E   Obetz / Outerbelt Area
F   Alum Creek
G   South End near Rickenbacker

Source: Insight2050 Corridor Concepts, Implementation Toolkit, April 2019

> **While policy direction aims to prioritize housing and transit, there are numerous equity issues as a result of the type and pattern of development the Code allows. The Code makes it difficult to develop in areas that have historically suffered from disinvestment which contributes to the continuation of sprawl and exacerbates the problem of disproportionate access to jobs, services, and amenities, and increased transportation costs for lower-income households.**

3.2   Code Does Not Prioritize Future Housing and Transit Needs Equitably

The City, Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), and other partners have developed policy guidance that underscores the value and importance of higher density/intensity development along key corridors, place-based standards that acknowledge existing and historic neighborhood development patterns, maintenance of key job centers, and context-sensitive parking provisions, among other priorities and initiatives.

Key policy themes from these documents are:

• Prioritize growth through infill development rather than outward growth/annexations,

• Increase intensity on primary corridors, existing shopping centers, and commercial sites,

• Revitalize/enhance neighborhoods through compatible infill of gentle density where appropriate,

• Focus retail on corridors/centers as part of mixed-use development,

• Protect employee-based land uses and job centers,

• Use design guidelines and preservation to ensure quality,

• Balance parking needs with goal of supporting walkability, transit use, etc., and

• Preserve natural resources.

While City and regional policy direction aims to prioritize housing and transit, there are numerous equity issues as a result of the type and pattern of development the Code allows. The Code's lack of contextual development standards and emphasis on the separation of land uses makes it difficult to develop in areas that have historically suffered from disinvestment which contributes to the continuation of sprawl and exacerbates the problem of disproportionate access to jobs, services, and amenities, and increased transportation costs for lower-income households. Additionally, the Code has not been updated to align with new City policy or adopted plans, meaning areas that are identified for change (such as more housing or including affordable housing) remain

regulated by standards that promote lower-density development patterns. While staff has been successful in negotiating the approval of higher density residential projects with elements of affordability, the lack of coordination between guiding policy and the Code limits incentives for infill development over greenfield development.

To get a better understanding of how the Code does not prioritize future housing and transit needs equitably, this Section demonstrates: 1) that it is easier to submit a project inconsistent with City policy, 2) the Code does not support the Regional Housing Strategy, and 3) the focus of City planning has shifted to greater involvement in development review from long range planning.

A. **Easier to Submit a Project that is Inconsistent with City Policy/ Vision.** The development standards in the Code have not been updated to implement the policy and vision established by City and regional plans. Areas envisioned for more housing or commercial development remain regulated by base zoning districts established prior to the updated policy or plan. Key growth planning initiatives, such as the 2019 Insight2050 Corridor Concepts report, provide policy direction to address zoning inadequacies along key corridor areas in Columbus (e.g. East Main, Southeast, West Broad, Northwest, and Northeast) (see Figures 6 and 7). Due to the mismatch between zoning standards and envisioned development patterns, Insight2050 recommends new context-based zoning districts (urban mixed-use and compact mixed-use).

The City uses a mixture of tools to accommodate the desired development patterns, such as time-consuming, site-by-site CVs (see Section 4.4) and overlays/special districts (see Section 3.1.A). It is easier for applicants to pursue projects that are consistent with the base zoning standards, but inconsistent with the City's policies. Only when an applicant requests a rezone or a variance can the City negotiate to implement components of the plan. This leads to a more extensive review process, which is not always mandatory.

Figure 7: LinkUS Framework Strategy
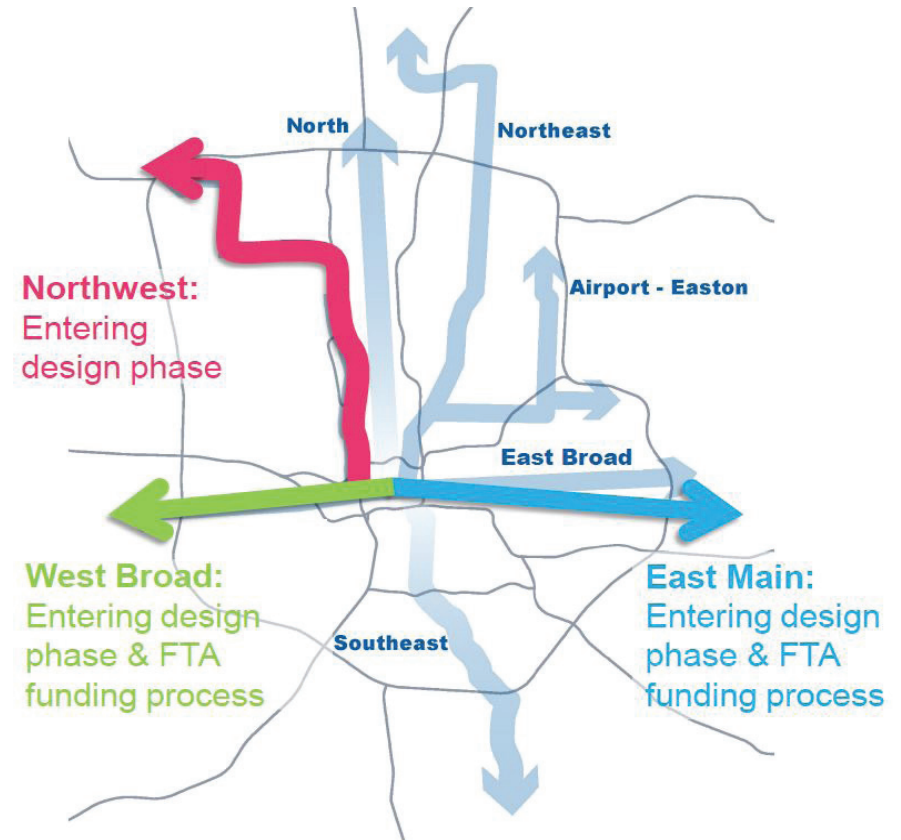
Source: LinkUS

For example, the Franklin Condos, on East Broad Street, provide 36 units with parking access behind the building, not visible from East Broad Street. The project is generally considered a successful reflection of local policy. The Franklin Condo project was constructed on a parcel zoned Apartment Residential District (AR-O) and subject to the 2005 Near East Area Plan (NEAP). The height, setback, and related standards within the AR-O Zone promote lower density development on large lots (20,000 square feet) with large setbacks (50 feet), and limited height (35 feet). The NEAP, on the other hand, highlights the corridor's beauty and historical significance, and the development strategy indicates a desire for mixed-use, medium to high-density development that respects historic buildings and adds new structures consistent with the neighborhood's character. The historic character is defined in the East Broad Street Design Guidelines, which are intended for use with new development. East Broad has also been identified by the LinkUS initiative as a key mobility corridor.

The project, as constructed, was only possible through obtaining a number of CVs and staff negotiating with the applicant to modify the project to more closely align with the NEAP. If the project was consistent with the Code, and not been subject to staff, Area Commission, or City Council review, the resulting development would not have reflected the vision or intent of the NEAP (See Figure 8). The variances not only allowed flexibility from the AR-O district standards, they triggered the additional review needed to achieve greater consistency with applicable policy direction and better align with the City's growth targets. See Attachment 1 for more information.

Performance Summary: Overall, the Code is unable to implement policy direction without requests for deviation from the requirements, leading to an ineffective, unpredictable, inequitable process that may deliver high-quality built results only through arduous development review and negotiation.

> It is easier for applicants to pursue projects that are consistent with the base zoning standards, but inconsistent with the City's policies. Only when an applicant requests a rezone or a variance can the City negotiate to implement components of the plan. This leads to a more extensive review process, which is not mandatory and can be avoided.

Figure 8: Franklin Condos Code Allowances and Requirements

No provisions for building form, massing, articulation, intensity, or other tools that are aligned with policy initiatives.

35' height limit

42.75' min. front setback

54 min. parking spaces

Example diagram of Franklin Condos analysis

B. **Code and Process Do Not Support the Regional Housing Strategy.** The Code also does not implement the Central Ohio Regional Housing Strategy (RHS), creating a barrier to achieving the City's economic growth and equity goals. The September 2020 RHS Executive Summary identified barriers to equitable development, which are not reconciled in the Code, including antipathy towards density, increased cost and uncertainty of the current development process, and a lack of incentives for affordable housing development.

RHS Barrier: Not-In-My-Backyard (NIMBY) attitudes and negative perceptions about housing density and affordability, resulting in a lack of public and political support that affects development feasibility in Central Ohio.[3]

According to the RHS (see Figure 9), political and neighborhood perception are so significant in Central Ohio that developers identified them as the second-biggest negative influence on feasibility (out of 14 factors). The RHS went on to say that, "Political and public support can make or break a development project, and denser or subsidized homes often encounter negative perceptions. This is especially true during approval processes requiring public consultation, such as rezoning." This concurs with information collected in the Technical Assessment (see Section 4.2).

RHS Barrier: Uncertainty associated with local land use processes and standards, driven by significant variations in local policies, processes and standards with little centralized information to help navigate the process. This increases the time and cost of development.[3]

To some extent, this barrier to development is multi-jurisdictional issue based on variations in requirements between jurisdictions and access to centralized information and resources. As discussed in Section 3.1, the City's Code is unpredictable because of the complex hierarchy of regulations and the lack of objective development standards. The entitlement process is also unpredictable and inequitable due to the challenges and excessive time required to navigate the system and the large volume of one-off zoning actions (see Section 4.1).

Figure 9: NIMBY Attitudes

Not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) attitudes.

According to regional developers, NIMBY attitudes affect development feasibility in Central Ohio. Political and public support can make or break a development project, and denser or subsidized homes often encounter negative perceptions. This is especially true during approval processes requiring public consultation, such as rezoning. Political and neighborhood perceptions of a project are so impactful that developers identified them as the second-biggest factor negatively affecting development feasibility in our survey (out of 14 factors). This was affirmed by the broader stakeholder groups that participated in the Regional Housing Strategy.

Answer Choices	Responses
Local Land Use Regulations	68.8%
Politics and Neighborhood Perception	64.6%
Planning and Design Guidelines	37.5%
Construction Materials Costs	34.5%
Infrastructure Costs	29.2%
Construction Labor Costs	27.1%
Neighborhood Factors	14.6%
Development Review Costs	8.3%
Financing: access to debt, equity, and government incentives	6.3%
Other (please explain)	6.3%
Federal Land Use Regulations	2.1%
Proximity to employers, healthcare, education, healthy foods, and transit	2.1%
Operations and Maintenance Costs	2.1%
State Land Use Regulations	0.0%

Table 7. Developer survey feedback on the top 3 factors negatively impacting development feasibility in Central Ohio

[4]Based on analysis of pro formas for Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) projects in Central Ohio.
[5]Based on share of developers' projects subject to cost.
[6]Based on average cost when present; expressed as share of total development costs.

Source: MORPC Regional Housing Strategy, September 2020

RHS Barrier: Increasing costs of residential development, including land costs, site selection, and regulatory costs. This can decrease production, particularly of housing at lower price points. The increased cost of construction materials and labor were identified as key drivers in the economics of residential development in Central Ohio.[3]

Relative to the Technical Assessment of the City's Zoning Code, the primary issues that surfaced in the RHS for this barrier to housing production are the cost to apply for zoning approvals (i.e., zoning actions), costs associated with delays, and costs of development requirements that go beyond basic standards (e.g., changes to property layout, landscaping, and materials). Findings related to the process are discussed in Section 4. However, the costs associated with development requirements that go beyond basic standards should be of concern to the City. As discussed throughout this Report, since the base zoning standards are ineffective and outdated, the City consistently negotiates with applicants on a case-by-case basis. In many cases, the negotiations result in a different outcome than what is allowed under the existing standards and often go beyond the requirements in the Code. Developers are typically concerned about the hard costs of a project, but they are also worried about unexpected costs in the predevelopment phase, which increase overall risk.

> **The Code lacks requirements or incentives for affordable housing, such as inclusionary housing requirements, community benefit programs, or density bonuses. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are not defined in the current Code and are not allowed by-right.**

RHS Barrier: Need for more assistance than available resources, across multiple fronts. From rental assistance to support for home repairs, demand dwarfs available programs. This need plays out in the region's housing finance landscape, as well, where limited gap financing has created an overdependence on Low-Income Housing Tax Credits to produce affordable housing in the regions.[3]

In Columbus, like many cities, there is a limited supply of safe, high quality affordable housing while the demand for financial assistance dwarfs available programs. The Code does not play a direct role in the housing finance equation, but it can encourage or require affordable units as part of a broader housing strategy to achieve housing and equity goals. Currently, the Code lacks requirements or incentives for affordable housing, such as inclusionary housing requirements, community benefit programs, or density bonuses. To be effective, these regulatory programs need to be calibrated to local market conditions, but they've been successful in cities across the county in creating affordable units and other community amenities.

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) can also provide more affordable housing; however, ADUs are not defined in the current Code and are not allowed by-right. Currently, construction of an ADU typically requires approval of a CV.

Performance Summary: Overall, the Code is not supportive of RHS objectives and it contributes to community perceptions of NIMBYism. Furthermore, it adds to the uncertainty and unpredictable nature of development due to the complex hierarchy of regulations, the lack of objective development standards, challenges and time required to navigate the system, and the large volume of one-off zoning actions. For these reasons, the Code does not promote a fair and objective development process to deliver affordable housing.

3. Source: MORPC Regional Housing Strategy, September 2020

C. **Focus of City Planning has Shifted from Long Range Planning to Greater Involvement in Development Review.** The City's Planning Division has evolved substantially since the adoption of the 1993 Comprehensive Plan. Emphasis at that time was on citywide planning policy, area plans, and special projects. Today, the Planning Division is more focused on development review due to the number of design review boards (eight, including Historic Resources Commission) and a high degree of engagement with the zoning and variance processes. (As noted above, projects are only reviewed for consistency with City plans through a zoning or variance request.)

The Planning Division staffs five historic commissions, three design review boards, the Board of Commission Appeals, the Columbus Art Commission, and two interjurisdictional review panels, and a targeted neighborhood capital improvements program. The Division also supports efforts to address place-based social determinants of health impacting infant mortality. See Section 4.2.B for more information on the Design Review process.

As discussed in Section 3.1, the Code is inadequate to serve the diverse needs, priorities, and policies of a large, and rapidly growing city, such as affordable housing, protection of job centers, and encouragement of transit-supportive, mixed-use corridors. As the standards became outdated and ineffective, the City has relied increasingly on a complex transactional process to circumvent the obsolete regulations. The transactional and highly curated process is time consuming for all parties, particularly staff, applicants, board and commission volunteers, and elected officials. This is a strain on City resources with far-reaching implications. The attention to process draws the City's focus away from long range planning, contributes to inequity (see Section 4.1), and impedes housing development (see Section 3.2.B). Figure 10 illustrates the relationship between the development standards, the approval process, and long-range planning.

> As the Code standards have become outdated over time, the City has relied increasingly on a complex transactional process to circumvent the obsolete regulations. The transactional and highly curated process is time consuming for all parties and has no comprehensive planning policy to universally implement through Code standards. This is a strain on City resources with far-reaching implications.

Figure 10: Standards, Procedures, and Long Range Planning
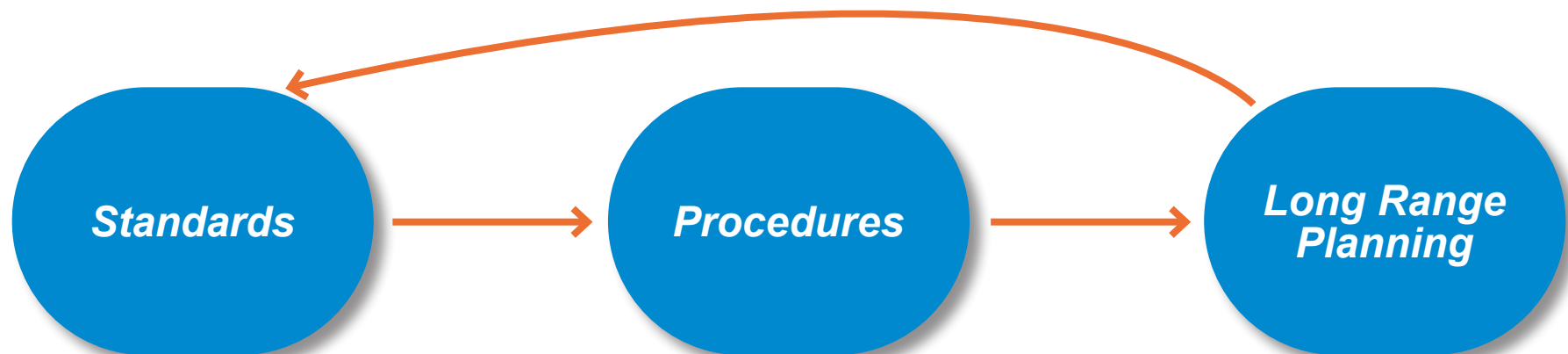
Outdated and ineffective standards leads to a more transactional, time-consuming, and unpredictable process. This resource intensive process can detract from long-range planning, which provides direction for implementation and updates to the Code.

This shift to a focus on processing applications has had negative consequences for long-range planning and the implementation of policy. These include:

- It is unclear if the City's growth priorities in C2P2 and other initiatives (such as Insight2050) are understood and accepted by the community.

- The City has identified growth priorities with C2P2 and other policy documents. However, the City has not developed a comprehensive, citywide recommended land use map to guide development and zoning amendments. Given the transactional nature of the approval process, implementation of growth priorities is slow and uncertain.

- As new plans are created, such as area plans, the City does not have a system to update the Code or Zoning Map to proactively implement the plans. Instead, implementation is incremental and subject to negotiations triggered by applications.

- While about 95 percent of the City has an adopted area plan in place, only 25 percent of the City has adopted the full C2P2 land use framework or an updated area plan. This leaves many areas with plans over 15 years old or no plan at all. While many of these plans may provide relevant policy direction, it gives the impression of inequitable application of policy, with some areas accommodating growth (and associated infrastructure impacts) while other areas do not (see Figure 11).

Performance Summary: As a result of a shift away from long-range planning to the development review process, the City's ability to implement its priorities for growth management have diminished. This can be seen in the lack of a comprehensive, citywide recommended land use map and the limited adoption of C2P2 land use policies and maps. The shift has also had negative impacts on the ability to provide objective direction and contribute to dependable and predictable outcomes, such understanding how the City will achieve its growth, housing, and job projections, and how the City will establish land use and transportation integration. The City does not have a system to

update the Zoning Code or Zoning Map as plans are adopted, which means there is no certainty in implementing the plans and it is difficult to deliver a high-quality built environment that creates a sense of place. Finally, as stated above, large areas of the City have plans that are over 15 years old or no plan at all. While many of these plans may provide relevant policy direction, it at least gives the impression of inequitable application of policy.

Figure 11: Adopted Plan Coverage
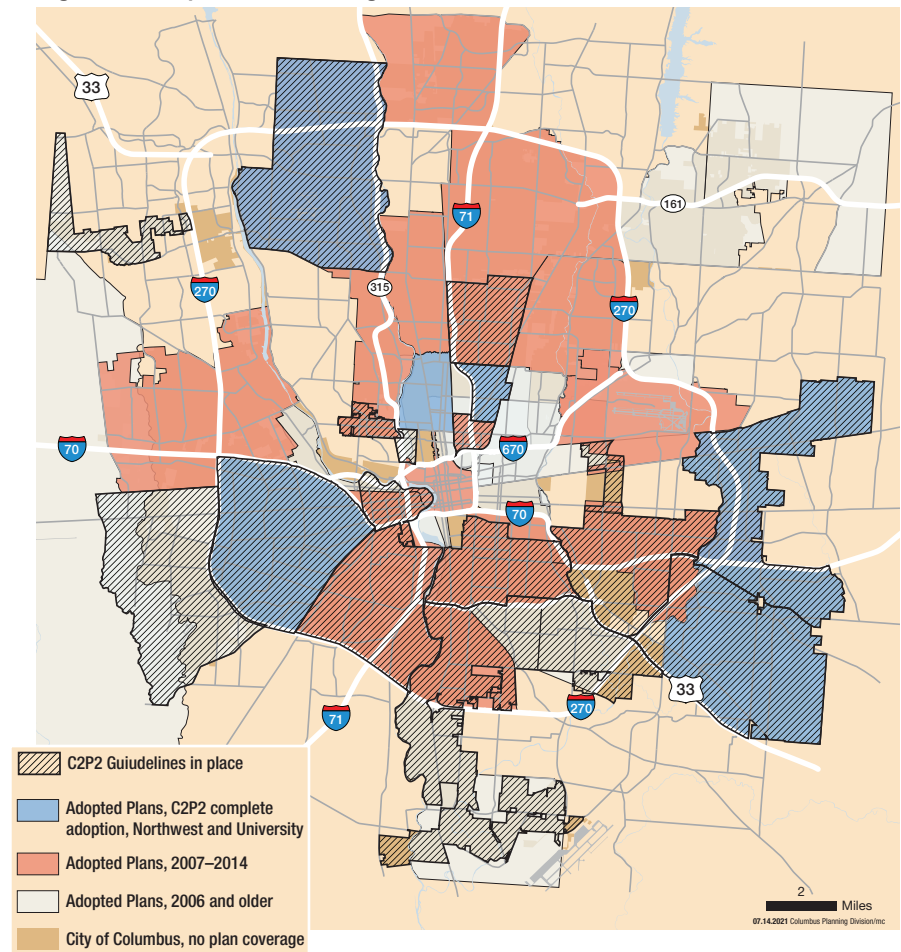
Source: City of Columbus, January 2021

3.3 Code is Not User-Friendly

Clarity, consistency, and brevity are vital to a code's effectiveness. Zoning codes must provide an easy-to-navigate organization, appropriate cross-references, succinct writing, consolidated tables, and clear graphics to be understood by the community, administered by staff, and implemented by policy makers. The Code is disorganized and challenging to navigate, with key information difficult to locate or missing entirely.

A. **Code is Disorganized and Difficult to Navigate.** The Code is organized within Title 33 in numerical chapters and sections, with alphabetized subsections. The chapters begin at 3301 and end at 3399. The Code establishes 70 chapters with each chapter numbered inconsistently in increments of one or two, for example: Chapters 3305, 3307, 3309, 3310, 3311, 3312, etc. Section numbering typically increases in increments of .01, as seen in Sections 3309.01–3309.11. In some cases, the thousandths decimal place is used if a new section was inserted, as seen in Chapter 3309, where the sections are, in order, 3309.11, 3309.115, 3309.12, 3309.13, 3309.131. The disorganized numbering framework is difficult to navigate with little consistency and predictability, making specific provisions difficult to find. See Figure 12 for an example.

Structural deficiencies in the Code include requirements and standards in locations that are difficult to identify and counterintuitive. For example, standards for parking (Chapter 3312) are located toward the beginning of the Code, between procedural requirements (Chapter 3311 (Administration of Development Standards), and Chapter 3313 (Area Commissions – Procedures for Establishment)), separate from other development standards. There are many repealed procedural sections related to Area Commissions located between provisions for overlays (Chapter 3325 (University District Zoning Overlay) and base zoning districts (Chapter 3332 – Residential Districts)) (see Figure 13). Section titles are generic and not descriptive, making it difficult to locate information. For example, Section 3372.01 (Purpose and Intent) is the purpose and intent for Chapter 3372 (Planning Overlays); however,

Figure 12: Inconsistent Code Numbering Structure

Chapter 3309 - ZONING MAP AND ZONING MAP DISTRICTS

3309.01 - Digital zoning map establishment, interpretation and mainte
3309.02 - Zoning map districts.
3309.03 - Establishment of districts.
3309.04 - Multiple use districts.
3309.05 - Residential use districts.
3309.06 - Apartment residential use districts.
3309.07 - Manufactured home park district.
3309.08 - Planned residential and multi-family use districts.
3309.09 - Institutional use district.
3309.10 - Commercial use districts.
3309.11 - Manufacturing use districts.

> **Sections highlighted in orange are organized in increments of one**

3309.115 - University-College Research Park district.
3309.12 - Flood plain district.
3309.13 - Parking use districts.
3309.131 - Airport Environs overlay.
3309.135 - Limited overlay.
3309.137 - Planning overlay.
3309.139 - Hellbranch Run watershed protection overlay.
3309.14 - Height districts.
3309.141 - Basic height district established.
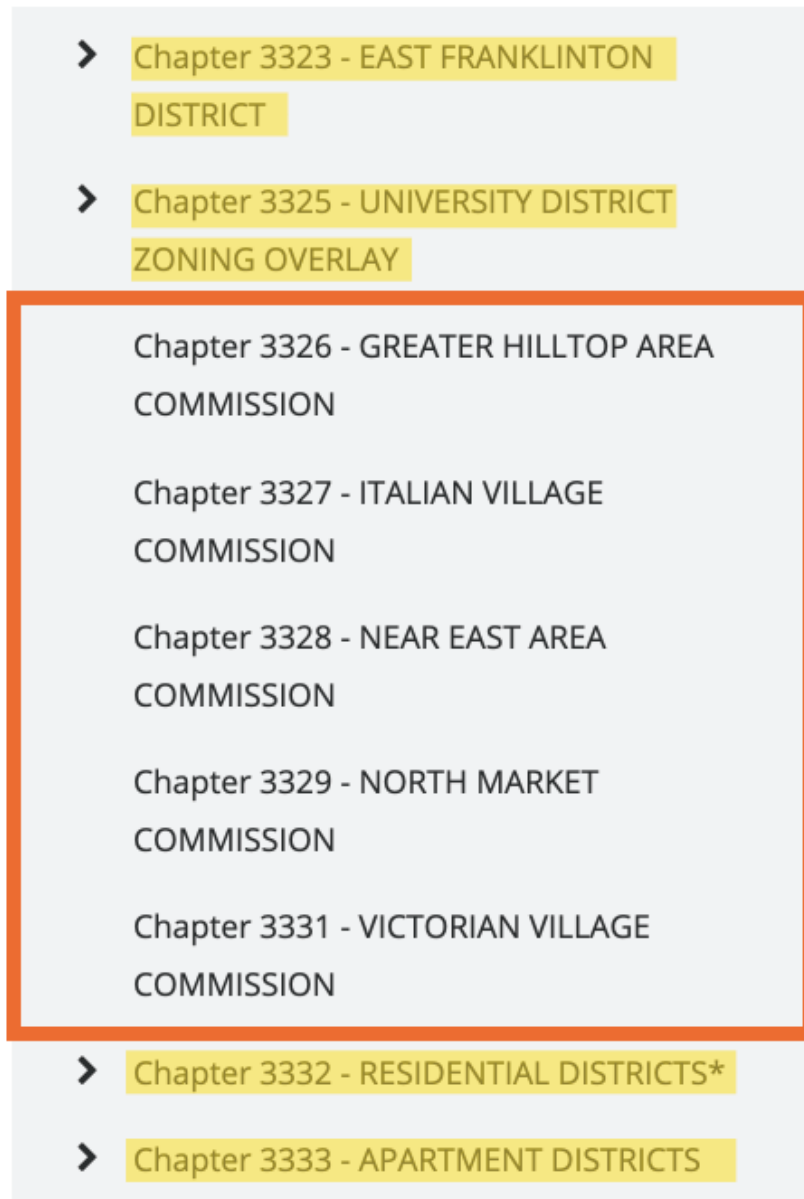3309.142 - Height district exceptions.
3309.145 - Thirty-five foot height district exception.
3309.148 - Area districts.

> **Sections highlighted in yellow are disorganized and inconsistent**

Figure 13: Disorganized Code Framework

Section 3372.602 (Purpose and Intent) is the purpose and intent for the Urban Commercial Overlay (UCO) and is located after over 40 repealed sections. The Code retains several repealed chapters and sections, adding to a long list of content that is no longer applicable.

Performance Summary: Overall, the Code's organization and structure are ineffective and unpredictable. While City staff is able to help seasoned code users who know how to navigate it, it is not guaranteed to ensure high quality results. The Code is most easily interpreted by those with technical training and experience, which creates an equity issue by leaving a majority of the community without access to the information on what the Code allows.

B. **Lack of Code Illustrations, Graphics, and Tables.** Illustrations and graphics can communicate development standards more clearly and efficiently than written provisions. Illustrations can depict standards for measuring sign height or setbacks, while technical writing is prone to misinterpretation and uncertainly. The Code provides very few useful illustrations, except for basic graphics related to parking design, vision clearance, and overlay boundary maps. The Code also utilizes tables inconsistently. In some chapters, such as Chapter 3312 (Off-Street Parking and Loading), parking requirements are organized in convenient tables, but in other chapters, such as Chapter 3351 (C-1 Neighborhood Commercial District), uses are described in lists where tables would be easier to use and interpret.

Performance Summary: Overall, the Code rarely leverages illustrations, graphics, and tables effectively, weakening predictability and the ability to produce high quality built results. Lack of clear illustrations contributes to inequity by making the Code more difficult to use and interpret, especially for non-professionals or those without financial means to hire consultants.

> Zoning district standards are unorganized and separated by procedural requirements (which have been repealed and relocated). Overlay requirements are located before base district standards.

C. **Code is Use-Based and Does Not Support Modern Economy.** The Code includes over 100 uses organized in separate lists within each zoning district, with the Director having the authority to approve additional uses on a case-by-case basis. The uses are overly specific, redundant, outdated, inconsistent, and do not support a modern economy. For example, the Code lists uses such as Travel Agencies, Travel Arrangement and Reservation Services, Tobacconist, and Compact Disc, Music, Record and Video Stores. The manufacturing districts provide flexibility, with commercial districts being fairly flexible and residential districts being the most restrictive. This use-based framework emphasizes the outdated perception that land uses must be separated in order to protect the public's health, safety, and welfare, leading to suburban sprawl and neighborhood inequities. For more information on obsolete and redundant uses, see Figure 14.

> **Allowed land uses in the Code are overly specific, redundant, outdated, inconsistent, and do not support a modern economy.**

Performance Summary: Overall, the Code greatly emphasizes use, which is inconsistent with modern approaches and leads to decreased effectiveness, predictability, and quality. The archaic use framework and emphasis on "desirable" uses (i.e., protecting single-family zones) leads to an inequitable land use framework.

Figure 14: Obsolete Land Uses

Barber and Cosmetology Educational Training Facility

Book, Newspaper and Magazine Stores (Unlimited size)

Building Material and Supplies Dealers (No outside yards or storage)

Butcher Shops, Fish, Meat, and Seafood Markets (Unlimited size)

Cafes, Delicatessens and Restaurants (Unlimited size)

Camera, Photo finishing and Photographic Supplies Stores

Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores

Coin and Stamp Dealers

Colleges

Compact Disc, Music, Record and Video Stores (Includes rental)

Computer and Software Stores

Dry cleaning and Laundry Services

Exercise and Health Facilities

Fabric, Needlework, Quilting, Sewing and Piece Goods Stores

Food and Beverage Stores

Footwear and Repair

Formal Wear and Costume Rental and Sales

Funeral Homes and Services

> **Uses highlighted in yellow are obsolete and not based on a modern economy. Uses highlighted in green are overly specific and overlap.**

Zoning Code Performance Summary

As stated in Section 1, the purpose of the Zoning Code Assessment Report is to provide an analysis of the Zoning Code and related processes and identify how effectively the Code implements the planning and development goals expressed in the City's policy documents and facilitates equitable development through clear and effective standards and transparent review processes. More specifically, as the City prepares for the future it is vital that the Zoning Code:

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

With that in mind, the Assessment evaluated the Code and process based on the following key metrics:

- **Effectiveness** - How well does the Code or process contribute to or help lead to implementation of the City's policy framework and priorities for growth management?
- **Predictability** - How well does the Code or process provide objective direction, meet expectations, and contribute to dependable and consistent outcomes?
- **Quality** - How well does the Code or process deliver a valuable, long-lasting, attractive built environment that creates a sense of place and builds community vitality?
- **Equity** - How well does the Code or process promote a fair and objective development process for all residents of Columbus?

As Table 4 shows, based on the detailed analysis in this section, the Code does not perform well across the metrics. Here's a summary of the key supporting evidence for each finding:

- Complex amalgam of zoning tools creates a regulatory system that does not effectively implement the City's policy framework and priorities for growth management. The Code is unable to implement policy direction without requests for deviation from the requirements, leading to an ineffective, unpredictable, inequitable process that may deliver high-quality built results only through arduous development review and negotiation.

- Minimal objective standards and form controls create a regulatory system that is not effective or predictable in implementing the City's policy framework and priorities for growth management.

- Form-controls (or lack thereof) struggle to produce high-quality built results as they are inconsistent and overly complex as well as inequitable due to uneven application of form controls and a complicated and costly process.

- Off-street parking provisions are not effective in implementing the City's policy framework and priorities for growth management.

- Historic preservation and design review requirements contribute to a process that is generally effective, but not always predictable in implementing the City's policy framework and priorities for growth management.

- Historic and design review require substantial staff resources and covers less than five percent of the City, leaving most areas without a more consistent, predictable review process to preserve historic resources.

- Code is not supportive of RHS objectives and contributes to community perceptions of NIMBYism. Furthermore, it adds to the uncertainty and unpredictable nature of development due to the complex hierarchy of regulations, the lack of objective development standards, challenges and time required to navigate the system, and the large volume of one-off zoning actions. For these reasons, the Code does not promote a fair and objective development process to deliver affordable housing.

- As a result of a shift away from long-range planning to the development review process, the City's ability to implement its priorities for growth management have diminished. The shift has had negative impacts on the ability to provide objective direction, such understanding how the City will achieve its growth, housing, and job projections, and how the City will establish land use and transportation integration.

- No system to update the Zoning Code or Zoning Map as plans are adopted, which means there is no certainty in implementing the plans.

- Code's organization and structure are ineffective and unpredictable. The Code is most easily interpreted by those with technical training and experience, which creates an equity issue by leaving a majority of the community without access to the information on what the Code allows.

- Code greatly emphasizes use, which is inconsistent with modern approaches and leads to decreased effectiveness, predictability, and quality. The archaic use framework and emphasis on "desirable" uses (i.e., protecting single-family zones) leads to an inequitable land use framework.

The Code attributes listed under each finding are rated on the following scale:

- Low = inadequate in satisfying the metric

- Medium = somewhat adequate in satisfying the metric

- High = effective in satisfying the metric

- Mixed = satisfies the metric in varied ways

- NA = has no relationship to the metric

Table 4: Zoning Code Performance Summary

| Finding	Effectiveness	Predictability	Quality	Equity
Standards are Not Tailored to Local Conditions (Development Standards Evaluated)	**Low-Med**	**Low-Mixed**	**Low-Med**	**Low**
Inadequate Base Zoning Districts and Overlays/Special Districts	Low	Low	Low	Low
Minimal Form Controls	Low	Low	Low	Low
Prohibitive Parking Provisions	Low	Low	Low	Low
Historic Preservation and Adaptive Reuse	Med	Mixed	Med	Low
Code Does Not Prioritize Future Housing and Transit Needs Equitably (Development Standards Evaluated)	**Low**	**Low**	**Low-Mixed**	**Low**
Easier to Submit a Project that is Inconsistent with the Policy/Vision	Low	Low	Low	Low
Code and Process Do Not Support the Regional Housing Strategy	Low	Low	NA	Low
Focus of City Planning has Shifted from Long-Range Planning to Greater Involvement in Development Review	Low	Low	Mixed	Low
Code is Not User-Friendly (Code Format Evaluated)	**Low**	**Low**	**Low**	**Low**
Code is Disorganized and Difficult to Navigate	Low	Low	Low	Low
Lack of Code Illustrations, Graphics, and Tables	Low	Low	Low	Low
Code is Use-Based and Does Not Support Modern Economy	Low	Low	Low	Low

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4 Assessment of the Process

According to the findings of the stakeholder interviews, the zoning and development review process is perceived as so complex and byzantine that only those with substantial resources and a thorough knowledge of the process can achieve successful project approval. This makes the Code inaccessible to many, favors experienced developers, and discourages small land and business owners. The repercussion of the complex process, the discrepancy between City goals and Area Commission approvals (i.e., often lower density, more parking, less height than ideal), and delays associated with rezoning and variances, is that applicants feel pushed to submit projects designed to meet the "lowest common denominator development" – development they believe will be approved, not the development that best matches City policies or is the most innovative and transformational.

When asked "…what is working well…", the first response from stakeholders was City staff expertise and their ability to communicate. City staff is managing an enormous amount of communication and coordination in the development process and is successful at finding solutions to complex problems. However, because the process is difficult to navigate and lacks clarity, respondents also expressed that there is mistrust between the community and City leadership on many levels. There are beliefs among the community that the City listens to and favors some neighborhoods more than others, and a perception that developers are trying to "cheat" or "bully" the neighborhood as evidenced by the high number of requested variances.

Figure 15 provides a high-level overview of the site plan approval process for all commercial and multi-family greenfield and infill development (excluding single family homes). While not mandatory, preliminary site plan approval is highly encouraged to identify potential issues and ordinances early in the process. Applicants work with Area Commissions and civic associations as a first step to refine project parameters and neighborhood compatibility concerns. If required, zoning actions, including rezonings, CVs, and Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) Variances, are one of the initial steps. If located in a design review district, the projects will go through design review by one of the eight boards with design approval authority concurrent with a zoning action. Final plans and documents are routed to the various City departments for final approval. See also Attachment 4 for more detailed flowcharts on the zoning process and approvals.

Figure 15: Overview of Site Plan Approval Process
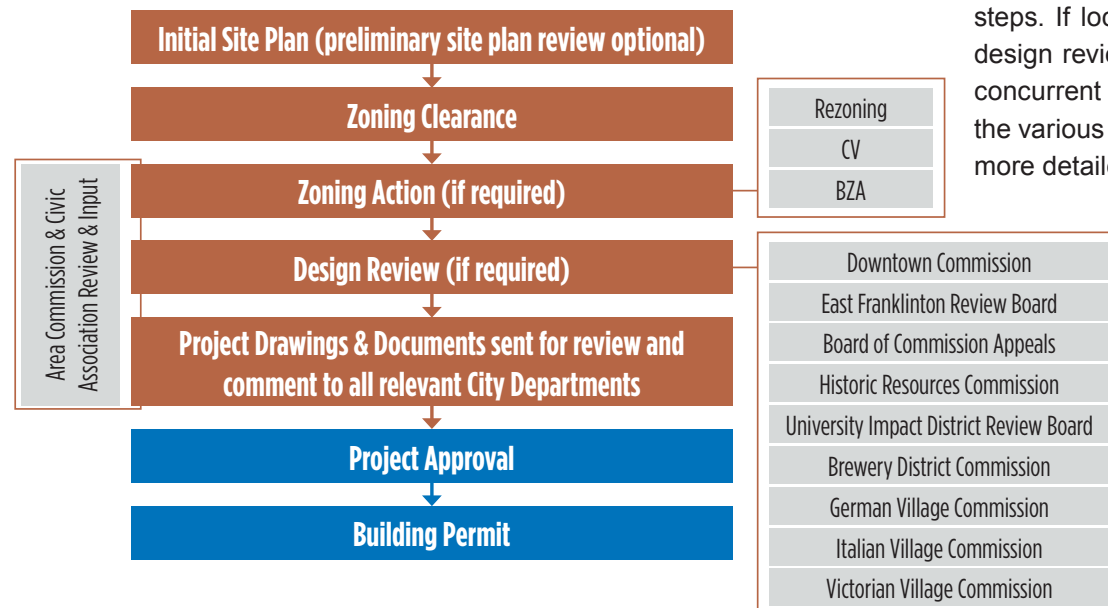
Assessment and Findings

The process assessment is based on the following:

- Personal interviews with City staff and stakeholders (Attachment 2),
- Consultant Team meetings with City staff,
- Results from the Citywide online survey (Attachment 3),
- Review of the Code, policy documents, and other related documents (including *Emerging Trends and Issues for Consideration*), and
- National best practices.

The analysis resulted in two major findings:

- *Overreliance on Site-by-Site Negotiated Zoning Actions*
- *Multi-layered and Scattered Decision-Making Process Creates Uncertainty*

> **There was a substantial increase in the use and approval of CVs and rezonings after the 2008/2009 Great Recession. 96 percent of all zoning ordinances approved included unique site-specific conditions.**
> *(Emerging Trends and Issues for Consideration, June 2020)*

4.1 Overreliance on Site-by-Site Negotiated Zoning Actions

To overcome inadequate and ineffective Code standards, and to better align projects with adopted policy, Staff relies on project negotiations, variances, and rezonings. While rezonings and variances are necessary and effective tools to allow property to change over time and accommodate unique site conditions, these legislative approvals should be exceptions rather than part of the typical path to project approval. Using lengthy, time consuming, and highly negotiated processes represents an unsustainable system which generates mistrust and reduces staff capacity (see Section 3.2.C) and overburdens decision makers with project approvals rather than allowing them to focus on broader citywide policy initiatives.

A. **Large Volume of Zoning Actions Create Unique Zoning for Individual Parcels.** From January 2011 through December 2020, City Council approved 1,288 zoning related ordinances (zoning amendments, CVs, and rezonings) and from 2016 through 2020 the BZA considered 750 variance requests. While the exact proportion of projects that require Council or BZA approval is unclear, staff has indicated that the vast majority of significant projects require some form of exception from the base zoning district's requirements. These approvals illustrate a collage of unique zoning approvals tailored for each project.

While crafting and adjusting regulations to accommodate the needs of individual projects may seem like a benefit, over the long term it is an unsustainable use of time and resources. This approach also adds to unpredictability as the community and property owners are unclear what combination of requirements will ultimately be approved. Further, the repeated need to modify base regulations indicates that the base development standards are not working, are out of date, and need constant adjustment to accommodate historic development patterns or to meet current market conditions.

Figure 16 provides the annual breakdown of Council zoning ordinances by type. Amendments are used infrequently throughout the period with nine cases being the annual high. Of note is an increase in the number of CVs in comparison to rezonings. Applicants gravitate toward CVs, because rezonings are more time consuming and expensive compared to CVs and are subject to parkland dedication requirements. Thus, CVs are lower in cost than a rezoning. In addition, projects requiring a rezoning need to go to the Development Commission, which is an additional step. However, since CVs skip Development Commission review, formal notification of adjacent property owners doesn't occur until the CV(s) is scheduled for City Council consideration. (See Area Commission below for noticing of those meetings.) The benefit of rezonings is it does result in a zoning map change, whereas CVs do not (see discussion below about land use and map discrepancies).

CVs can be used to adjust a permitted use (Solo CV), or they can be paired with a rezoning (including a Limited Text rezoning). As Figure 17 shows, about 38 percent of all ordinances were Solo CVs and another 13 percent were paired with a rezoning. Most rezonings were "restricted" meaning that the base zones standards were adjusted using limitation text (Limited Overlay), planned districts, and/or an accompanying CV. Less than 4 percent of zoning ordinances resulted in a new designation without restrictions or amendments.
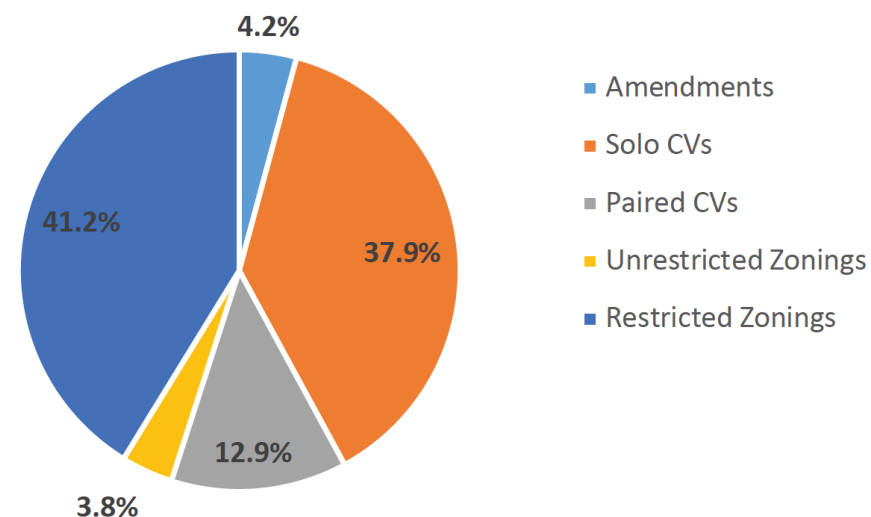
> **Applicants gravitate toward CVs, because rezonings are more time consuming and expensive compared to CVs and are subject to parkland dedication requirements.**

Figure 16: Council Approved Zoning Ordinances By Year
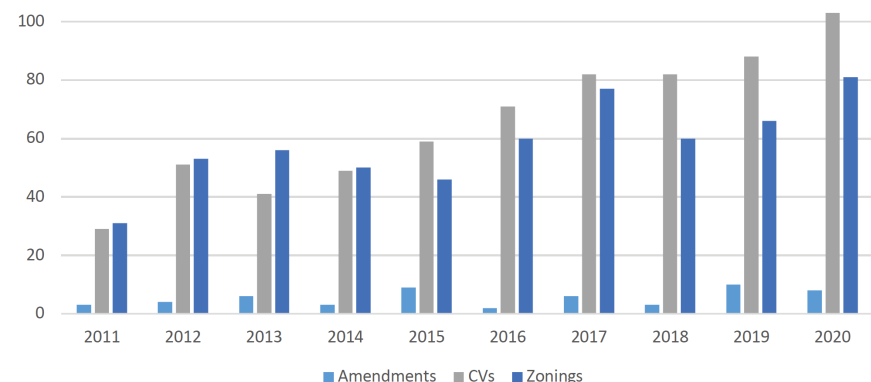
Source: City of Columbus, Staff Analysis, 2021

Figure 17: Council Approved Zoning Ordinances By Type

Source: City of Columbus, Staff Analysis, 2021

Figure 18: Council and BZA Variances Citywide

Source: LWC, July 2021

Legend:
- Council Zoning Variances
- BZA Zoning Variances
- CPDs
- PUDs
- Limited Zoning
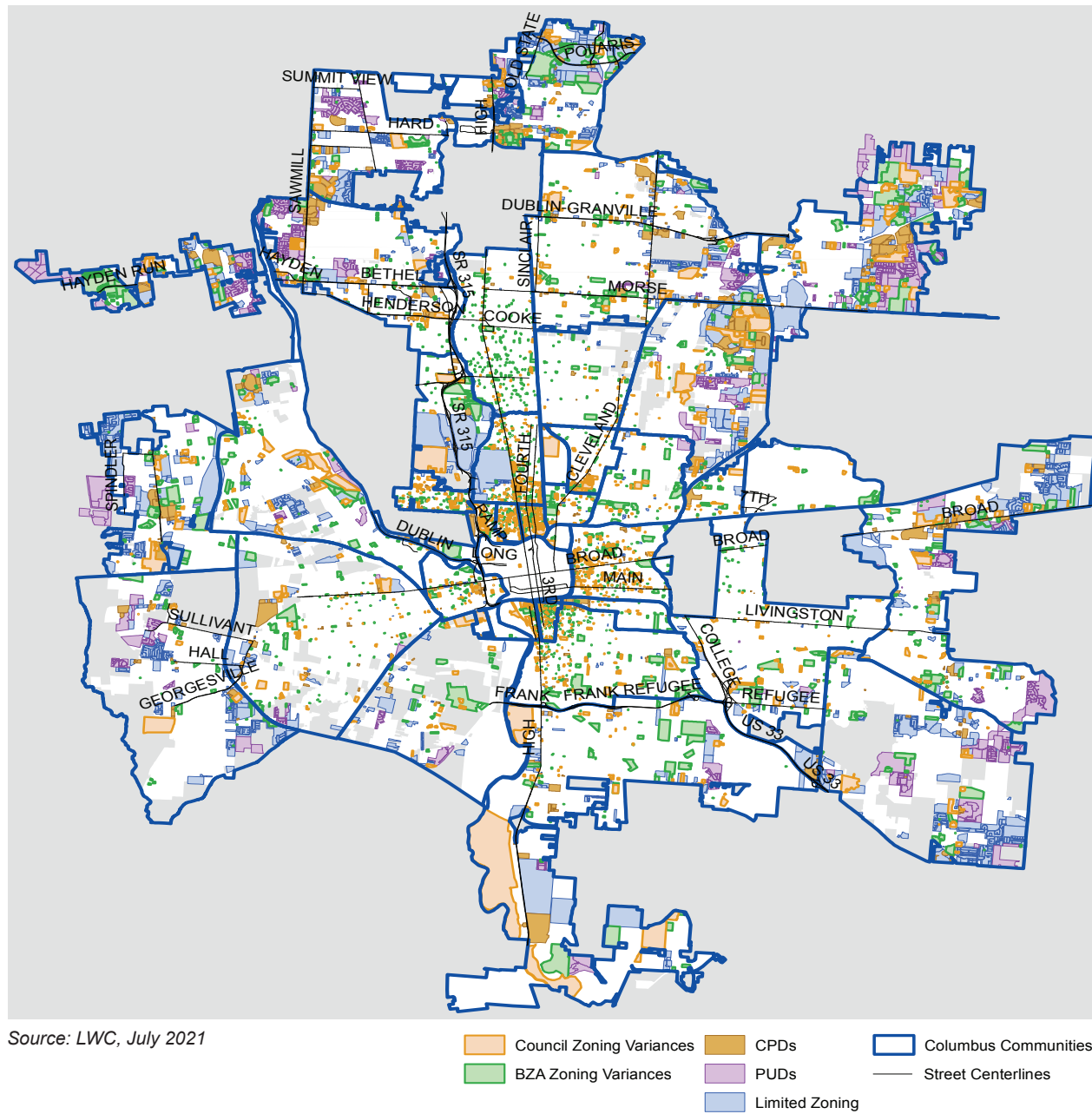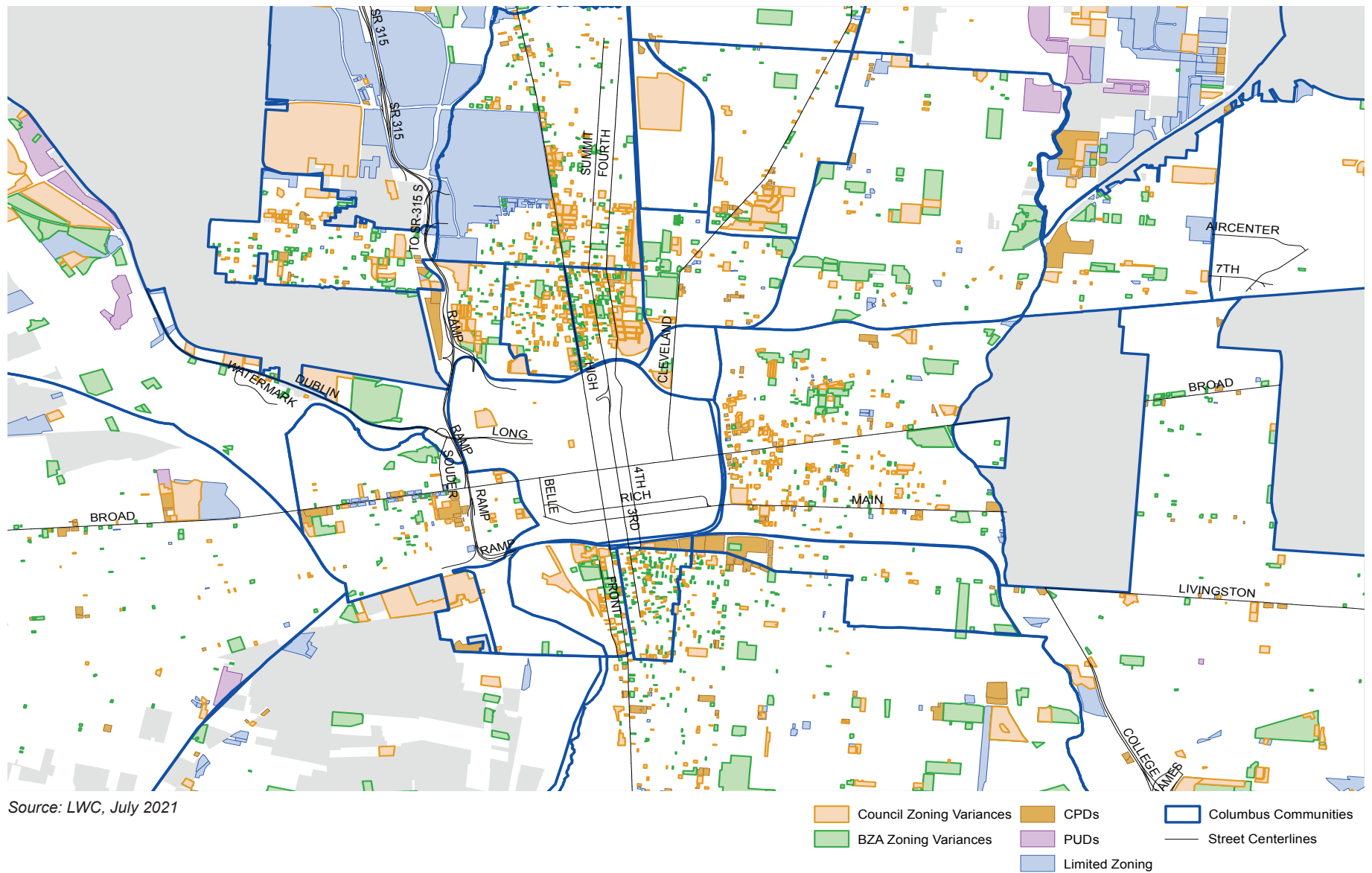- Columbus Communities
- Street Centerlines

Figure 18 shows the distribution of Council and BZA variances and restricted rezonings (Limited text, PUDs, and CPDs) throughout the City (note this does not include unrestricted rezonings). Figure 19 shows a closer view of zoning modifications in the center of the City. As both figures illustrate, the Code does not work well in any particular part of the City, illustrated by the high number of unique zoning requests in all neighborhoods. As expected given the suburban nature of the Code, areas near to the City center such as Italian Village (54 percent of the land area) and Olentangy West (87 percent of the land area) have one or more unique zoning applied. Yet, even newer, more suburban areas of the City have high concentrations of unique zoning approved, including Rock Fork-Blacklick (71 percent of land) and the Far North (63 percent of land). Approximately 1/3 of the land area of the City is regulated by one, or more, unique zoning districts.

Performance Summary: The end result is process that is unpredictable and inequitable due to the complexity and time required to navigate the system. While the process may be effective in achieving the City's goals and producing high quality results, it is not clear that this is achieved in most cases through the variance process or other zoning actions.

**Figure 19: Council and BZA Variances Central City**

Source: LWC, July 2021

▢ Council Zoning Variances	▢ CPDs	▢ Columbus Communities
▢ BZA Zoning Variances	▢ PUDs	— Street Centerlines
▢ Limited Zoning		

B. **Discrepancies Among Zoning Map, Existing Land Use, and Future Land Use.** As noted throughout the Report, the extensive use of CVs has resulted in discrepancies among the zoning map, existing land use, and future land use recommendations. There were 31,000 housing units approved through Council zoning action and thousands of residential units were approved without rezoning.

For example, the Brewery District maintains a predominance of M-Manufacturing District zoning, despite little manufacturing activity remaining (see Figure 20). Under the Code, residential uses in the M-Manufacturing Districts (Section 3363.01) are restricted to a unit for a resident security person or residential care facilities (e.g., residential treatment center, halfway house, hospital). However, dozens of projects and hundreds of residential units have been built in the area using the CV process. One example is the 7.65-acre property located at 204 Liberty Street. Under the CV process, 347 units were approved along with other variances for parking setbacks, number of parking spaces, vision clearance, and building lines (see Figure 21). This is a problem because the parcels remain zoned for manufacturing uses, which may lead to incompatibility issues if industrial uses return, or new residential uses constrain an existing manufacturing use.

Figure 20: M District Application on Built Environment in Brewery District
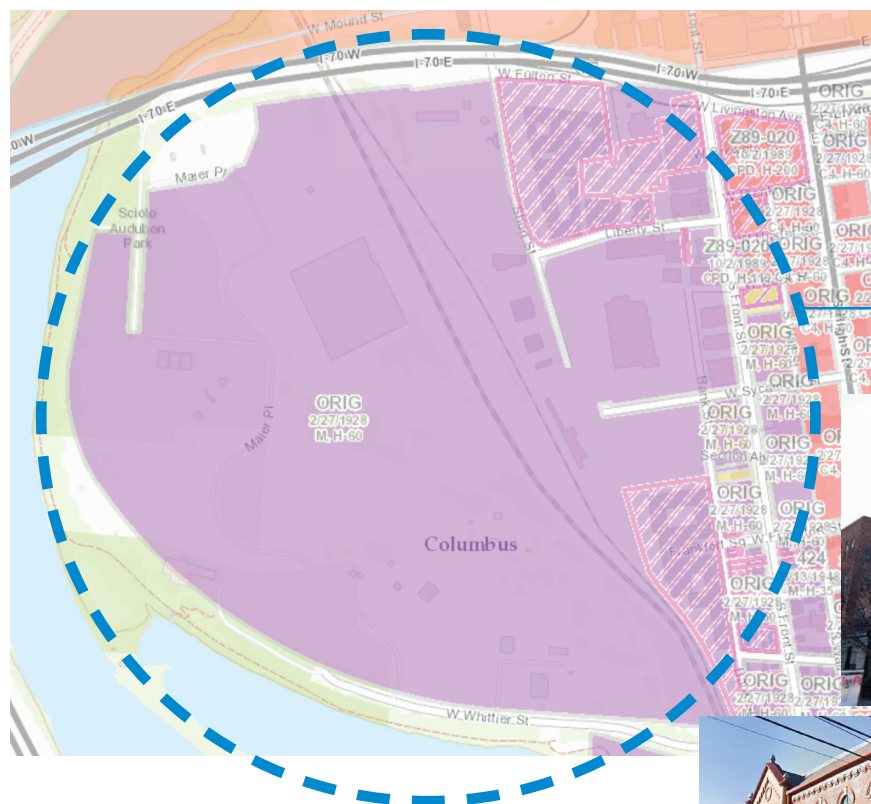
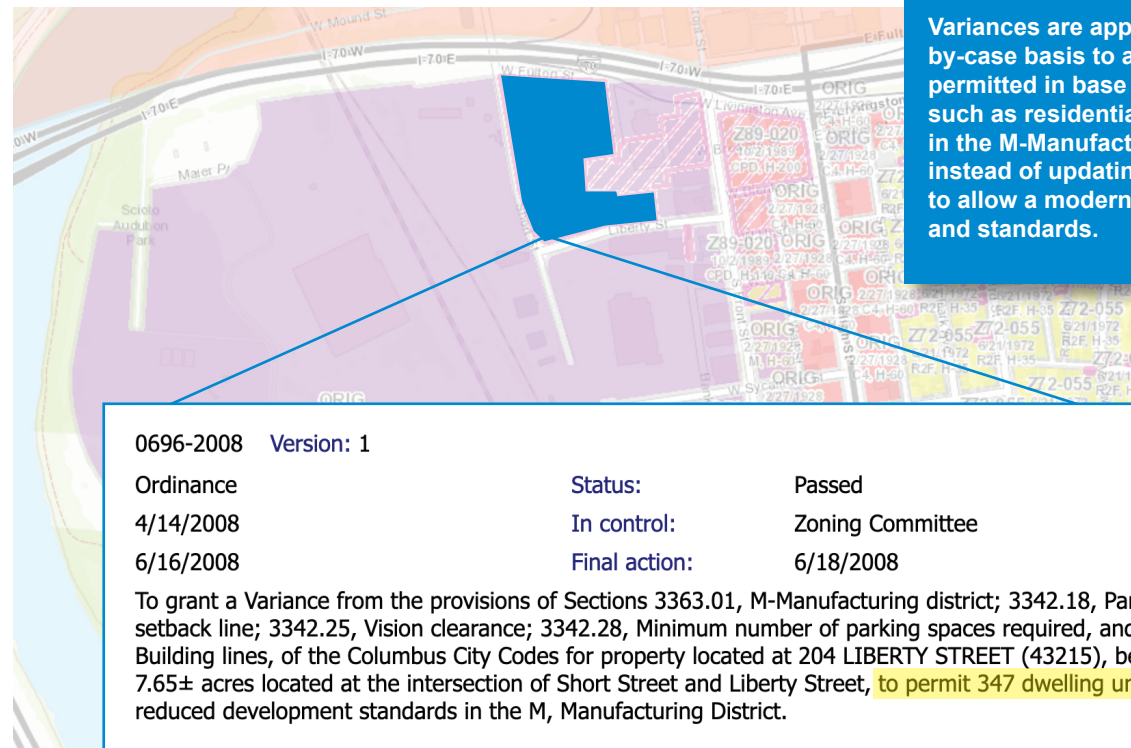All zoned Manufacturing, but context and allowed uses are different

Existing built environment in the Brewery District; source: Google Earth

These inconsistencies are currently being resolved on a case-by-case basis as properties are sold or refinanced, because lenders require the zoning to be consistent with the existing use to mitigate their risks and protect the value of the collateral.

Performance Summary: The end result is a process that is unpredictable and inequitable due to the complexity and time required to negotiate. Additional time means additional cost and can adversely affect development quality and affordability. While the process often results in high quality development, because the initial point of negotiation is low (base standards) the City must negotiate to an acceptable level, leaving some requests unfulfilled. Moreover, because of the inconsistency between the zoning map, existing land uses, and future land use recommendations, the process is largely inadequate in implementing the City's policy framework and priorities for growth management, housing, and equity.

Figure 21: M District Application on Land Uses in Brewery District

Variances are approved on a case-by-case basis to allow uses not permitted in base zoning districts, such as residential dwelling units in the M-Manufacturing district, instead of updating zoning districts to allow a modern mix of land uses and standards.

0696-2008   Version: 1

Ordinance	Status:	Passed
4/14/2008	In control:	Zoning Committee
6/16/2008	Final action:	6/18/2008

To grant a Variance from the provisions of Sections 3363.01, M-Manufacturing district; 3342.18, Parking setback line; 3342.25, Vision clearance; 3342.28, Minimum number of parking spaces required, and 3363.24, Building lines, of the Columbus City Codes for property located at 204 LIBERTY STREET (43215), being 7.65± acres located at the intersection of Short Street and Liberty Street, to permit 347 dwelling units with reduced development standards in the M, Manufacturing District.

3363.01 - M-manufacturing districts.

In an M-manufacturing district, a use of the C-1, C-2, C-3, C-4 commercial districts (excluding extended stay hotels), C-5 commercial district (utilizing C-5 development standards), the P-1, and P-2, parking district, and the following uses are permitted:

    A. One or more uses as specified in C.C. 3363.02 through 3363.175;

    B. Residential uses restricted to:

        1. A dwelling unit for a resident security person; or

        2. Units within a half way house or community residential treatment center, a hospital, or other building specifically for human care;

    C. Accessory uses as specified in this chapter; and

    D. An adult entertainment establishment, and an adult store.

4.2 Multi-layered and Scattered Decision-Making Process Creates Uncertainty

The development approval process is complex and involves a myriad of review boards, associations, commissions, City departments, and the City Council, with different roles and levels of authority. Area Commissions and civic associations act on behalf of the neighborhoods and communities which they represent, giving the public a voice in the review process. However, these groups may not adequately represent the opinions of the collective community, and not every community in the City has an Area Commission acting on its behalf. The role of the Area Commissions in the review process is intended to be advisory (i.e., making non-binding recommendations), yet stakeholders mentioned that while not required, decision makers often defer to Commissions. Also, because a majority of projects require higher level review, project review occurs concurrently across Area Commissions, design review, staff, Development Commission, and BZA or City Council. Developers must, therefore, navigate multiple comments from scattered sources, which often conflict when staff seeks to align projects with City goals.

A. **External: Area Commissions and Civic Associations.** Chapters 3109 and 3111 of the Municipal Code establish the duties and functions of Area Commissions, which act as an advisory body to the Development Commission, Board of Zoning Adjustment, Graphics Commission, and City Council. Each Area Commission has a set of by-laws that serve as the operating and management agreement of the Commission, including maintaining records, recording minutes, noticing meetings, and establishing quorums. Appointments to Area Commissions are made by the Mayor and City Council and are unpaid, voluntary positions. Commission meetings are open to the public, and the Commissions are responsible for noticing the meetings.

Unlike Area Commissions, civic associations are not officially recognized in the Code and are not subject to the same requirements. In practice, however, they often perform similar roles, particularly when there is no overlapping Area Commission. Area Commissions and civic associations compose a patchwork of geography across the City and have differing authority. As illustrated in Figure 22, the City's 21 Area Commissions cover only 67 percent of City.

Area Commissions and civic association meetings serve as the primary place for community involvement, where community members can provide input and influence the outcome of proposed development. These meetings inform citizens on development projects and provide a platform to provide input on new development. Applicants engage with these groups early in the process for review, input, and recommendations on development applications.

While these organizations offer an avenue for community engagement, most Area Commissions and civic associations are functioning without benefit of staff input regarding development proposals (such as presence of relevant staff at meetings or staff analysis/reports). While ongoing training is regularly offered by City staff, Commission members may or may not attend. The Department of Neighborhoods supports and often attends the meetings of these groups, but their expertise does not typically extend to planning and zoning requirements in the City. It is an ongoing challenge for staff to assert consistent requirements for Area Commissions. Subjective input, lack of organized review procedures, and unreliable attendance at training sessions decrease the effectiveness of the review process.

In addition, these groups have different degrees of influence and some newly appointed Commission members do not fully understand their role, responsibility, authority, or the zoning process. According to the stakeholder interviews, projects submitted often receive conflicting direction for refinement with no clear solution and/or are asked to return to issues that were resolved in prior meetings. Design and aesthetics are regularly targeted in areas with no design review authority and issues such as traffic and parking are often inappropriately used as a basis for rejection of requests not dealing with these topics.

Performance Summary: The result is a time consuming, unpredictable, subjective, expensive, and inequitable process that can be dominated by personal preference rather than objective findings of fact.

Figure 22: Area Commissions Citywide
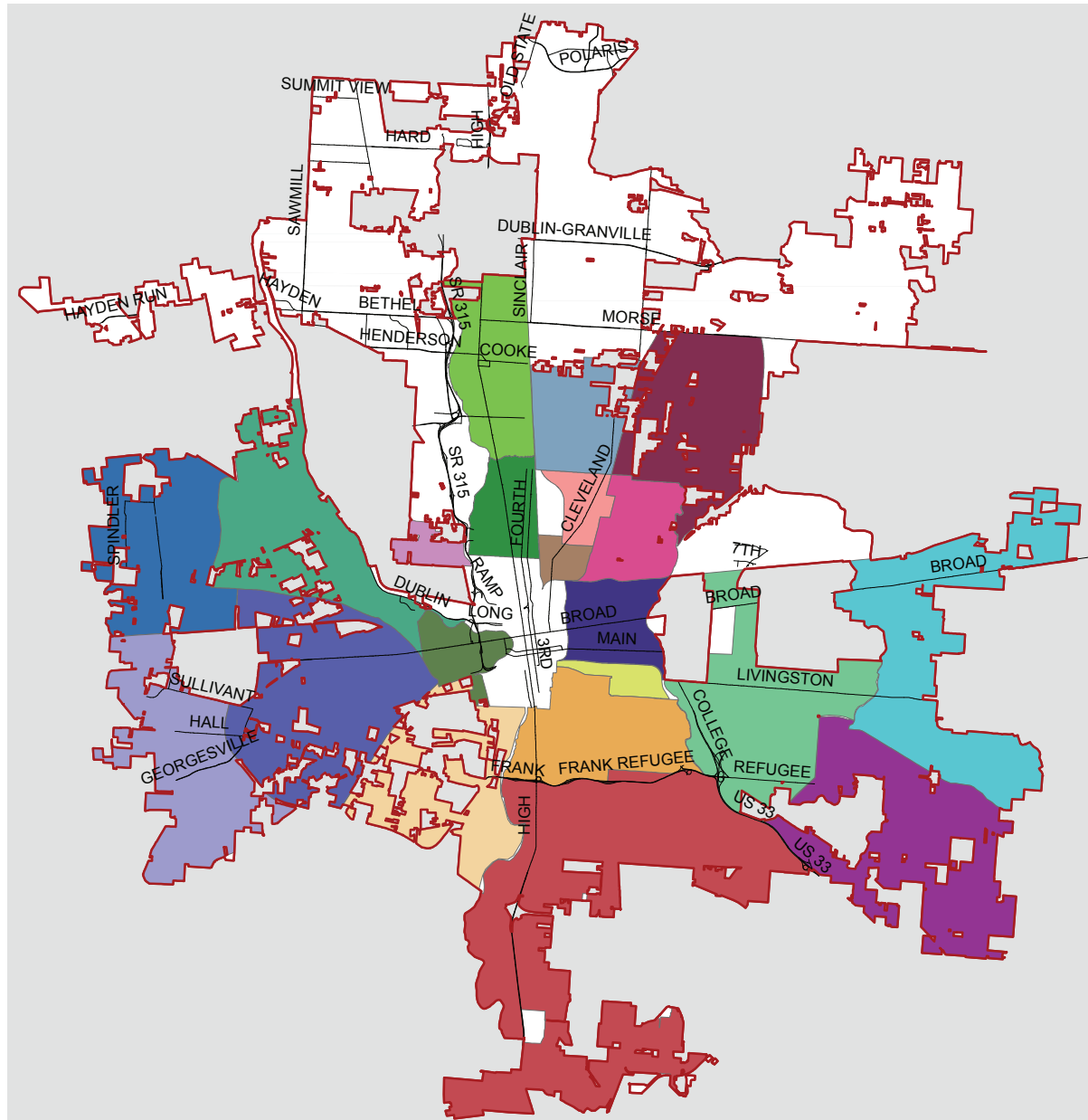
Legend:
- 5th by Northwest Area Commission
- Clintonville Area Commission
- Columbus Southside Area Commission
- Far East Area Commission
- Far South Columbus Area Commission
- Far West Side Area Commission
- Franklinton Area Commission
- Greater Hilltop Area Commission
- Greater South East Area Commission
- Livingston Avenue Area Commission
- Mideast Area Commission
- Milo-Grogan Area Commission
- Near East Area Commission
- North Central Area Commission
- North Linden Area Commission
- Northeast Area Commission
- South Linden Area Commission
- Southwest Area Commission
- University Area Commission
- West Scioto Area Commission
- Westland Area Commission

Source: LWC, April 2021

A key consideration in the next step of this project will be to define how the general public can have a more substantive voice in the future of their neighborhoods. Outside of design review, rezoning and CV requests are currently the only way to provide feedback on development and consistency with City policy. If the development approval process is adjusted to reduce what projects require Area Commissions review, or changes the purview of the Commissions, the residents will need an alternative method to provide input to avoid disenfranchisement. This will require extensive education, frequent discourse, and a thoughtful approach to address the challenges and inequities in the system.
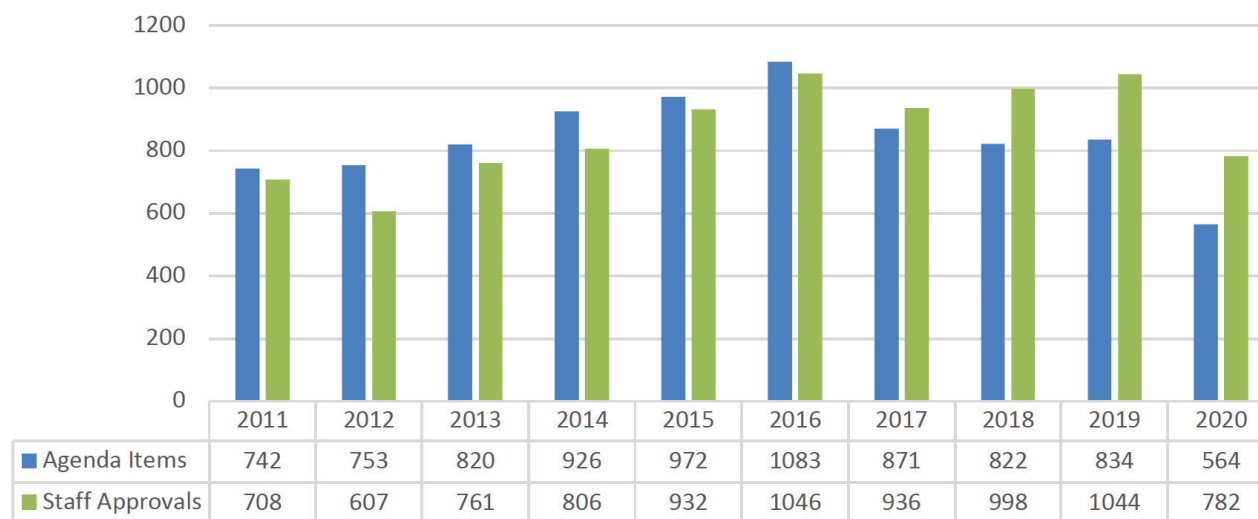
B. **External: Heavy Reliance on Design Review.** There are a total of eight districts that require design review, including five historic districts and three other districts. Figure 24 shows the locations of the eight districts. In total, the districts represent about three percent of the City.

Unlike Area Commissions, the boards and commissions that oversee these districts are staffed by the Development Department's Planning Division. These boards and commissions also hold more authority than Area Commissions. Property owners and developers within these areas are required to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness or Certificate of Approval (COA) for exterior changes, such as new construction, additions, and signs/graphics. The basis for the review of applications for COAs are standards found in Code, design guidelines, and/or the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. Depending on the complexity of the project, applications may need to go to a commission/board several times for conceptual reviews and to refine project components before they receive approval.

As Figure 23 shows, from 2011-2020 over 16,800 COAs were agenda items considered by a commission/board or issued by staff. In some districts, administrative approval may have been granted to staff in the design guidelines. This Figure also shows the COAs have increased over time, from about 1,450 cases in 2011 to about 1,880 cases in 2019, with a peak in 2016 with over 2,000 cases. The design review bodies also make a recommendation on zoning actions, which suggests that as rezonings and variances have increased, so has the role of design review.

Figure 23: Design Review Cases

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Agenda Items	742	753	820	926	972	1083	871	822	834	564
Staff Approvals	708	607	761	806	932	1046	936	998	1044	782

*Source: City of Columbus, Staff Analysis, 2021*

From 2011-2020 over 8,500 COAs were issued by staff. Another 8,300 were considered by City commissions.
(Emerging Trends and Issues for Consideration, Updated May 2021)

The benefits and impacts of historic preservation and design review include sustainability, small business support, community identity, naturally occurring affordable housing, and revitalization, among many others. According to the National Park Service, which sets historic preservation policy in the U.S., historic preservation is an important way for us to transmit our understanding of the past to future generations.

The design review process usually includes recommendations regarding rezonings and variances above and beyond the requirements in the design guidelines. Variances are particularly prevalent in these areas due to the small lot sizes, complexities of infill development, and challenges in adaptively reusing older buildings. The current design review process also complicates the consistency of inter-departmental comments in site plan review because the Planning Division provide feedback separate from the site plan review process. In addition, since the base zoning districts do not provide objective and predictable development outcomes (see Section 3.1), there is more neighborhood interest in the oversight of a historic or design review board/commission and the ability to control development through a COA.

Figure 24: Historic Districts Citywide
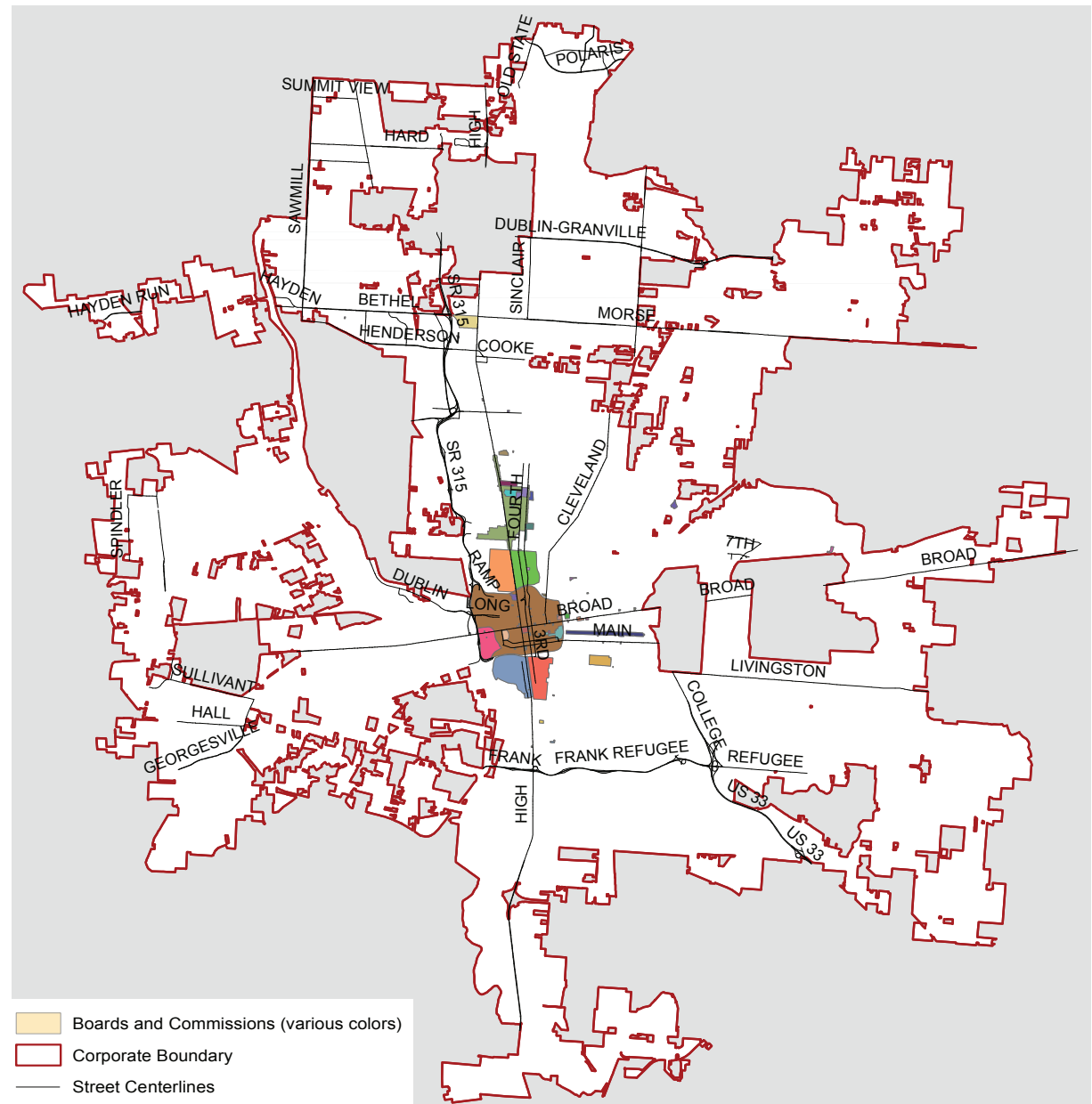
Source: LWC, July 2021

This time intensive process on the part of the City is not sustainable. It takes approximately seven FTE to staff the eight commissions and boards for a relatively small area of the City. In addition, there are about 60 citizen volunteers on these boards/commissions. The resources demands of this approach are particularly noteworthy in light of the relatively small portion of the City (less than 5 percent) that is covered by design review.

Performance Summary: The design review process is not effective in implementing the City's policy framework and priorities for growth management, because these priorities may not be clear to the boards and commissions or do not align with neighborhood goals. As variances and rezonings are considered in the design review process, it does not contribute to dependable and consistent outcomes across districts. While the process may contribute to a long-lasting built environment, the process is, at times, subjective and open to interpretation by board and commission members. Due to the complexity and lack of transparency, the process in not fair or equitable for all residents.

C. **Internal: Organizational Structure.** As shown in Figure 12, development review and approval often crisscross many departments and divisions. The lack of hierarchy in City Departments in the development review process leads to ambiguity and uncertainty in outcomes. Based on feedback from the stakeholder interviews, input and direction is at times inconsistent, or diametrically opposed, and lacks a lead department to resolve conflicts and provide final guidance. Comments and direction from some departments and staff often contradict City policy and direction provided during the concept planning and early development review stages. As discussed in Section 3.2, this has also shifted resources away from proactively engaging communities in planning the City's future to reacting to development projects and time-consuming negotiations.

It is difficult to separate the efficacy of City Departments from the operating system that they are working with on a daily basis. In Columbus, the Code is very outdated and obsolete (see Section 3). As stated at the beginning of this Section, most stakeholders believe that staff are handling large case loads and that they are adept at finding solutions to complex problems.

Performance Summary: Overall, the City's organizational structure delivers mixed results in terms of effectiveness, predictability, quality, and equity. In many instances, City staff are successful at implementing the City's policies and deliver high quality built results. However, the volume of cases and the focus on zoning actions is unsustainable and ultimately has negative impacts on the ability to provide objective direction and contribute to dependable and predictable outcomes.

D. **Internal: Staff Discretion.** Contrary to best practice, the current Code and development review processes do not enable staff to make decisions that respond to unique site or development constraints. The decision-making process is either elevated to the commission/board level or reviewed by staff in terms of strict compliance with the Code. The Planning Division only has input on development applications if a zoning action, such as a rezoning or CV, is required.

Performance Summary: This leads to a process that is inefficient in terms of resources and may be ineffective in implementing the City's priorities for growth management.

Zoning Review Process Performance Summary

As stated in Section 1, the purpose of the Zoning Code Assessment Report is to provide an analysis of the Zoning Code and related processes and identify how effectively the Code implements the planning and development goals expressed in the City's policy documents and facilitates equitable development through clear and effective standards and transparent review processes. More specifically, as the City prepares for the future it is vital that the Zoning Code:

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

With that in mind, the Assessment evaluated the Code and process based on the following key metrics:

- **Effectiveness** - How well does the Code or process contribute to or help lead to implementation of the City's policy framework and priorities for growth management?
- **Predictability** - How well does the Code or process provide objective direction, meet expectations, and contribute to dependable and consistent outcomes?
- **Quality** - How well does the Code or process deliver a valuable, long-lasting, attractive built environment that creates a sense of place and builds community vitality?
- **Equity** - How well does the Code or process promote a fair and objective development process for all residents of Columbus?

As Table 5 shows, based on the detailed analysis in this section, the Code does not perform well across the metrics. Here's a summary of the key supporting evidence for each finding:

- Large volume of zoning actions results in a process that is unpredictable and inequitable due to the complexity and time required to navigate the system. Additional time means additional cost and can adversely affect development quality and affordability.
- Volume of cases and the focus on zoning actions is unsustainable and ultimately has negative impacts on the ability to provide objective direction and contribute to dependable outcomes.
- Process is highly negotiated. The City negotiates to an acceptable level, However, the initial point of negotiation is low (base standards) and may leave some requests unfulfilled.
- Because of inconsistencies between the zoning map, existing land uses, and future land use recommendations, the process is largely inadequate in implementing the City's policy framework and priorities for growth management, housing, and equity.
- Area Commissions and civic association meetings serve as the primary place for community involvement, where community members can provide input and influence the outcome of proposed development. However, the process can be unpredictable, subjective, and inequitable and dominated by personal preference rather than objective findings of fact.
- Design review process is often not effective in implementing the City's policy framework and priorities for growth management, because these priorities may not be clear to the boards and commissions or do not align with neighborhood goals.
- Variances and rezonings are considered in the design review process, it does not contribute to dependable and consistent outcomes across districts. The process is, at times, subjective and open to interpretation by board and commission members.

- Design reviews is not sustainable on the part of the City. It takes approximately seven FTE to staff the eight commissions and boards for a relatively small area of the City. In addition, there are about 60 citizen volunteers on these boards/commissions. The resources demands of this approach are particularly noteworthy in light of the relatively small portion of the City (less than 5 percent) that is covered by design review.

- Development review process does not enable staff to make decisions that respond to unique site or development constraints. This leads to a process that is inefficient in terms of resources and may be ineffective in implementing the City's priorities for growth management.

The aspects of the process listed under each finding are rated on the following scale:

- Low = inadequate in satisfying the metric
- Medium = somewhat adequate in satisfying the metric
- High = effective in satisfying the metric
- Mixed = satisfies the metric in varied ways
- NA = has no relationship to the metric

Table 5: Zoning Process Performance Summary

Finding	Effectiveness	Predictability	Quality	Equity
Overreliance on Site-by-Site Negotiated Zoning Actions (Development Review Process Evaluated)	Low	Low	Mixed	Low
Large Volume of Zoning Actions Create Unique Zoning for Individual Parcels	Low	Low	Mixed	Low
Discrepancies Among Zoning Map, Existing Land Use, and Future Land Use	Low	Low	Mixed	Low
Multi-layered and Scattered Decision-Making Process Creates Uncertainty (Development Review Process Evaluated)	Low-Mixed	Low-Mixed	Mixed	Low-Mixed
External: Area Commissions and Civic Association Process	Mixed	Low	Mixed	Low
External: Heavy Reliance on Design Review	Mixed	Low	Mixed	Low
Internal: Organizational Structure	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed
Internal: Staff Discretion	Low	Low	NA	Mixed

Attachment 1:
Project Studies

Project Study Overview

Purpose of Analysis

The Project Study Overview analysis focused on two key questions about the Columbus Zoning code using three different types of built projects: 1) What does the code require/allow?, and 2) What was approved and how does that differ from the code?

The projects analyzed and their zoning district are:

■ The Franklin Condos; AR-O (Apartment Residential District)

■ The Yardley; CPD (Commercial Planned Development District)

■ The Belmont House (Sub-Area 2); L-AR1 (Limited Apartment District 1)

Key Findings of Analysis

1. **Lot Area.** The AR-O and L-AR1 zoning districts require a minimum lot area of 20,000 sf. Requiring such a large area of land can lead to the need to assemble multiple parcels to meet the requirement as well as leaving out other desirable outcomes that fit on parcels smaller than the required amount.

2. **Building Form and Massing.** The AR-O and CPD zoning districts limit the building height to 35 feet max., regardless of the context. This may be appropriate in some areas but not enough in others. Equally important, there are no standards to coordinate the maximum building footprint with adjacent and nearby buildings. In addition, there are no building massing or façade articulation standards to avoid a long, plain façade.

3. **Building Frontage.** No requirements exist to address the relationship between the sidewalk and ground floor spaces. As a result, the ground floor space can be occupied by parking or other uses that don't contribute to the streetscape or to pedestrian-oriented activity along the fronts of buildings.

4. **Parking Requirements.** The AR-O, CPD and L-AR1 zoning districts require the same minimum number of parking spaces (1.5 spaces per unit) in residential projects regardless of their context. As a result, projects in contexts that can rely on public transit need to provide the same amount as projects that are not near public transit. This does not prioritize future housing and transit needs and often results in the applicant needing a variance from the standards.

5. **Building Placement and Parking Location.** The Building and Parking front setbacks in AR-O and CPD zoning districts are not coordinated with the streetscape expectations in pedestrian-oriented contexts. For example, parking can be located in front of the building producing a gap between the ground floor of the building and the adjacent streetscape.

General Findings

1. **The Zoning Code is not user-friendly.**

- *Structure of Zoning Content.* Not user-friendly, the document lacks a coherent sequence of Chapters and contains content in areas where even the experienced code user would not expect to find the content.
- *Finding all applicable Requirements.* Because there are many instances of content being in a location that doesn't seem logical to the reader, the reader needs to search in multiple locations (other Chapters) for the requirements and is unsure when to stop looking for all requirements that apply. This results in uncertainty and confusion for the reader/applicant
- *Zoning Map.* There is no clear direction for a non-experienced reader about where to find the zoning map and start the process of using the zoning code.

2. **Standards are not Context-Based.**

- The fact that what was approved in each of the three case studies is not what the code would have produced on its own points to the need for standards that recognize the realities of different contexts so that individual applicants don't have to go through the process of demonstrating that on each project.
- *Zoning Districts – Building Line.* As an example of the lack of context information in the zoning, in the apartment districts, there is an extraordinary number of building line scenarios and standards for each zoning district. This usually means that the the intended physical character or each zone is not clear or known enough to coordinate with the Building Line (Setbacks) requirements. For example, the AR-12, ARDL, AR-1 through AR-4, AR-O and R-Rural through R-4 have the same range of options as to where to locate the building from the property line.

Comparison of what the Code allows/requires to what was approved

The Franklin Condos

What the Code allows/requires

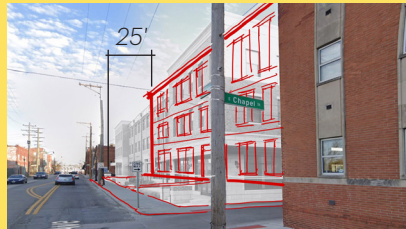*Example of what could have been built following Code requirements*

What was approved

| Maximum allowed building height | |
| Approved building height | |

The Yardley

What the Code allows/requires

25'

Example of what could have been built following Code requirements

What was approved

| Required building setback | |
| Approved building setback | |

The Belmont House

What the Code allows/requires

Example of what could have been built following Code requirements

What was approved

Project Study Overview

Code Assessment
Columbus, Ohio

October 7, 2021

OPTICOS

Franklin Condos

Project details:

- Located at 1670 East Broad St.

- AR-O (Apartment Residential District)

- 36 units, 46 du/ac

Analyzed scenarios:

1. What the Code requires/allows

2. What was approved

1) What the Code requires/allows

1) What the Code requires/allows

Zone: AR-O (Apartment Residential District)

Lot width
Requirement: 50' min.
Project complies with requirement, total: 200'

Lot area
Requirement: 20,000 sf min.
Project complies with requirement, total: 34,000 sf

- - - Requirement   Approved building for comparison to Code requirements

1) What the Code requires/allows

Zone: AR-O (Apartment Residential District)

Lot width
Requirement: 50' min.

Lot area
Requirement: 20,000 sf min.

Lot coverage
Requirement: 17,000 sf max. (50% of lot area)
Project does not comply with requirement, total: 17,400 sf (calculations only include building)

- - - Requirement　　▢ Approved building for comparison to Code requirements
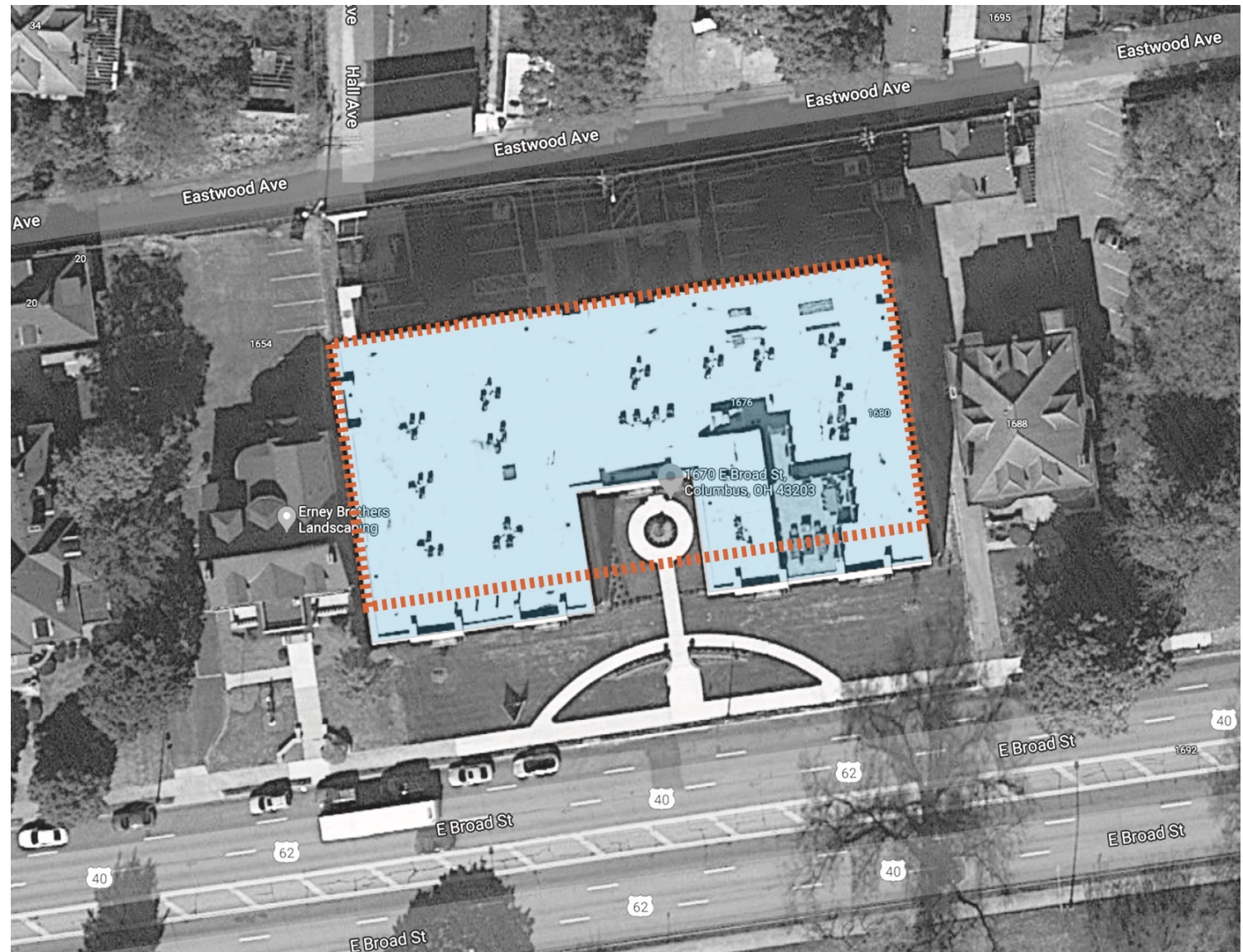
1) What the Code requires/allows

Zone: AR-O (Apartment Residential District)

Lot width
Requirement: 50' min.

Lot area
Requirement: 20,000 sf min.

Lot coverage
Requirement: 17,000 sf max. (50% of lot area)

Building line (front setback)
Requirement: 42.75' min.
Project does not comply with requirement, at 30'

- - - Requirement ■ Approved building for comparison to Code requirements ■ Area not in compliance

1) What the Code requires/allows

Zone: AR-O (Apartment Residential District)

Lot width
Requirement: 50' min.

Lot area
Requirement: 20,000 sf min.

Lot coverage
Requirement: 17,000 sf max. (50% of lot area)

Building line (front setback)
Requirement: 42.75' min.

Minimum Side Yard
Requirement: 9.16' min. (1/6 of bldg. height)
Project does not comply with requirement, at 4'

- - **Requirement**   **Approved building for comparison to Code requirements**   ■ **Area not in compliance**

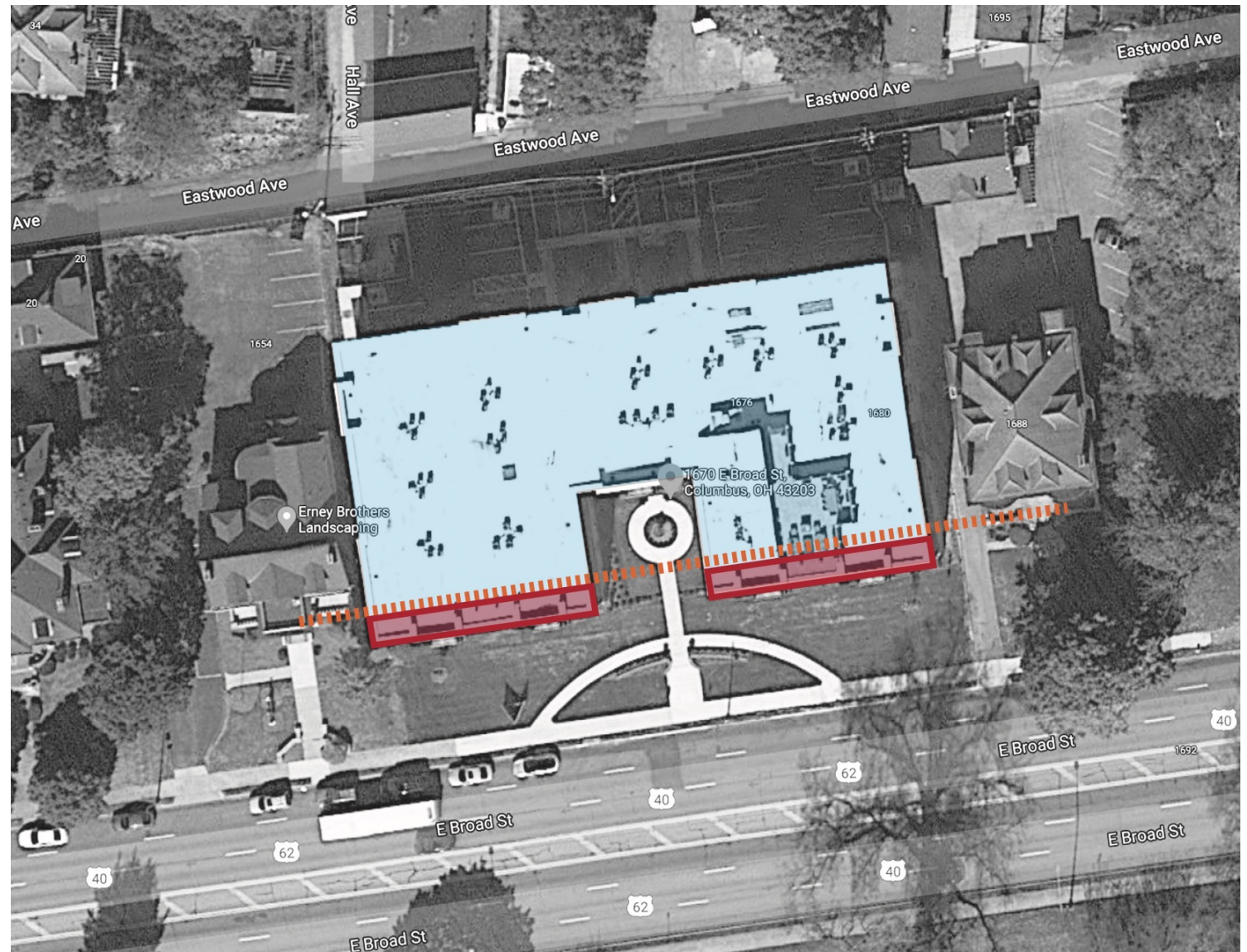# 1) What the Code requires/allows

Zone: AR-O (Apartment Residential District)

Lot width
Requirement: 50' min.

Lot area
Requirement: 20,000 sf min.

Lot coverage
Requirement: 17,000 sf max. (50% of lot area)

Building line (front setback)
Requirement: 42.75' min.

Minimum Side Yard
Requirement: 9.16' min. (1/6 of bldg. height)

Parking front setback line
Requirement: 25' min.
Project does comply with requirement, at 30'

Parking spaces
Requirement: 54 min. (1.5 per unit x 36 units)
Project does not comply with requirement, total: 53 spaces

- - - Requirement   Approved building for comparison to Code requirements   Area not in compliance

1) What the Code requires/allows

Zone: AR-O (Apartment Residential District)

Lot width
Requirement: 50' min.

Lot area
Requirement: 20,000 sf min.

Lot coverage
Requirement: 17,000 sf max. (50% of lot area)

Building line (front setback)
Requirement: 42.75' min.

Minimum Side Yard
Requirement: 9.16' min. (1/6 of bldg. height)

Parking setback line
Requirement: 25' min.

Parking spaces
Requirement: 54 min. (1.5 per unit x 36 units)

Building height
Requirement: 35' max.
Project does not comply with requirement, total: 55'

55' ----
35' ----

- - - Requirement   ▬▬ Area not in compliance
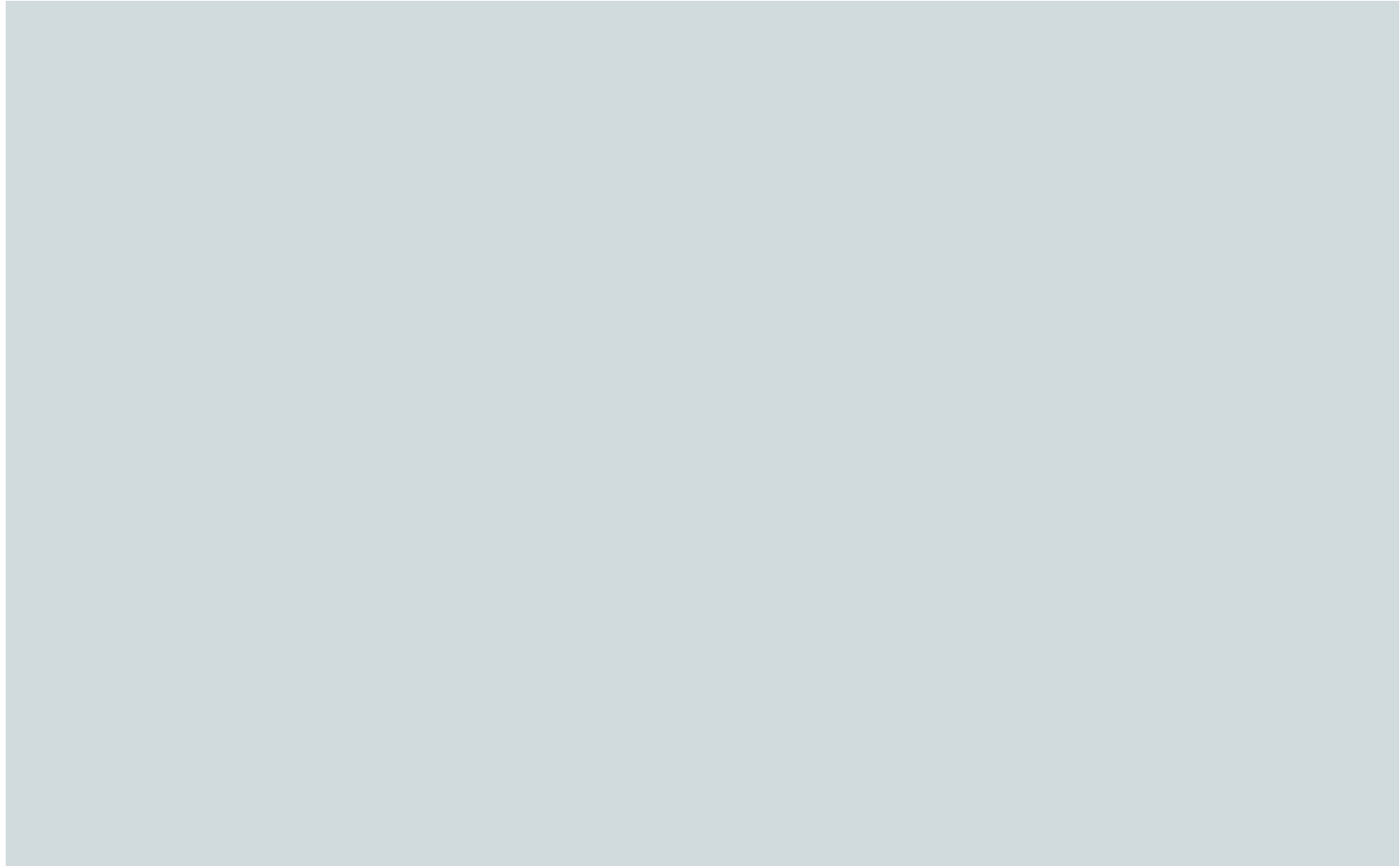
2) What was approved

2) What was approved

Standard variance:

1) Building lines
To reduce the building line from 42.75' to 30'

Reason: Structure moved closer to ROW to remove all parking in front of structure and vehicle access directly from Broad Street

Result of variance: 8 parking spaces were able to be located inside the building rather than outside in front of it
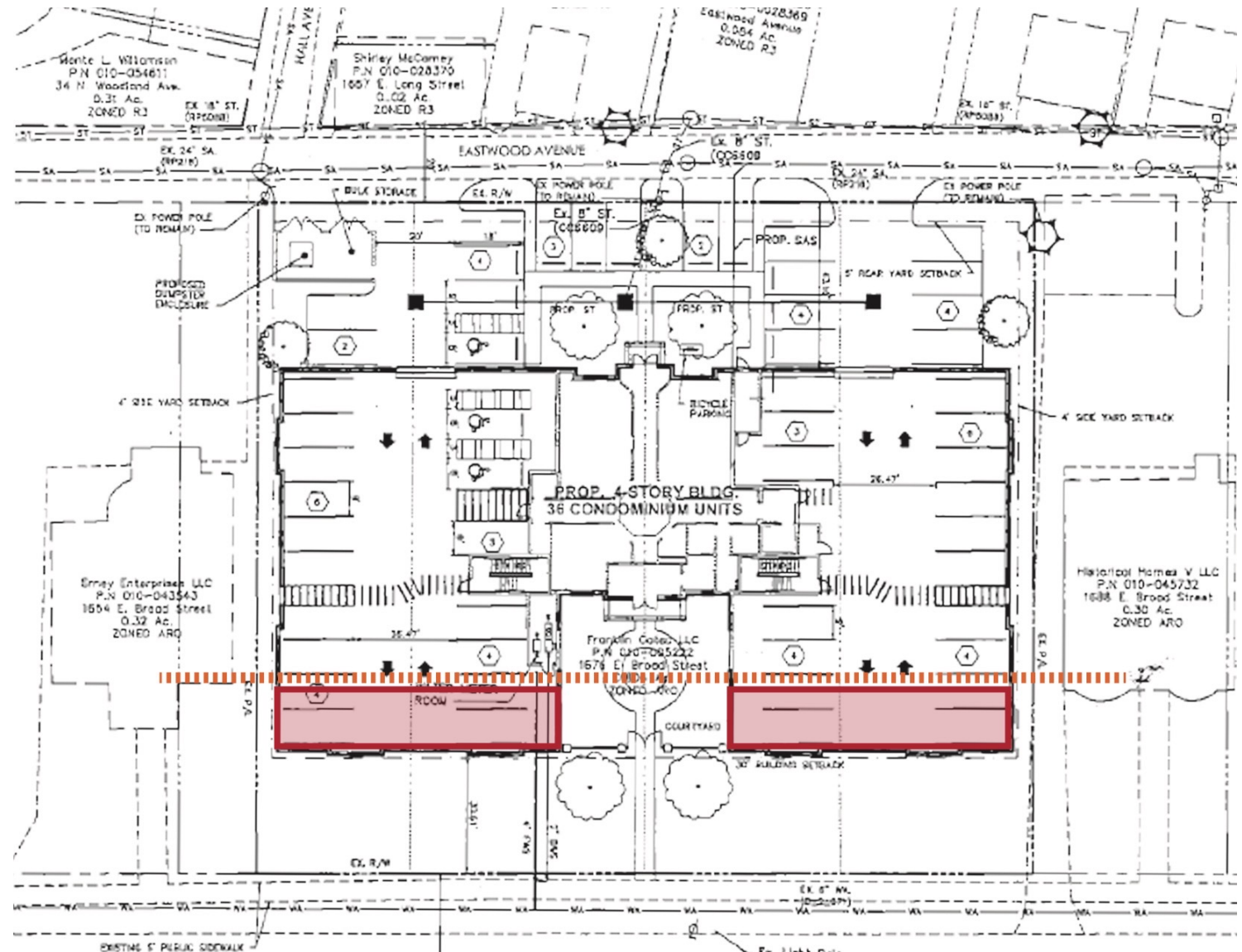
2) What was approved

Standard variance:

2) Minimum side yard permitted.
To reduce the min side yard from 9.16' to 4'

3) Maximum side yard required.
To reduce the max side yards from 16' to 4'

Reason: To permit moderate-sized development while reducing impact to neighborhood

Result of variance: Enough width for parking on both sides of each drive aisle
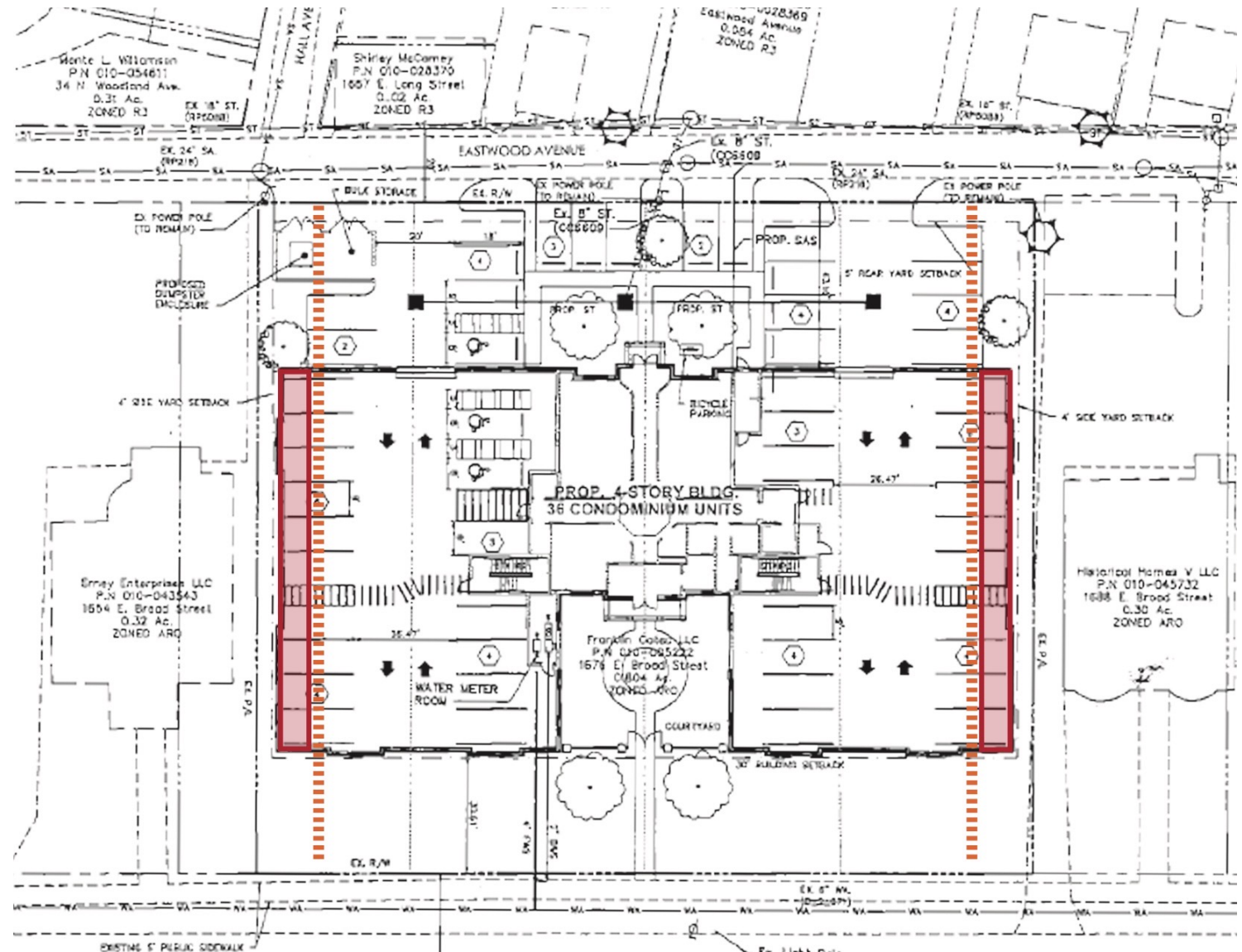
2) What was approved

Standard variance:

4) Minimum number of parking spaces required.
To reduce the min number of required parking spaces from 54 to 53

5) Rear yard
To reduce the required rear yard from 25% to 23%
Lot size: 34,000 sf
25% = 8,500 sf.; 23% = 7,820 sf

Reason: To permit moderate-sized development while reducing impact to neighborhood and achieve a front setback comparable to neighboring structures, and comply with Staff comments with regard to refuse collection locations

Result of variance: Accommodates parking, landscaping, trash, etc., along rear while keeping front setback free of parking
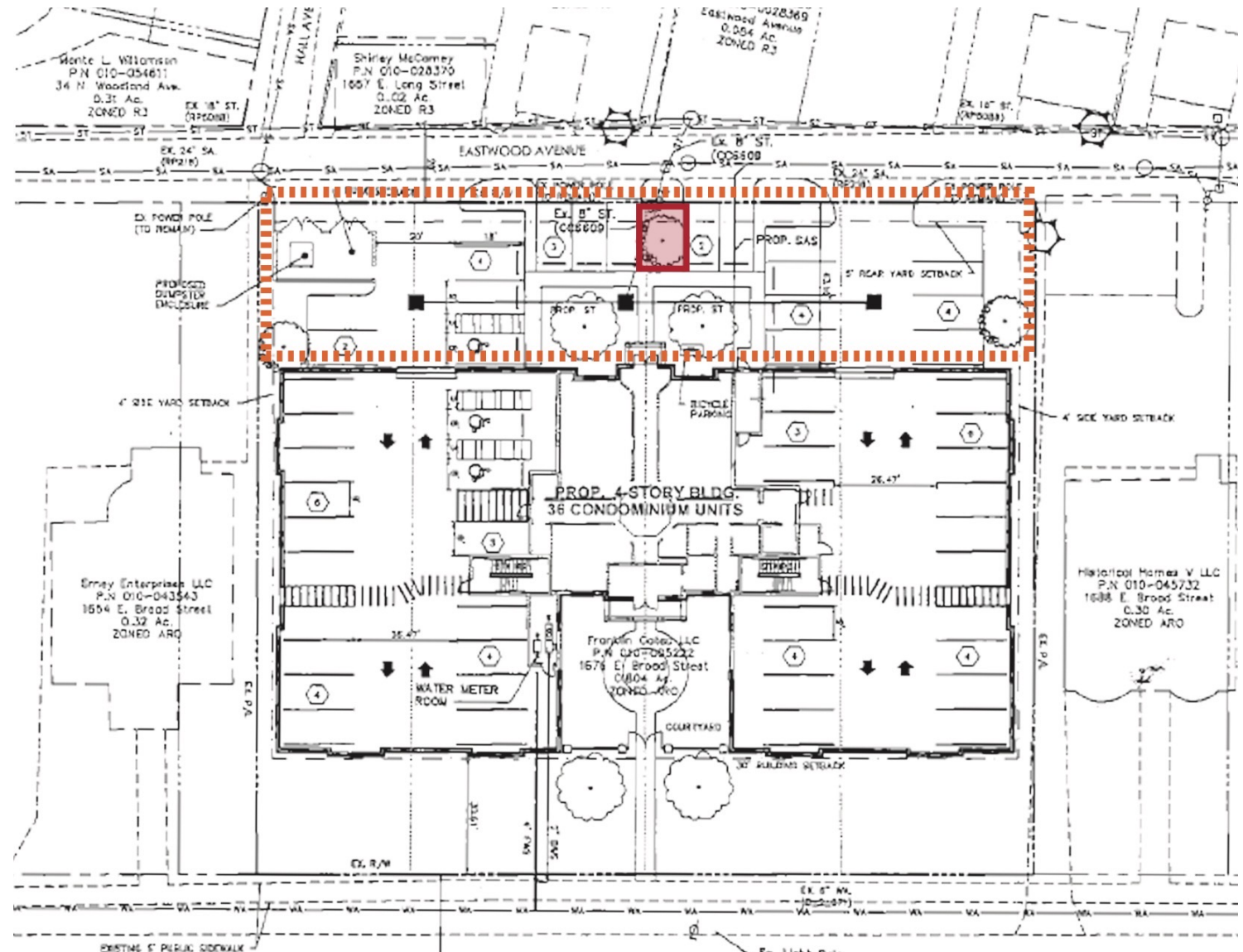
The Yardley

Project details:

- Located at 122 Parsons Ave.

- CPD (Commercial Planned Development District)

- 78 units, 70 du/ac

Analyzed scenarios:

1. What the Code requires/allows

2. What was approved

1) What the Code requires/allows

1) What the Code requires/allows

Zone: CPD (Commercial Planned Development District)

Lot width
Requirement: No requirement
Project complies, total: 170'

Lot area
Requirement: No requirement
Project complies, total: 44,200 sf
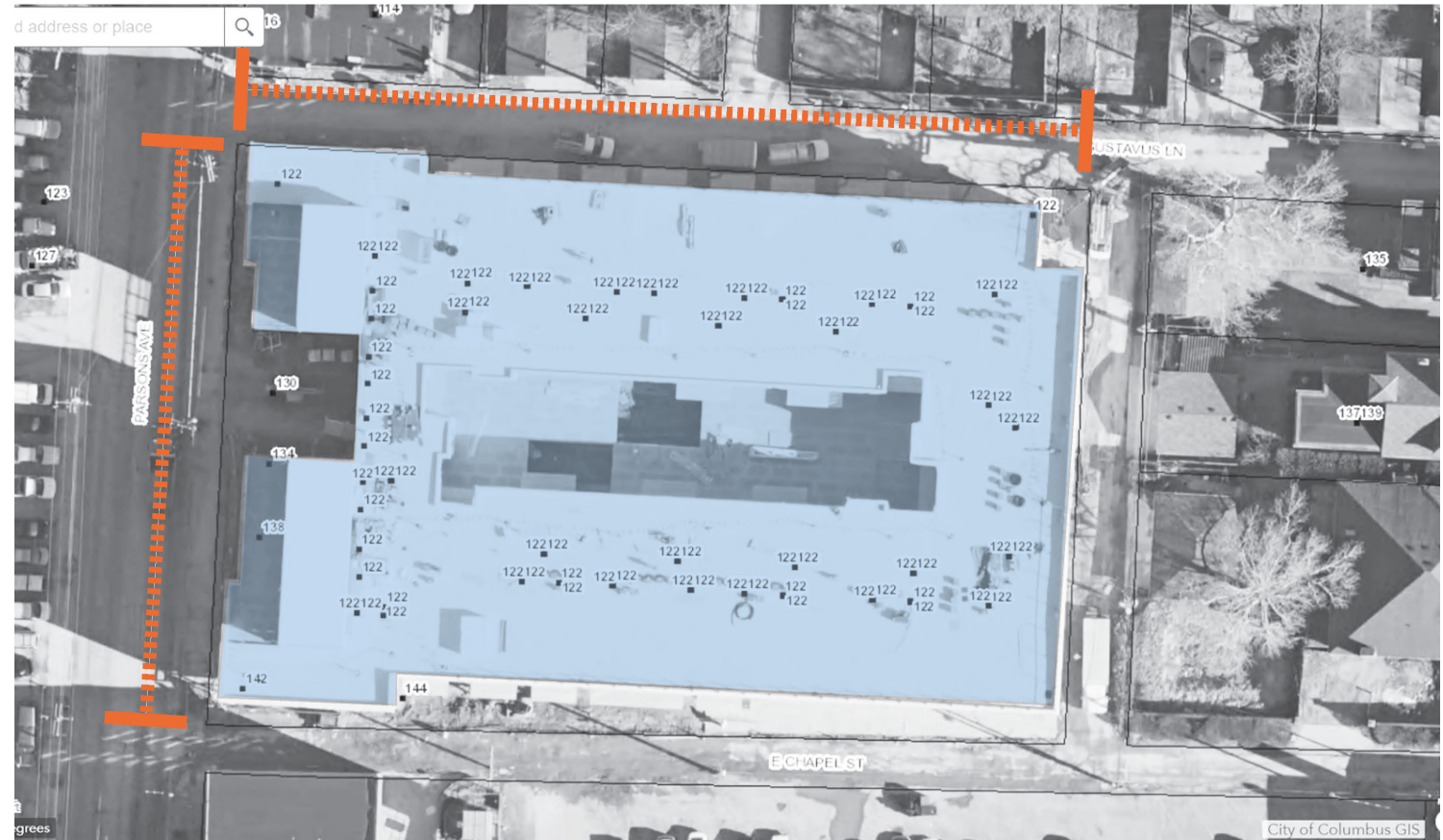
- - Requirement   ▧ Approved building for comparison to Code requirements

1) What the Code requires/allows

Zone: CPD (Commercial Planned Development District)

Lot width
Requirement: No requirement

Lot area
Requirement: No requirement

Lot coverage
Requirement: 22,100 sf max. (50% of lot area)
*Project does not comply with requirement,
total: 29,000 sf (approx.)
(calculations only include building)*

- - Requirement   Approved building for comparison to Code requirements

1) What the Code requires/allows

Zone: CPD (Commercial Planned Development District)

Lot width
Requirement: No requirement

Lot area
Requirement: No requirement

Lot coverage
Requirement: 22,100 sf max. (50% of lot area)

Building line (front setback)
Requirement: 25' min.*
*Project does not comply with requirement,
at 6' (if standard not reduced)*

**CPD District allows this requirement to be reduced
through the planning process*

Requirement   Approved building for comparison to Code requirements   Area not in compliance

1) What the Code requires/allows

Zone: CPD (Commercial Planned Development District)

Lot width
Requirement: No requirement

Lot area
Requirement: No requirement

Lot coverage
Requirement: 22,100 sf max. (50% of lot area)

Building line (front setback)
Requirement: 25' min.

Minimum Side Yard
Requirement: 25' min.*
Project does not comply with requirement, at 0'

CPD District allows this requirement to be reduced through the planning process
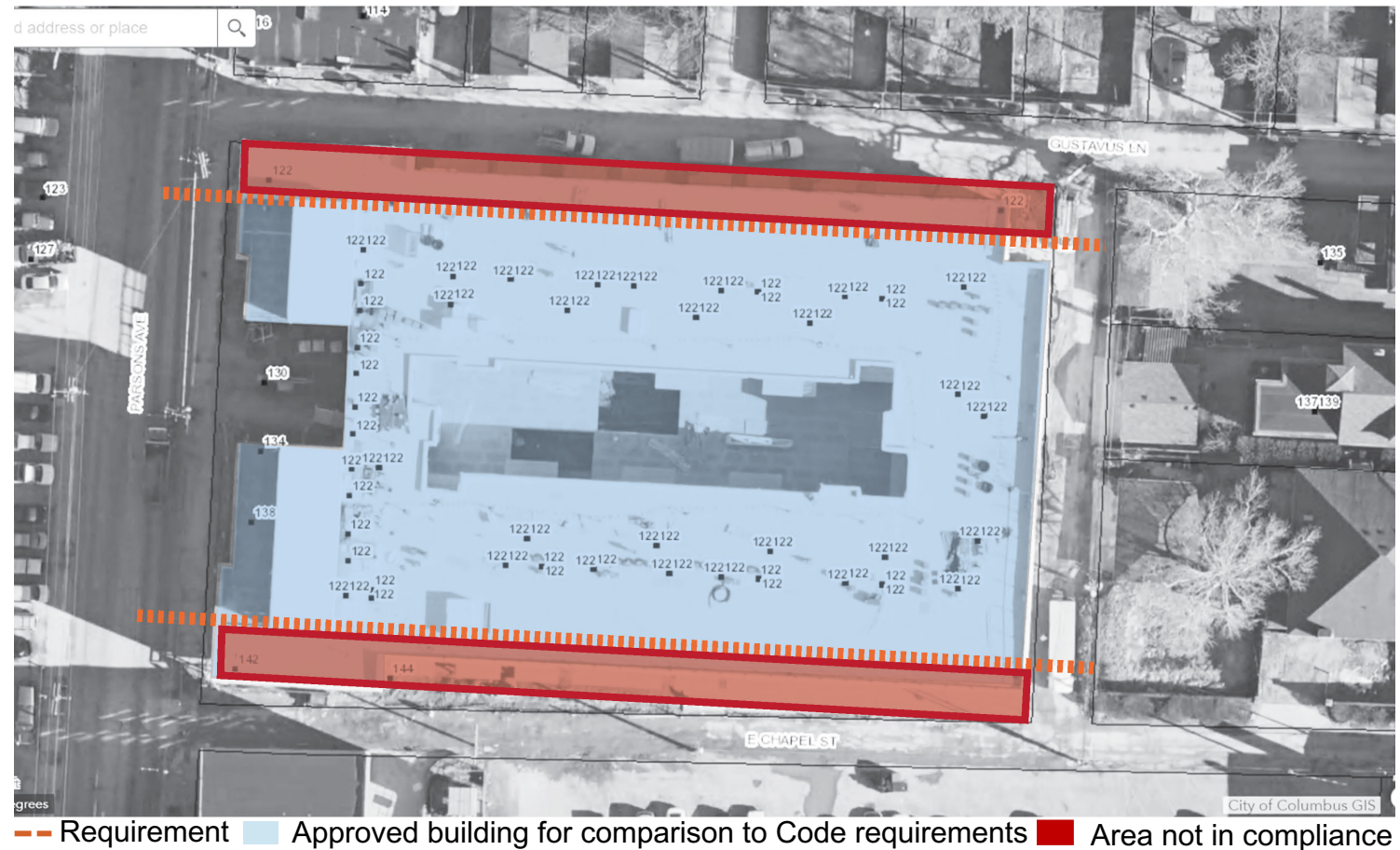
-- Requirement   Approved building for comparison to Code requirements   Area not in compliance

1) What the Code requires/allows

Zone: CPD (Commercial Planned Development District)

Lot width
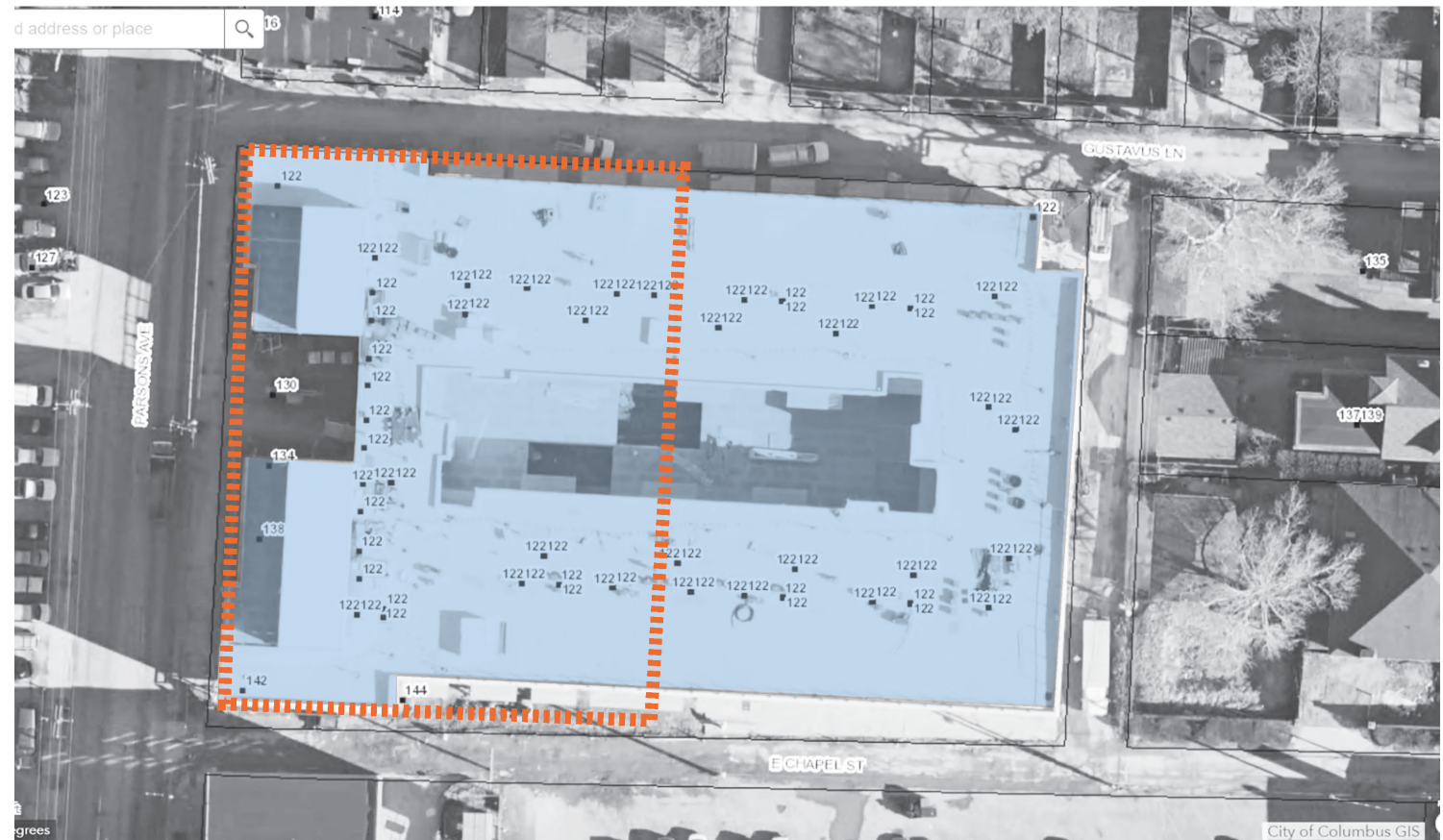Requirement: No requirement

Lot area
Requirement: No requirement

Lot coverage
Requirement: 22,100 sf max. (50% of lot area)

Building line (front setback)
Requirement: 25' min.

Minimum Side Yard
Requirement: 25' min.

Parking setback line
Requirement: 25' min. (front and rear)
Project does not comply with requirement in rear, at 0'

Parking spaces
Requirement: 141 spaces
Residential: 117 min. (1.5 per unit x 78 units)
Office: 10 min.
Retail: 8 min.
Project does not comply with requirement, total: 126 spaces

- - Requirement   Approved building for comparison to Code requirements   ▮ Area not in compliance

1) What the Code requires/allows

Zone: CPD (Commercial Planned Development District)

Lot width
Requirement: No requirement

Lot area
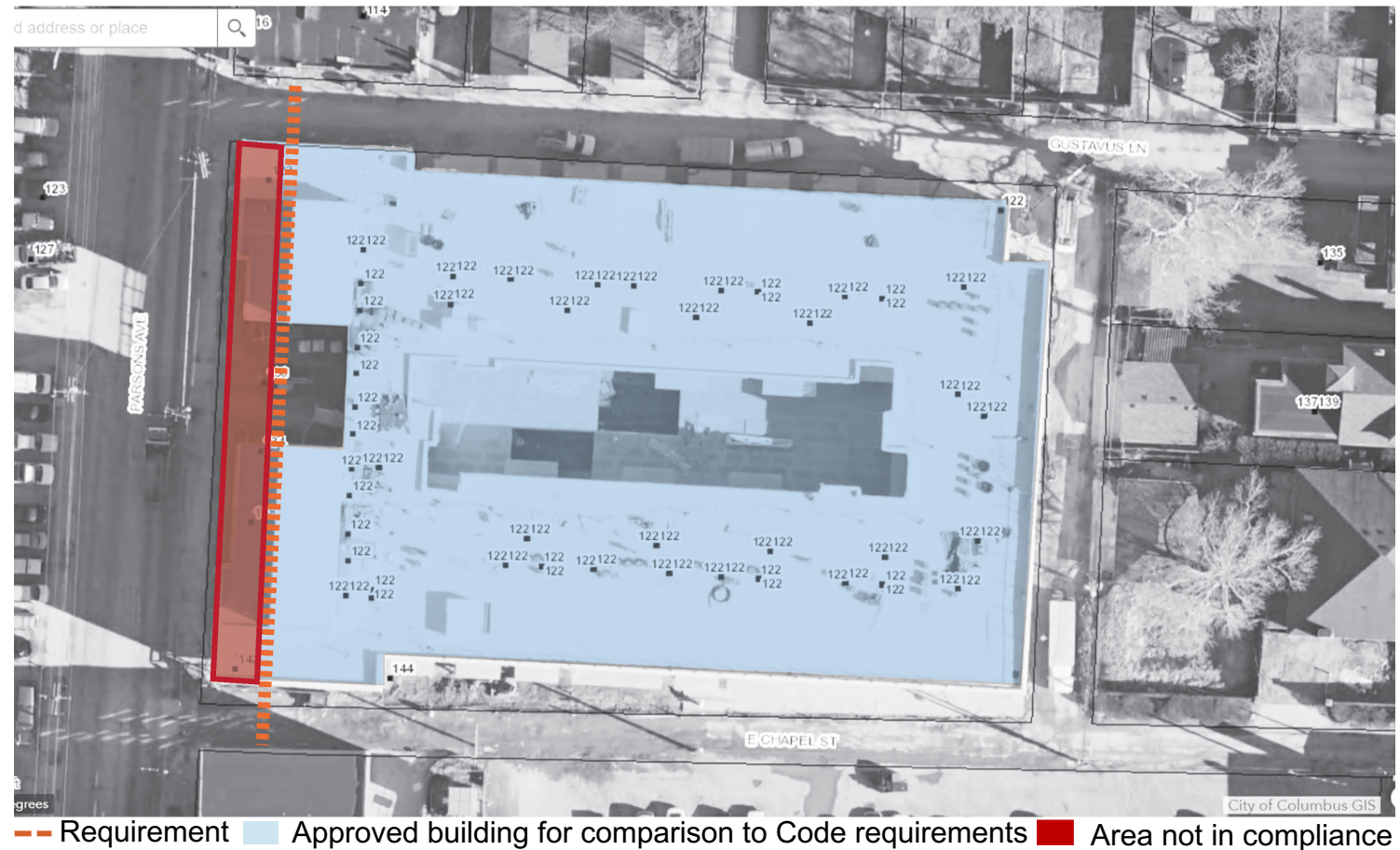Requirement: No requirement

Lot coverage
Requirement: 22,100 sf max. (50% of lot area)

Building line (front setback)
Requirement: 25' min.

Minimum Side Yard
Requirement: 25' min.

Parking setback line
Requirement: 25' min.

Parking spaces
Requirement: 141 min

Building height
Requirement: 35' max.
Project does not comply with requirement, total: 48'

48' ----- 4th story stepped back

38' -----

35' -----

-- - Requirement   ▇ Area not in compliance
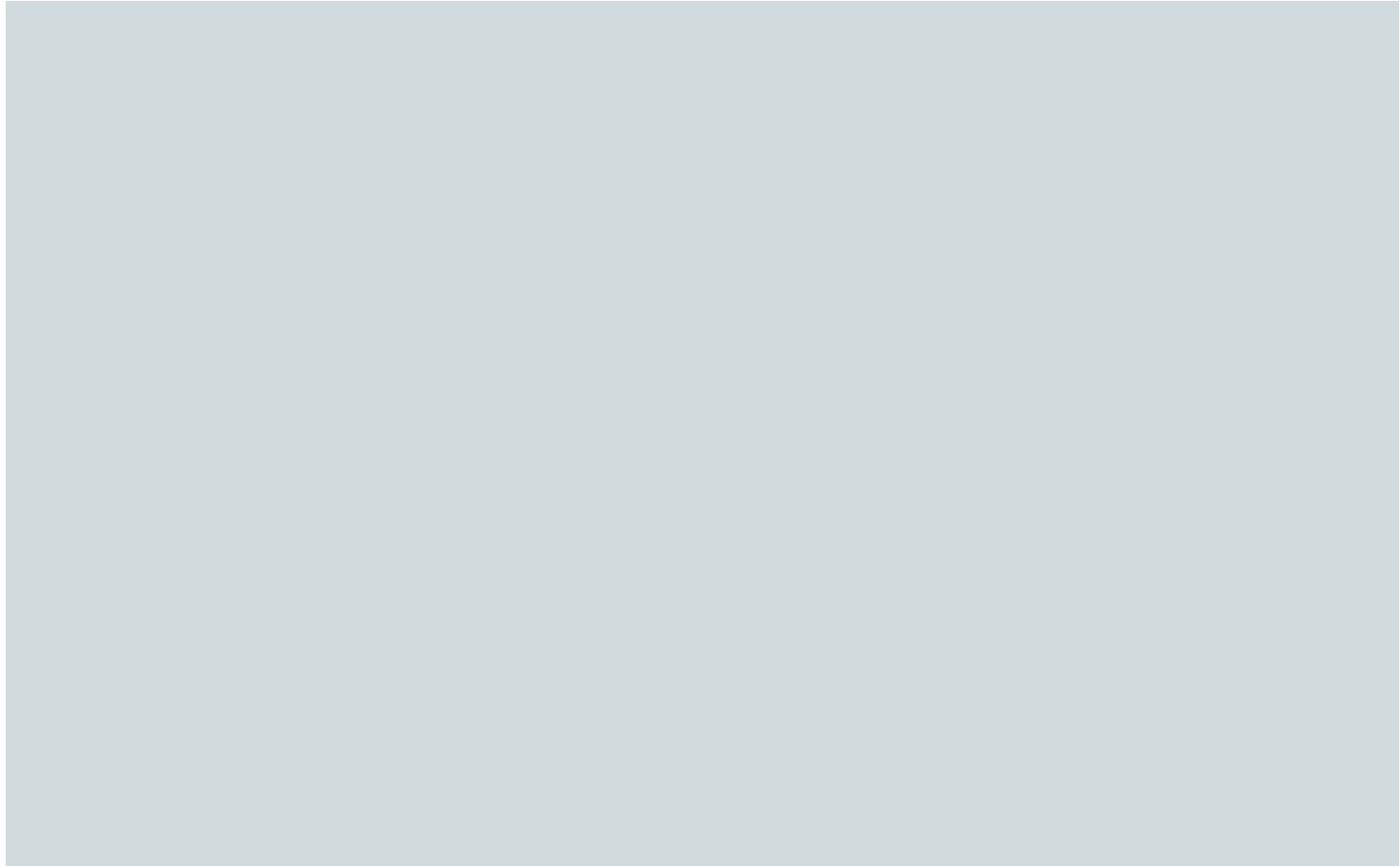
2) What was approved

2) What was approved

Standard variance:

1) Building height
To permit a max. building height of 52' from 35'

Reason: N/A

Result of variance: Taller 3rd story ceiling and partial 4th story
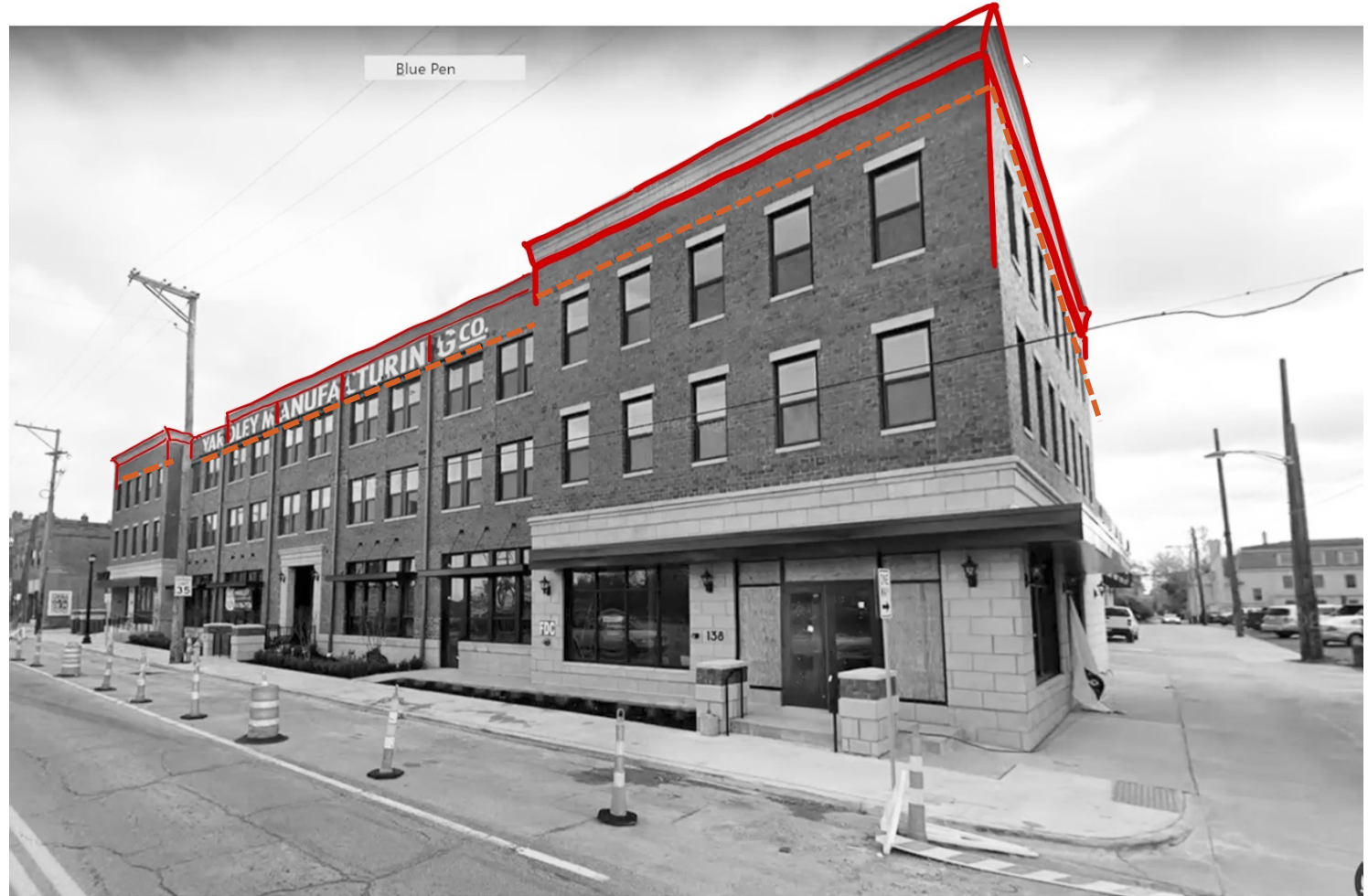
2) What was approved

Standard variance:

2) Stacked parking (Tandem)
To allow stacked parking spaces in the parking garage

Reason: N/A

Result of variance: More on-site parking

3) Parking spaces
Need to reduce the min. number of required parking spaces

Reason: none stated in Staff report

Result of variance: No need for off-site parking
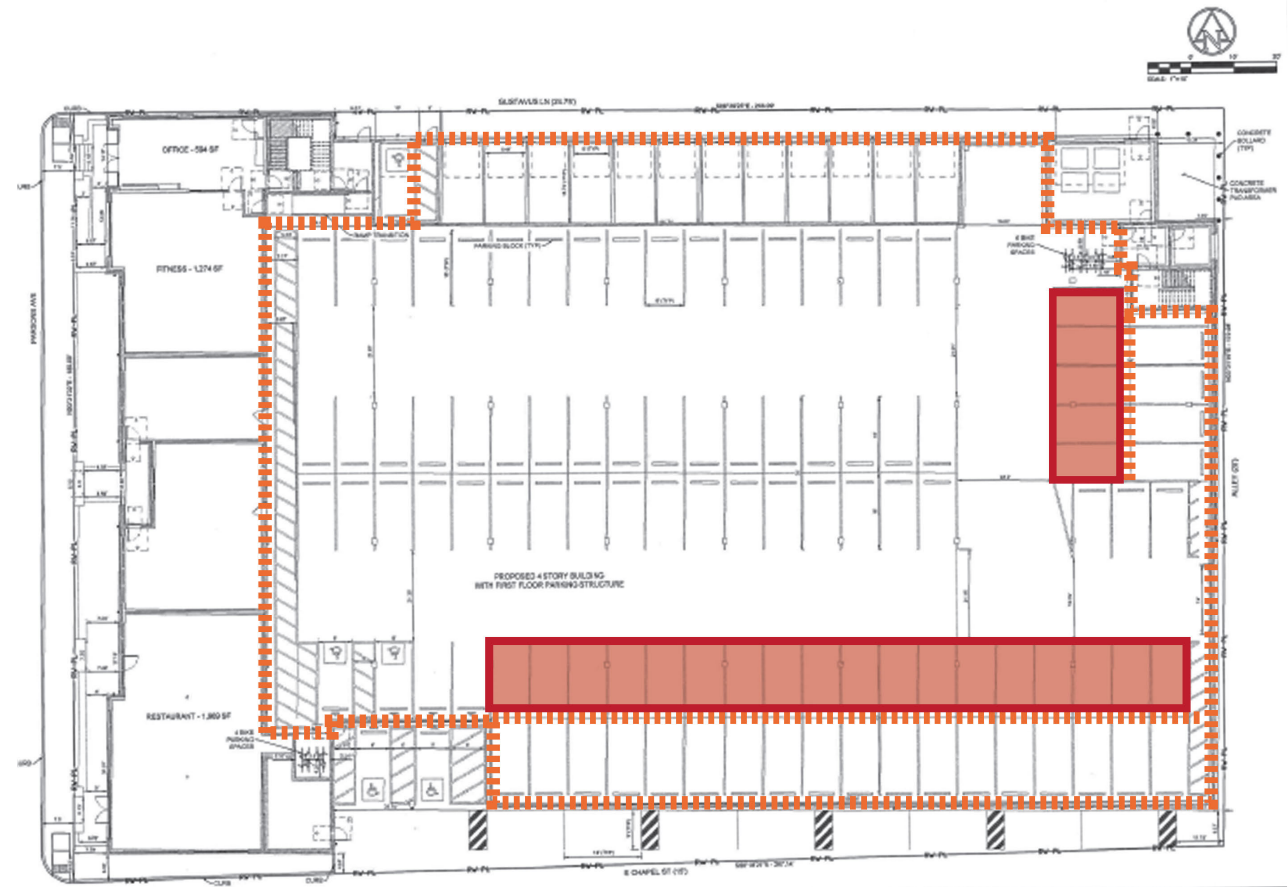
2) What was approved

Standard variance:

4) Vision clearance
Need to allow an encroachment into the vision clearance triangle at the intersections of Parsons Ave and East Chapel St, and Parsons Ave and Gustavus Ln. (10' vision triangle for the intersection applies to commercial sites)

Reason: N/A

Result of variance: Location of building consistent with urban context
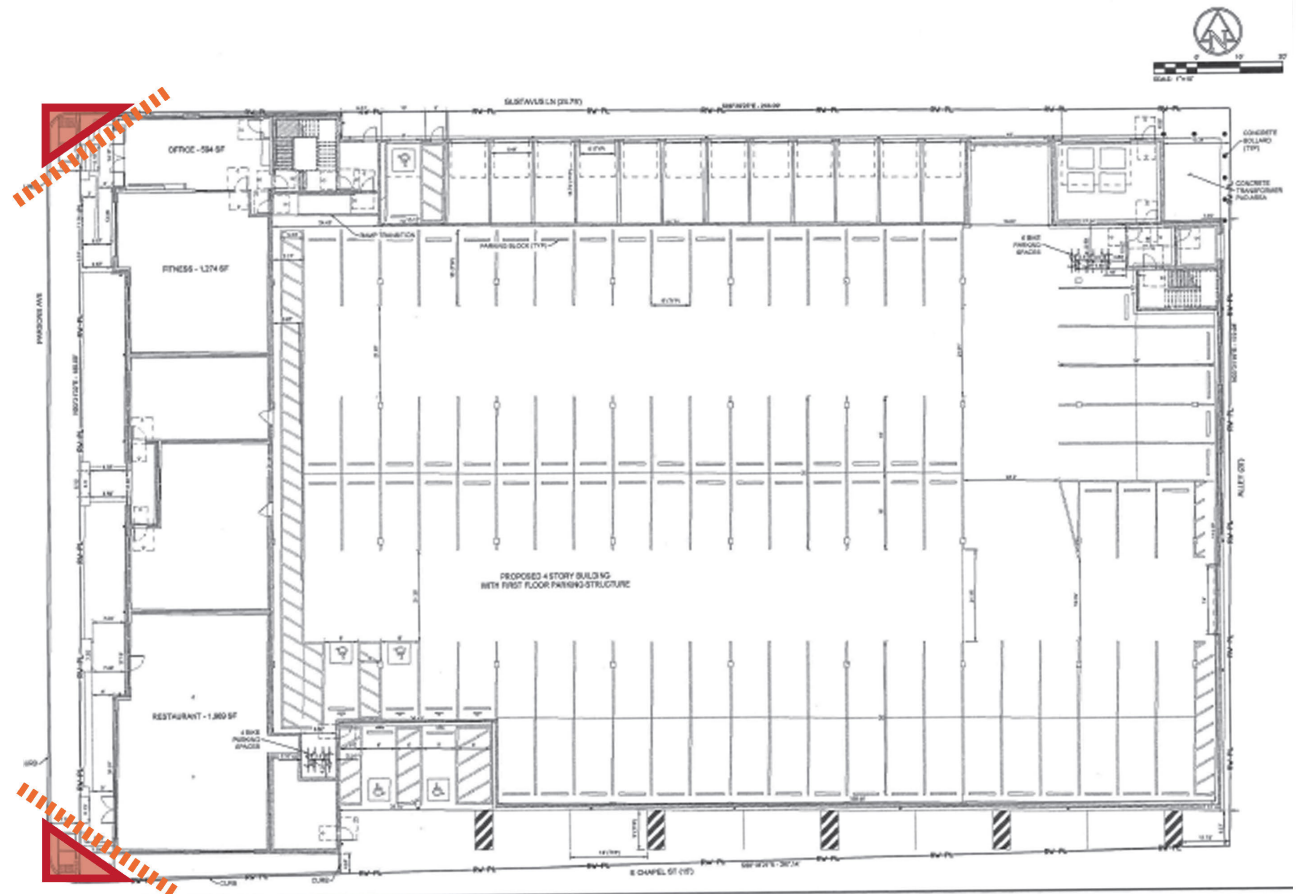
Belmont House
Phases 1 & 2 (Sub-Area 2)

Project details:

- Located at Trabue and McKinley

- Sub-Area 2: L-AR1 (Limited-Apartment District 1)

- Phase 1: 265 units; Phase 2: 216 units

- Adjoining sub-area designated for connected commercial and mixed uses

Analyzed scenarios:

1. What the Code requires/allows

2. What was approved

1) What the Code requires/allows

1) What the Code requires/allows

Sub-Area 2 Zone: L-AR1 (Limited-Apartment District 1)

Lot width
Requirement: 50' min.
Project complies with requirement, total: 800' (approx.)

Lot area
Requirement: 20,000 sf min.
Project complies with requirement, total: 380,000 sf (approx.)

(Sub-area 1: Designated for connected commercial and mixed uses)

– – – Requirement ▢ Approved building for comparison to Code requirements

1) What the Code requires/allows

Sub-Area 2 Zone: L-AR1 (Limited-Apartment District 1)

Lot width
Requirement: 50' min.

Lot area
Requirement: 20,000 sf min.

Lot coverage
Requirement: 190,000 sf max. (50% of lot area)
*Project complies with requirement, total: 130,000 sf (approx.)
(calculations only include buildings)*

(Sub-area 1: Designated for connected commercial and mixed uses)

– – Requirement   ▢ Approved building for comparison to Code requirements

1) What the Code requires/allows

Sub-Area 2 Zone: (Limited-Apartment District 1)

Lot width
Requirement: 50' min.

Lot area
Requirement: 20,000 sf min.

Lot coverage
Requirement: 190,000 sf max. (50% of lot area)

Building line (front setback)
Requirement: 13' min. or 25' min.
Project complies with requirement, at 100' (approx.)

(Sub-area 1: Designated for connected commercial and mixed uses)
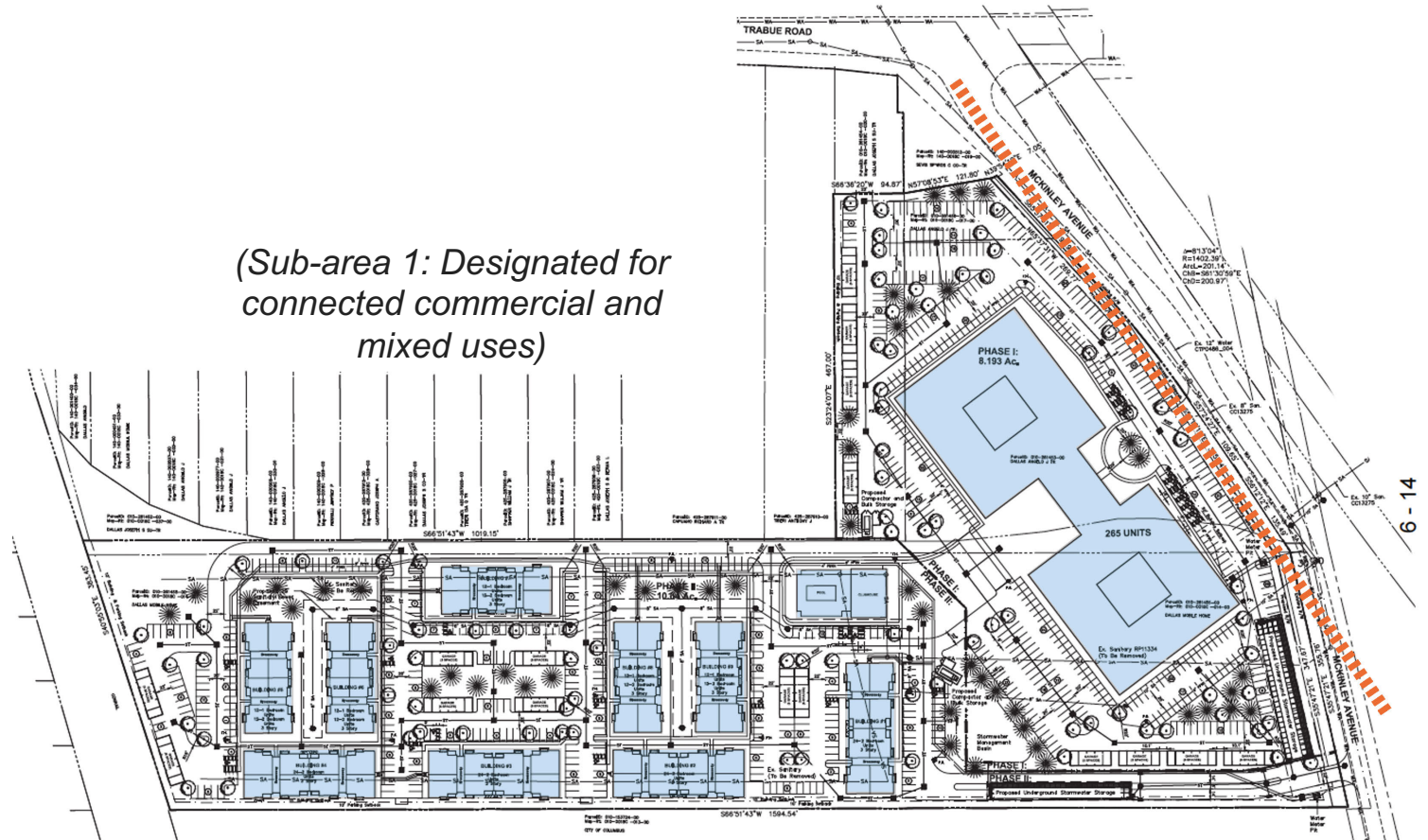
‑ ‑ Requirement   [blue box] Approved building for comparison to Code requirements

1) What the Code requires/allows

Sub-Area 2 Zone: (Limited-Apartment District 1)

Lot width
Requirement: 50' min.

Lot area
Requirement: 20,000 sf min.

Lot coverage
Requirement: 190,000 sf max. (50% of lot area)

Building line (front setback)
Requirement: 13' min. or 25' min.

Minimum Side Yard
Requirement: 5' min.
Project complies with requirement, at 15' or more
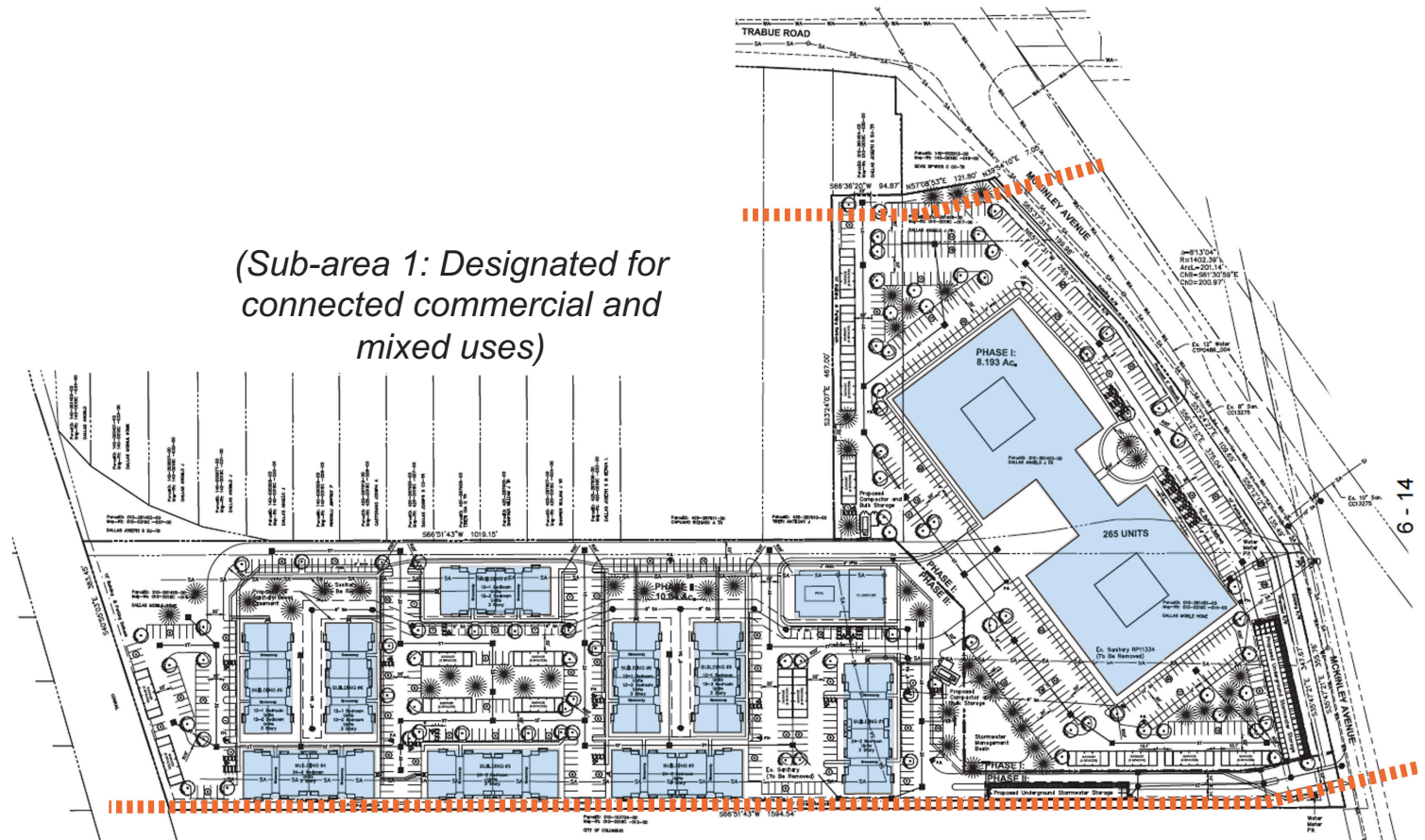
(Sub-area 1: Designated for connected commercial and mixed uses)

-- Requirement ▮ Approved building for comparison to Code requirements

1) What the Code requires/allows

Sub-Area 2 Zone: (Limited-Apartment District 1)

Lot width
Requirement: 50' min.

Lot area
Requirement: 20,000 sf min.

Lot coverage
Requirement: 190,000 sf max. (50% of lot area)

Building line (front setback)
Requirement: 13' min. or 25' min.

Minimum Side Yard
Requirement: 5' min.

Parking setback line
Requirement: 10' min. (front and rear)
Project complies with requirement, at 10' or more

Parking spaces
Requirement phase 1: 398 min. (1.5 per unit x 265 units)
Project complies with requirement, total: 467 spaces
Requirement phase 2: 324 min. (1.5 per unit x 216 units)
Project complies with requirement, total: 385 spaces

(Sub-area 1: Designated for connected commercial and mixed uses)
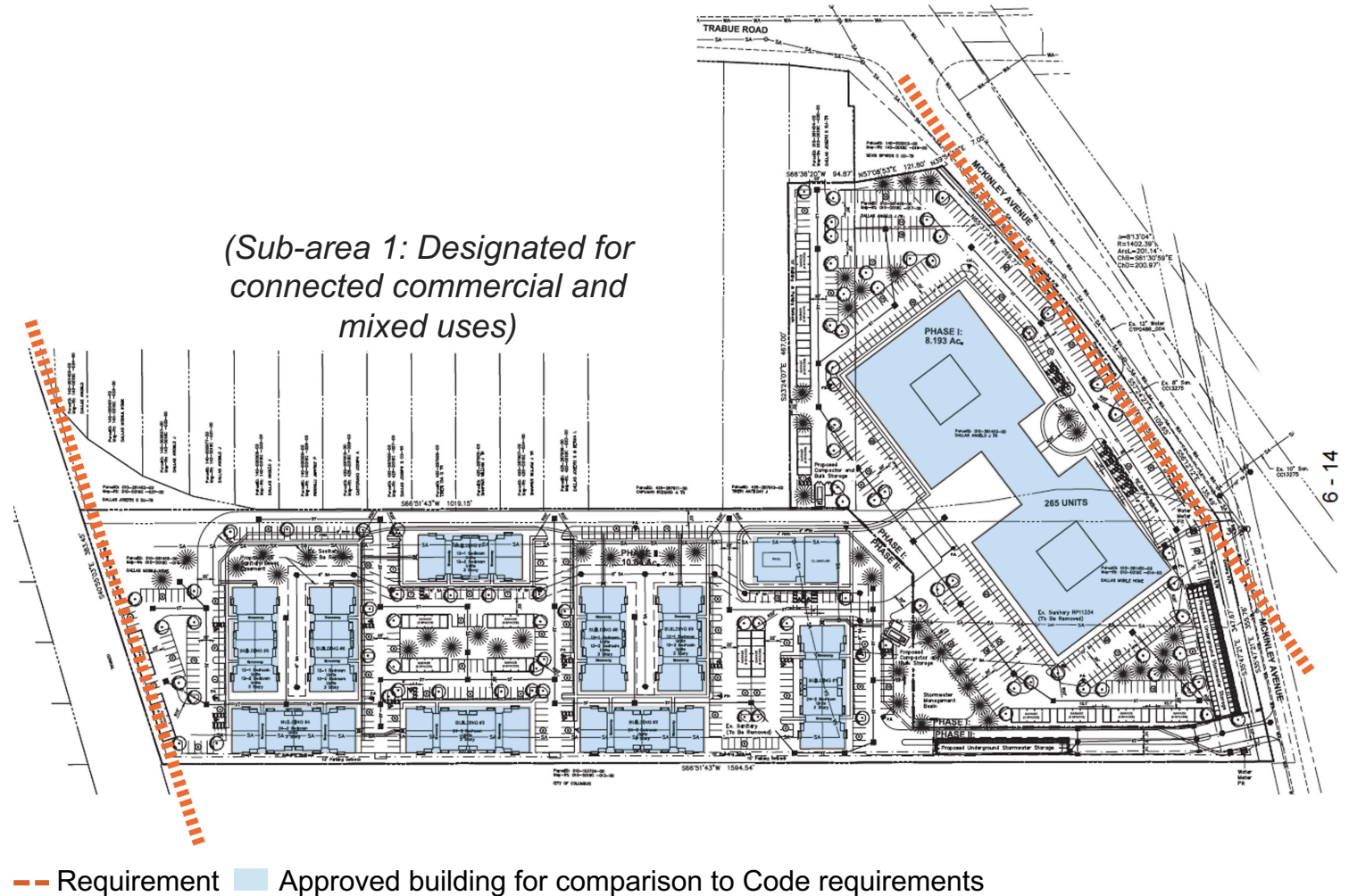
‑ ‑ Requirement   ▢ Approved building for comparison to Code requirements

1) What the Code requires/allows

Sub-Area 2 Zone: (Limited-Apartment District 1)

Lot width
Requirement: 50' min.

Lot area
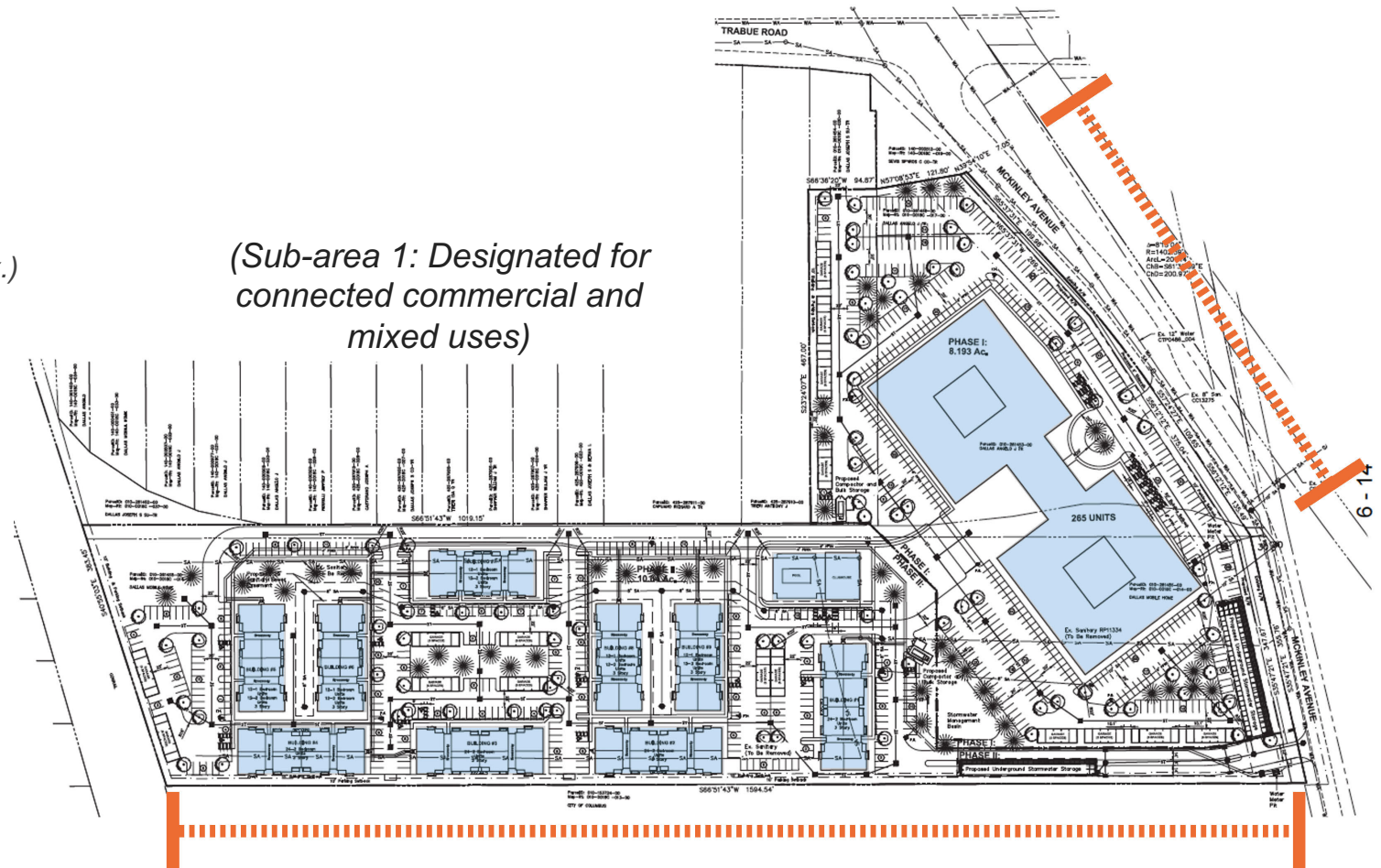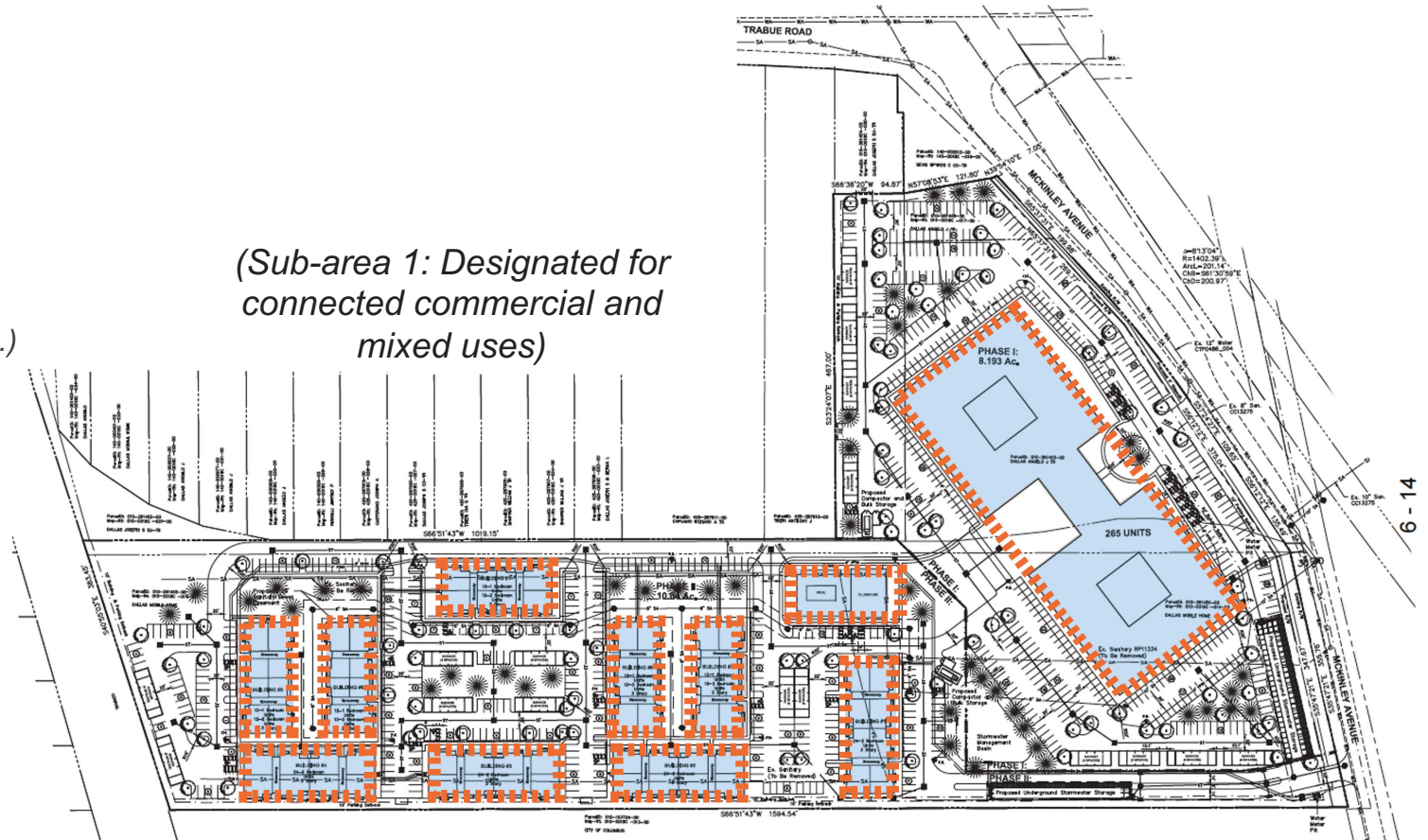Requirement: 20,000 sf min.

Lot coverage
Requirement: 190,000 sf max. (50% of lot area)

Building line (front setback)
Requirement: 13' min. or 25' min.

Minimum Side Yard
Requirement: 5' min.

Parking setback line
Requirement: 10' min.

Parking spaces
Requirement: 721 (1.5 per unit x 481 units)

Building height
Requirement: 60' max.
Project complies with requirement, total: 60' (approx.)

60' - - - -

-- Requirement

2) What was approved

2) What was approved

Standard variance:

1) Aisle
To permit aisles to be divided by property lines, subject to applicable total code required aisle width being provided and applicable easements

2) Driveway
To permit driveways to be divided by property lines, subject to applicable total code required driveway width being provided and applicable easements

Reason: N/A

Result of variance: Connectivity between adjacent parcels

Key to this outcome was the area plan call for a pedestrian oriented Town Center development pattern. The overall zoning includes an adjacent sub-area designated for connected commercial and mixed uses in response to this direction.
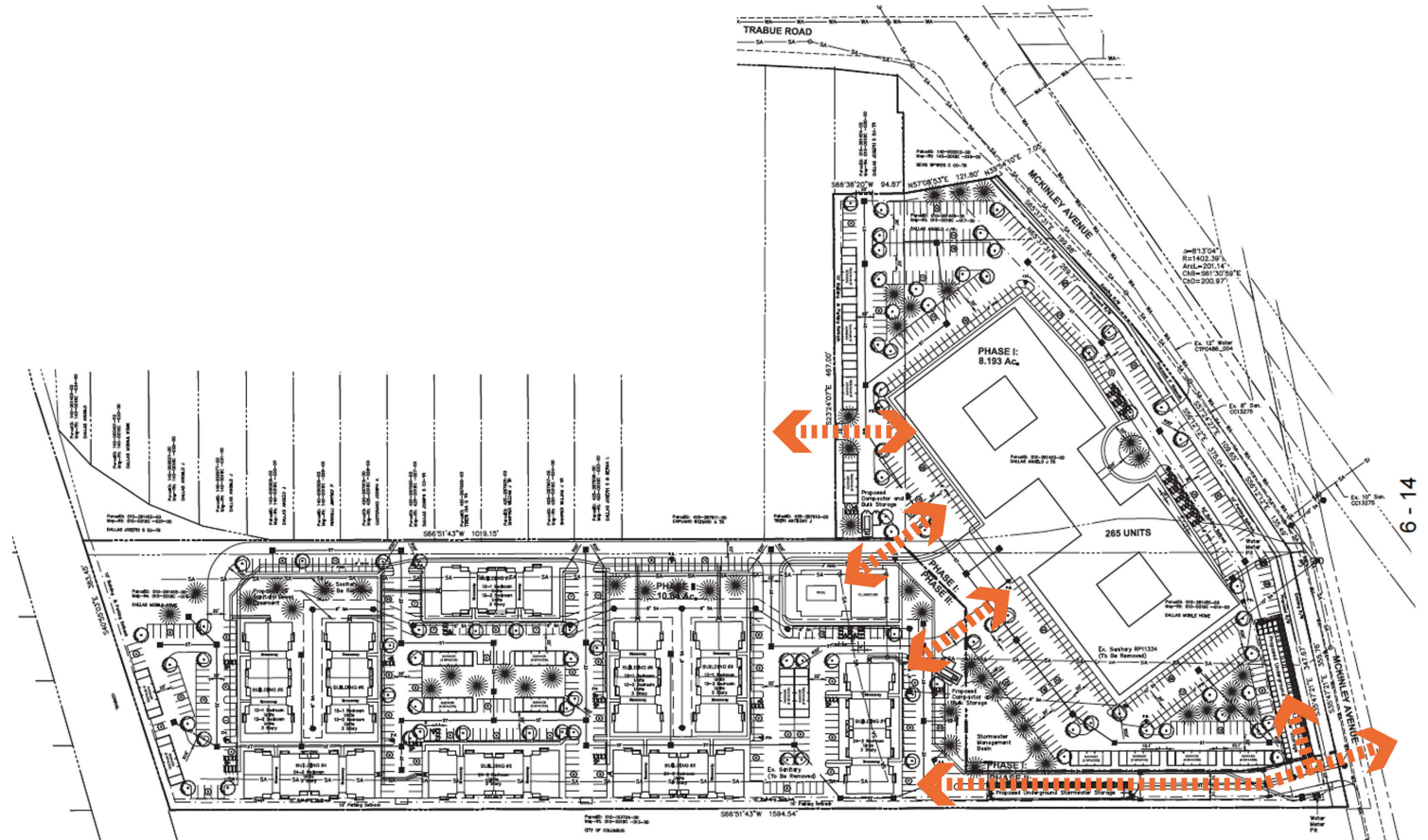
2) What was approved

Standard variance:

3) Maneuvering

To permit maneuvering areas (including aisles, driveways, and parking spaces) to be divided by property lines, subject to applicable total code required maneuvering being provided for parking spaces and applicable easements

5) Parking setback line

To allow parking spaces to be divided subject to code required dimensions being provided

Reason: N/A

Result of variance: Interconnected network of blocks and streets

Key to this outcome was the area plan call for a pedestrian oriented Town Center development pattern. The overall zoning includes an adjacent sub-area designated for connected commercial and mixed uses in response to this direction.
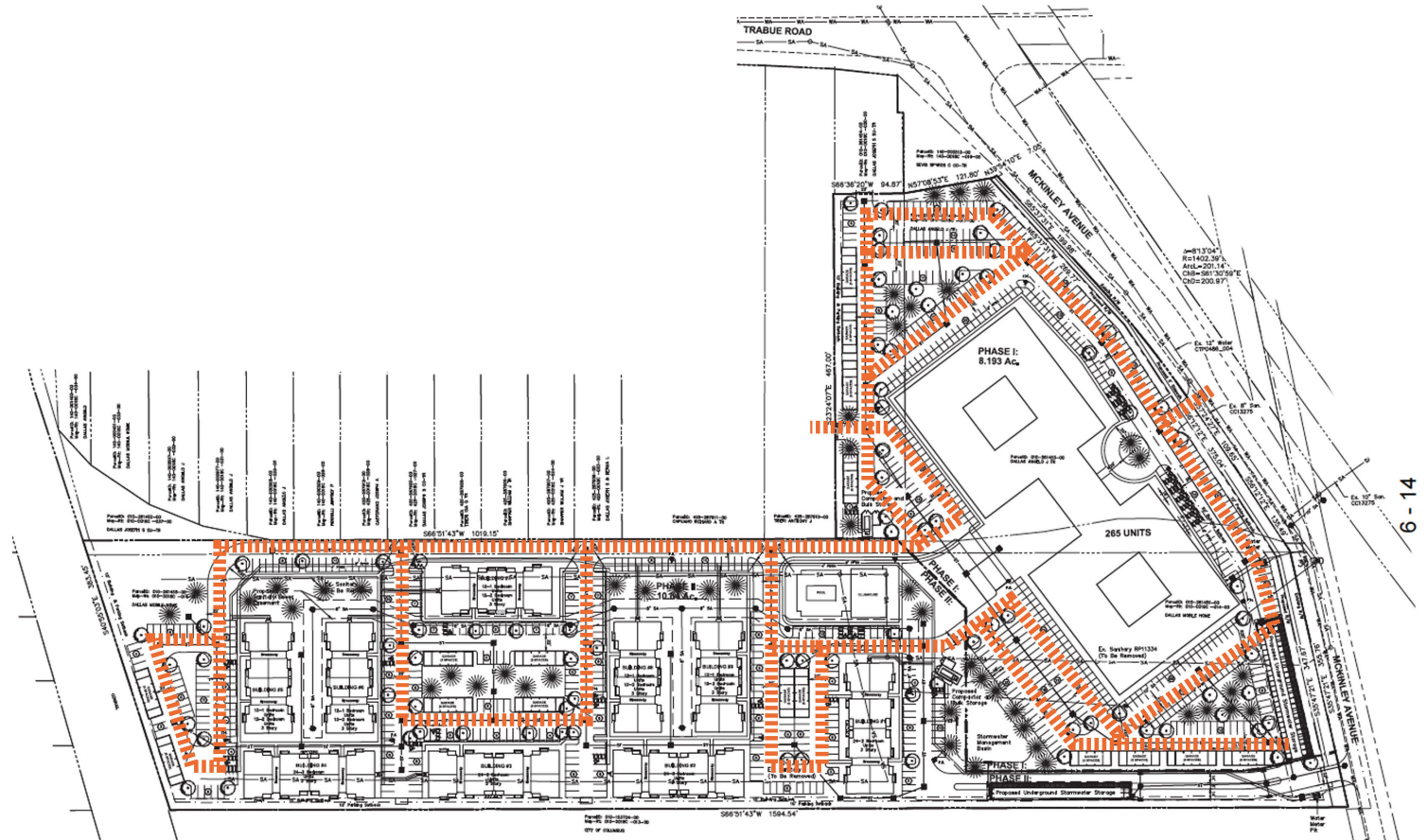
2) What was approved

Standard variance:

7) Perimeter yard
To permit commercial vehicular access and
reduced development standards for a multi-unit
residential development in the L-AR-1, Limited
Apartment Residential District

Reason: N/A

Result of variance: Interconnected block and
streets

*Key to this outcome was the area plan call for a
pedestrian oriented Town Center development
pattern. The overall zoning includes an adjacent sub-area
designated for connected commercial and mixed uses in
response to this direction.*
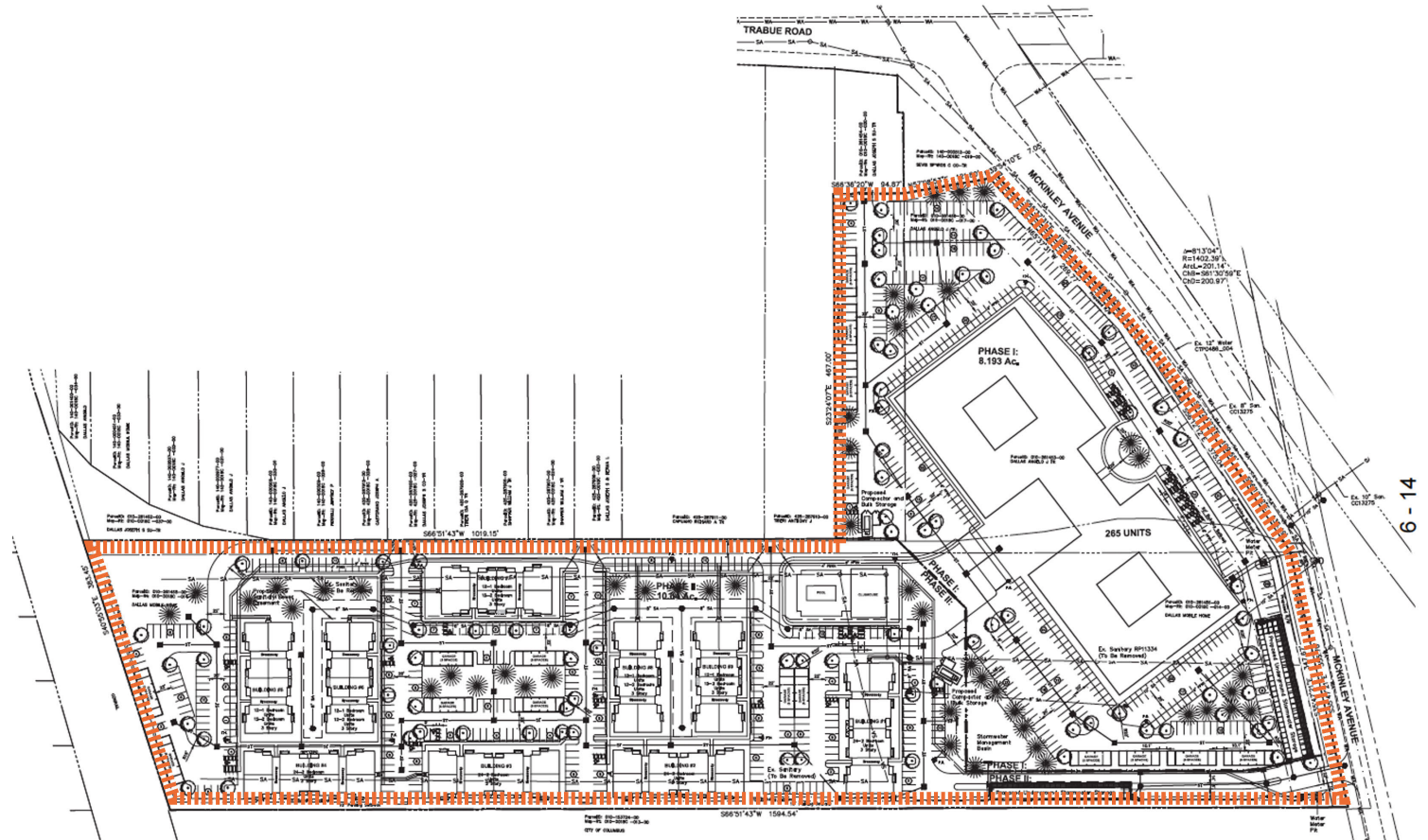
Attachment 2:
Stakeholder Interview Summary Report

Stakeholder Interview Summary Report

Zoning Code Assessment and Update Strategy
City of Columbus

Prepared by:
LWC & MKSK
February 2021

THE CITY OF
COLUMBUS

LWC

MKSK OPTICOS

Peter J. Park
City Planning and Design

W&W

Contents

Introduction

As part of the City of Columbus Zoning Code Assessment and Update Strategy (Project), the Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc. (LWC)-led Consultant Team (including Opticos Design, Inc., Peter J. Park, LLC, MKSK, and Warhol and Wall Street) conducted telephone interviews with key stakeholders. The interviews were intended to provide an insider's perspective on the successes and challenges of the existing Zoning Code, development review process, and provide an opportunity to discuss areas for improvement. The interviews were also aimed at identifying strategies for advancing equity in the City.

The City identified interview participants from a broad cross section of the community, particularly those with hands-on experience or knowledge of the Zoning Code and/or development review process. Stakeholders included residents, developers, architects, attorneys, property owners, City staff, Area Commissioners, City Councilmembers, and representatives from non-profit and civic organizations.

The Consultant Team conducted 44 interviews with over 70 individuals during the week of December 7th, 2020, with follow up interviews occurring through January 2021. Interviews were conducted in 30-minute intervals via teleconference. Each interview began with a description of the project and the purpose of the interviews. Respondents were assured that their identity and their input would be treated confidentially. The interviews were guided by a survey instrument developed by the Consultant Team and the City (see Appendix).

All participants were asked the same questions to ensure consistency. The Consultant team gathered notes during the call and summarized the input based on emphasis and repetition.

This Report provides a summary of key findings and an overview of responses for each question.

Common Themes

The following summary illustrates common themes across responses.

1. **Universal support for updating the Columbus Zoning Code.** Respondents generally expressed that the Zoning Code is outdated, not relevant to current development types, and ineffective-particularly for infill, mixed-use, and multi-family projects. Respondents often struggled to say something positive about the Code, even when prompted. The most positive comments were aimed at the efforts of and approachability of City staff and relief that (although cumbersome, see items #5 through #8, below) strategies have been developed to ensure that development still occurs in the City.

2. **Strong desire for the updated Zoning Code to accomplish the following** (not in hierarchal order):

   - Be predictable and easier to navigate,
   - Allow for faster review and approvals,
   - Reduce the number of variances,
   - Involve the community,
   - Result in consistent administration,
   - Address/facilitate affordable housing,
   - Allow for increased density and transit-supportive development (especially on identified transit corridors),
   - Support infill and projects appropriate in urban environments,
   - Accommodate regional growth,
   - Be forward looking,
   - Preserve what is best about existing neighborhoods, and
   - Address gentrification/displacement.

   Generally, respondents expressed optimism that the Zoning Code update can address many of these issues and an understanding that policies (at several levels) will need to be aligned for greatest impact.

3. **Disconnect between policy documents** (Insight 2050, LinkUs, C2P2, etc.). Regional and City plans that call for density and infill, high-capacity transit, affordable housing, focused incentives, etc. are not effectively implemented with the Zoning Code. The general public is largely unaware of and does not understand existing plans, initiatives, and findings, nor do they feel they were substantially involved. Also, when projects come forward that would fulfill these policy directives, there is often neighborhood opposition and public criticism directed toward City leadership. The solution requires City policy that is more aligned with regional plans and community education.

4. **Lack of a Citywide Comprehensive Plan or Future Land Use Map**. There are disconnects among recommendations of various existing area plans and the overall needs of the City and larger policy efforts. Not all neighborhoods have an existing area plan or a recently updated area plan. This conflict causes confusion and community opposition of developments that might align with Citywide or region-wide policy goals and benefit the larger population. The lack of a Citywide Comprehensive Plan or Future Land Use Map leaves many parts of the City without a consistent vision that would guide

updates to the Zoning Code. A consensus among City leadership as to overall land use direction will be important as a foundation of a Zoning Code update.

5. **Area Commission/Civic Association process is not serving its intended purpose and causes challenges.** Most Area Commissions and Civic Associations are functioning with limited City staff support (such as staff presence at all meetings or a staff report to guide the conversation). These groups have different degrees of influence and often, some Commission members do not fully understand their role, responsibility, authority, or the zoning process. Projects submitted often receive conflicting direction for refinement with no clear solution and/or are asked to return to issues that were resolved in prior meetings. Design and aesthetics are regularly targeted in areas with no design review authority and issues such as traffic and parking are often inappropriately used as a basis for rejection. The result is a time consuming, unpredictable, subjective, expensive, and inequitable process that can be dominated by individuals and personal preference rather than objective findings of fact.

6. **Lack of understanding for how the general public effectively engages on behalf of their neighborhoods**. Generally, respondents expressed that there is mistrust between the community and City leadership on all levels. There are beliefs among the community that the City listens to and favors some neighborhoods more than others, a perception that developers are trying to "cheat" or "bully" the neighborhood because of the sheer number of requested variances. Area Commission meetings serve as the primary place for community involvement, where community members feel they can influence the process and outcome of proposed development. If the development approval process is streamlined or adjusted to reduce what comes before Area Commissions, or changes the purview of the Commissions, the residents may feel disenfranchised. This will require extensive education, messaging, coordination, and a thoughtful approach to recommended changes.

7. **Lack of hierarchy in City departments leads to ambiguity in the development review process.** Many respondents mentioned that development review and approval goes through many different departments. Feedback and direction is, at times, inconsistent and conflicting, with no clear lead department to resolve conflicts and provide final direction. Further, comments and direction from some departments and City staff can run counter to overall policy guidance from City administration and direction provided during the concept planning and early development review stages.

8. **Existing zoning and approval process is unapproachable.** The zoning and development review process is perceived as overly complex, favoring those with substantial resources and thorough knowledge of the process. This has the impact of making the Code inaccessible to many, favoring experienced developers, discouraging small land/homeowners, and leading to an inequitable development process. It also contributes to mostly large-scale projects in transitional areas and projects that lack quality design to get through the process, rather than more creative and context-based projects.

9. **Education is critical to a Zoning Code update process**. Many stakeholders indicated that community outreach, messaging, and education will be critical to community support and the success of any Code update. This includes messaging on critical City policies, why they are important to the community, and how the Zoning Code update will help achieve them. Civic leaders, neighborhoods, residents, institutions, and stakeholders should be included in all steps of the process to help effective messaging. Stakeholders were concerned that past efforts and Code revisions have failed because of opposition at one or more of these levels, and sometimes solely because of inaccurate perceptions.

Summary of Comments per Question

Throughout the interviews, respondents were generally friendly, professional, generous with information, and appreciative to be involved. All respondents agreed to answer additional questions and continue to work with the Consultant Team and City staff on the project. The following are summaries of responses to each question.

1. **What is your affiliation in Columbus/how would you describe yourself as part of this interview?**

   Most respondents identified as residents, developers, architects, attorneys, property owners, City staff, Area Commissioners, City Councilmembers, and/or representatives from non-profit and civic organizations.

2. **How would you describe your level of familiarity with the Columbus Zoning Code? (none, poor, good, excellent, OK but very familiar with certain parts)**

   Most respondents rated their familiarity with the Code as either good or excellent, with several comments of "just below excellent." Those who rated their familiarity as good also often noted they have excellent familiarity with certain parts of the Code. Several respondents said they were very familiar with certain parts, but do not have a comprehensive understanding of the Code.

3. **In your opinion, what is working well with zoning and development in Columbus?**

   City staff expertise and communication. City staff is handling an enormous amount of communication and coordination in the development process and is successful at finding solutions to complex problems.

   Most development in Columbus is happening despite the Zoning Code, not because of it. The Code is inadequate, so a convoluted and complex development process has emerged over the years to address the Code's deficiencies. This process is only navigable to those who have become familiar with the work arounds.

   Architecture review in Historic Commissions seem to generally be working well, because they have City staff support, professional membership, and organized standards/guidelines that are readily applied to projects and enforceable.

   Some parts of the Code are working. The use categorization works well in certain circumstances (e.g., a gas station in the C5 Zone) and base standards sometimes work for suburban projects.

   Overlays have improved the zoning process to allow for mixed-use, higher density development. The application process is clear to some.

   Area Commissions and Civic Associations are providing channels for community engagement. These processes are informing citizens about development projects and giving them a platform to engage with the development process. There is strong support for ongoing opportunities for ongoing community engagement.

4. **In your opinion, what is not working well with zoning and development in Columbus?**

    The current zoning and approval process is overly complex. Only those with substantial resources and knowledge can navigate the process to achieve project approval. This makes the Code inaccessible to many, favoring experienced developers and resulting in an inequitable, subjective process.

    Design and development are pushed to the "lowest common denominator." Because of the impact of the community review process on development, the discrepancy between City goals and Area Commission approvals, and the length of time needed for a rezoning approval, a number of developers stated that it pushes them to submit projects that achieve the "lowest common denominator." Meaning developers often focus on development and design that they believe will be most easily approved and not the development and design that best matches City policies or is the most creative.

    Generally, respondents noted that the Code and development process:

    -   Not predictable,

    -   Difficult to navigate,

    -   Results in overly long approval timeframes,

    -   Requires multiple Council Variances on typical projects,

    -   Often conflicts and has contradictions (particularly across City staff department feedback in the development process),

    -   Not conducive to affordable housing,

    -   Antiquated parking standards,

    -   Conflicts with Citywide and regional policy goals for higher-density, infill development,

    -   Geared toward suburban development patterns that do not fit the context of older parts of the City nor reflect the desired urban pattern that enables sustainability, affordability, walkability, and equitable development.

5. **How does the Zoning Code impact local communities and neighborhoods, including historically excluded or vulnerable communities?**

    The Code burdens the City's ability to provide a range of housing products, adequate housing options, and affordable housing to a growing population. The subjectivity of the Code prevents lower income housing opportunities through arduous review processes and a mismatch between City policy and implementation. Multi-family development is needed across the City and is prevented by neighborhood groups in many neighborhoods.

    Fees, complicated processes, and lengthy development timelines limit the number and variety of projects that are built and impacts new residential affordability.

    The lack of density and transportation-oriented development challenges the bus system and disproportionately affects vulnerable communities.

Lower income communities have been historically burdened with proximity to high-speed roadways and heavy industrial land uses that impact quality of life and decrease livability of neighborhoods.

6. **Do you see any potential challenges with updating the zoning and development regulations?**

The quantity and variety of stakeholders who engage in the process will be an important consideration. This includes all City departments, elected officials, county and regional representatives including agencies and accord boards, bordering jurisdictions, 10+ school districts, Civic Associations and Area Commissions, the planning, engineering, design and development community, and the general public.

Often-contradictory visions for development outcomes across City departments is challenging. Development outcomes should reflect Citywide and regional policy goals. The development review process could benefit from clear criteria, department hierarchy, or naming a leading City division to make final decisions on development proposals.

Negative community perception of development in general, and developers as a whole, is an important opportunity for community education. The community expresses strong push back on many types of development for many reasons including aesthetics, disapproval of tax incentives, fear of property value decrease, perception of outsized height and massing, perception of increased traffic, and excessive parking concerns. These expressions are made in public meetings and across social media platforms. Community education in a Code update process will be essential to build understanding for Citywide and regional policy goals including accommodating growth, increasing affordable housing, fostering transit-oriented development, addressing racism and inequities, and correcting the history of disadvantaged neighborhoods.

The lack of a Comprehensive Plan or Citywide Future Land Use vision does not provide guidance for a Code update. The City's future vision is piecemeal and exists across several sources, such as neighborhood and area plans, council-stated goals, corridor studies, and MORPC-led efforts. The Columbus Citywide Planning Policies (C2P2) establish a framework but does not clarify desired future land uses across the entire City. Alignment of these goals with specific Citywide policy and targeted land use recommendations will be a valuable beginning to a Code update process.

The political climate in the City and the nation could complicate communications. Barriers to public discourse include distrust in the current, complex development process, misinformation on social media, growth pressure on the City, and other political/community pressures from public health and the vaccination process, distrust in the election process, and concern for systemic racism and the lives of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) citizens. Emotions are high in the community and could bring politization and negativity to a Code update process.

7. **Is there anything else you would like to add?**

City Council is very supportive and invested in this effort. Councilmembers would like to be involved and support a successful Zoning Code update. Councilmembers would like to be informed of any roadblocks, and are open to substantial, progressive changes to the Code that will advance City initiatives.

Strong political leadership to champion the effort and ensure its completion will be essential. Continued aligned and outspoken support from City Council and local leaders is key to a successful Code update process.

Concerns with City capacity. While there is high regard for the professionalism and capability of the City staff, there is a concern that some departments are over-burdened and underfunded. There is concern that City funding of the planning and zoning departments is not reflective of a large, national-scale City and is smaller than planning budgets in many surrounding suburbs. The City could put higher value on planning.

The City can accomplish this. Despite the challenges and amount of work needed to be successful, respondents were confident the effort is timely, politically supported, and can be accomplished.

8. **Is there anyone else we should talk to?**

Many respondents had similar suggestions such as local attorneys, younger stakeholders, organizations focused on aging in places, and representatives from every Civic Association and Area Commission.

9. **Can we follow up with you if we have additional questions?**

All respondents expressed a willingness to answer additional questions or clarify input. Many were hopeful that they would be included in the on-going process.

LWC

Appendix: Survey Instrument

Zoning Code Assessment and Update Strategy | City of Columbus

Name: _____ **Date:** _____ **Time:** _____

1. What is your affiliation in Columbus/how would you describe yourself as part of this interview?

   Homeowner   City Employee

   Renter   Elected Official

   Business Owner   Civic Leader

   Business Operator   Community Representative

   Property Owner   Organization Representative

   Developer   Other

   Project Designer

2. How would you describe your level of familiarity with the Columbus Zoning Code?

   None   Excellent

   Poor   OK but very familiar with certain part(s)_____

   Good

3. In your opinion, what is working well with zoning and development in Columbus?

4. In your opinion, what is not working well with zoning and development in Columbus?

5. How does the Zoning Code impact local communities and neighborhoods, including historically excluded or vulnerable communities?

6. Do you see any potential challenges with updating the zoning and development regulations?

7. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

8. Is there anyone else we should talk to?

9. Can we follow up with you, if we have additional questions?

Attachment 3:
Citywide Online Survey Report

Citywide Online Survey Report

Zoning Code Assessment and Update Strategy
City of Columbus

City of Columbus

Zoning Code Update - Phase One Public Survey

Summary of Results

August 18, 2021

Overview

City of Columbus staff used SurveyMonkey to gather stakeholder input as part of Phase I of the Zoning Code update. The survey was published on January 25, 2021 with an initial closing date of February 28. Due to strong interest, the survey period was ultimately extended to May 1. A variety of means were used to spread awareness of the survey, including email distribution, remote presentations to community and stakeholder groups, news articles, city website links, and distribution/reposting by interested parties. A total of 3,012 people responded to the survey. All questions were optional. The "opted out of the question" category used throughout the report reflects totals for respondents who either skipped the question or selected "prefer not to answer." Participation was anonymous.

While staff recognizes the limitations of a non-scientific survey, it provided insight into stakeholder perspectives and helped expand community awareness about the 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 Phase II of the update.

Among the findings is that priorities vary significantly based on a number of factors as reported by participants, such as race, home tenure, age and income. While it is important to note that participation levels varied by question, a number of groups were underrepresented as compared to citywide numbers. Examples include renters, minority residents, and lower income residents. Survey participation reinforces the need to focus additional attention on engagement broadly and particularly among underrepresented groups moving forward.

Who we heard from

<u>Stakeholders</u>: The table below reflects participant choices in order of frequency. It should be noted that respondents could choose more than one category.

Category	Count
Resident/Interested Citizen	1,922
Property Owner	1,543
Area Commission or Civic Association Member	471
Business Owner/Representative	234
Project Designer (Architect, Engineer, Landscape…	206
Organization Representative	188
Public Sector	159
Developer or Builder	152
Other (please specify)	135
Development Representative (Attorney, Agent)	54
City Commission or Board Member	49

<u>Do you live in the City of Columbus</u>? Of all survey participants, 81.7% indicated they live in the City of Columbus, while 12.8% indicated they did not. Another 5.4% opted out of the question.

<u>Are you a homeowner or renter</u>? Homeowners were 77% of all survey participants, while 16.9% indicated they were renters. Another 6.1% opted out of the question. Less than half of all Columbus households citywide are owner- occupied (2019 Census QuickFacts Estimate).

<u>Gender</u>: Of all survey participants, 47.4% indicated they were female, 40.7% male, and 0.9% non-binary. Another 11% opted out of the question.

<u>Age</u>: Respondent age was well distributed in the 25 and older categories. Fewer than 3% of survey participants were 24 or younger. Another 10.9% opted out of the question.

Respondent Age Ranges

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+

0.07% 2.56% 10.09% 19.79% 20.72% 15.04% 16.33% 15.41%
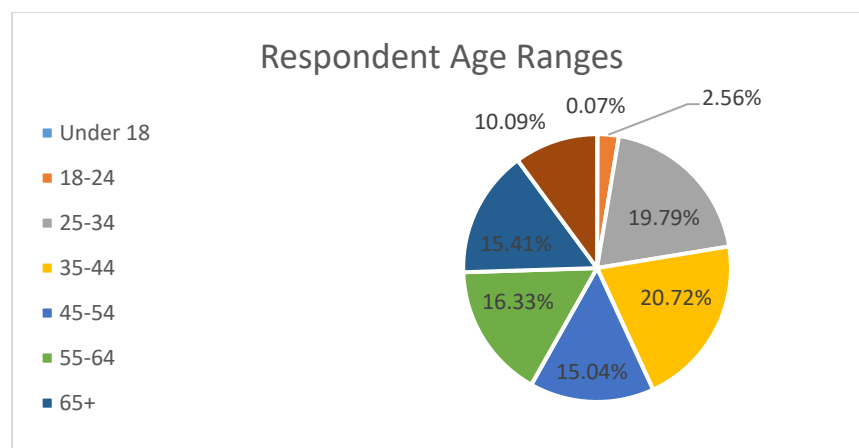
Race: Survey participants were asked which racial group they most closely identified with. The table below depicts the responses.

Race	Total Selected	% of all Survey Participants
White or Caucasian	2077	68.96%
Black or African American	259	8.60%
American Indian or Alaska Native	6	0.20%
Asian or Asian American	26	0.86%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1	0.03%
Two or more races	74	2.46%
Another race	11	0.37%
Opted out of question	558	18.53%

While it is important to note that 18.5% of all survey participants opted out of this question, the results from those who chose to provide information reflect less diversity than the citywide population. The 2020 Census reports the following racial composition for Columbus: White or Caucasian (53.2%); Black or African American (28.6%); American Indian (0.4%); Asian or Asian American (6.2%) two or more races (7.2%) and another race (4.3%).

Ethnicity: Survey participants were asked whether they identified as being of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. 2.2% indicated that they did, while 81.2% did not, and another 16.6% opted out of the question. The 2019 Census QuickFacts estimate for Hispanic or Latino ethnicity citywide was 7.7%.

Educational Attainment: Of all survey participants, 74.2% reported having a bachelor's degree or higher, while 17.4% had less than a bachelor's degree and another 8.3% opted out of the question. The 2019 Census QuickFacts estimate for bachelor's degree or higher citywide was 37%.

Household Income: Over half (52.3%) of all survey participants reported household incomes of $75,000 or higher; 21.6% reported incomes between $35,000 and $50,000; 5.4% reported incomes of $35,000 or less; and another 20.7% opted out of the question. The Columbus median household income is $53,745 as reported in the 2019 Census QuickFacts Estimate.

Where they live?

Survey participants were asked to identify their zip code of residence. The map below depicts the distribution of responses. Eight percent of participants opted out of the question.

ZIP Codes of Residence - Areas with 10 or more responses
Locations are representational only
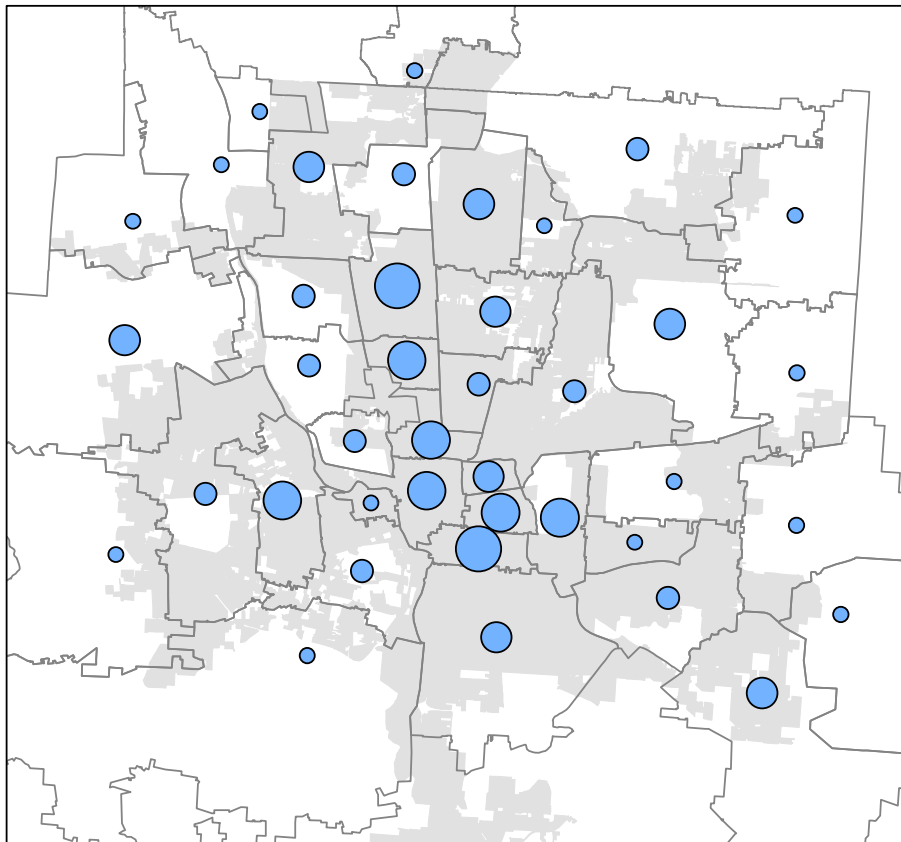
Top 10 Zip Codes of Residence	
Zip Codes	# of Responses
43206	290
43214	208
43202	198
43201	178
43205	170
43209	141
43204	130
43215	127
43207	96
43110	84

- 10-25
- 26 to 50
- 51 to 100
- 101-200
- 201-290
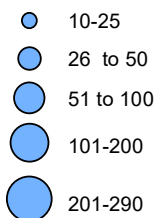
Where they work?

Of all survey participants 89.2% responded to the question asking in which zip code they work. The map below depicts the distribution of responses. Some of the respondents indicated that they were retired (4.4%); or worked in multiple locations" (2.3%); Still others selected a zip code of employment, but clarified that they were currently working from home due to the COVID 19 pandemic.
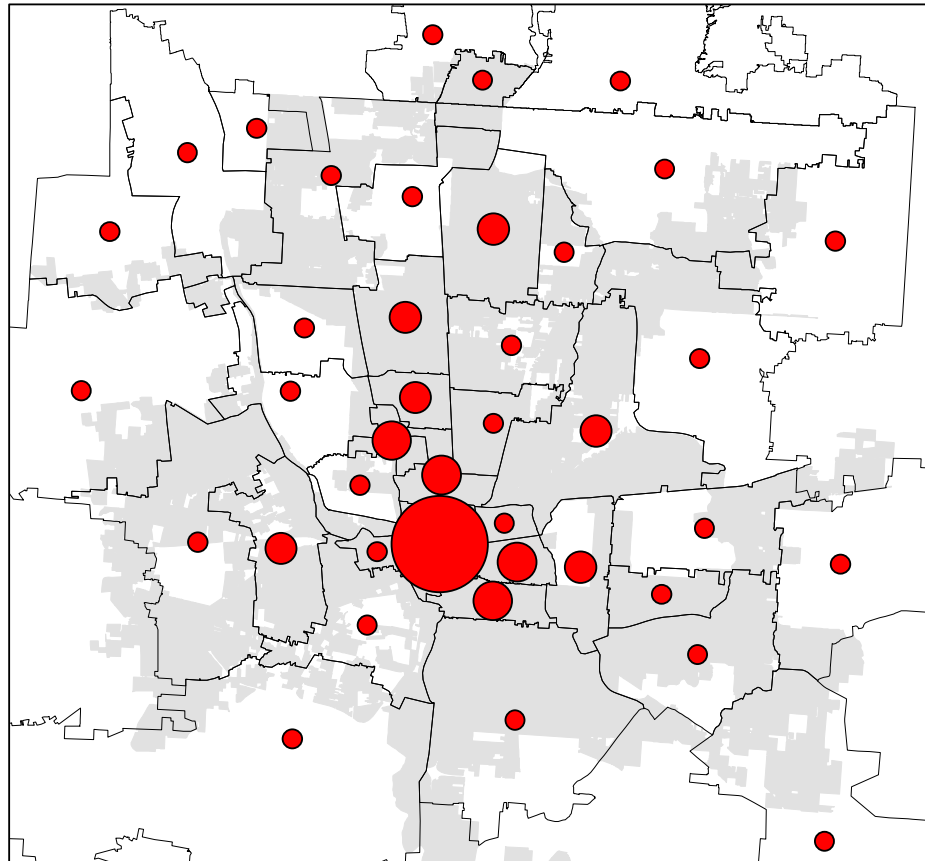
Top 10 Zip Codes of Employment	
Zip Codes	# of Responses
43215	669
43210	121
43206	118
43205	108
43201	103
43214	87
43219	81
43202	68
43204	59
43209	58

ZIP Codes of Employment - Areas with 10 or more responses

Locations are representational only

- 10 to 50
- 51 to 100
- 101 to 150
- 669 (Downtown)
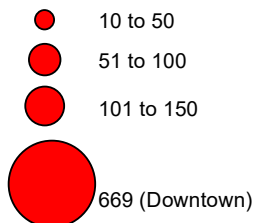
What We Heard

Familiarity with the Code: Of all participants half (51%) considered themselves somewhat familiar with the code; 30.1% percent were not familiar; 10.9% were very familiar; 7.3% reported being familiar with specific elements; and another 0.9% reported other or opted out of the question.

Priority Objectives: Respondents were asked to assess how important they felt key objective were to the zoning code update on a scale of 1-10.   While each topic was rated independently, the list below reflects their order of overall score. Nearly 1600 written comments were also submitted in response to the option to provide additional thoughts regarding project priorities. The question participation rate ranged from 98-99% depending on the individual priority topic.

Priority Objectives - overall mean rating out of 10

Objective	Rating
Fostering Walkable Neighborhoods	8.53
Encouraging Conservation of Natural Resources	8.3
Supporting Improved Transit	8.12
Promoting Good Design for New Development	7.74
Promoting Equity	7.74
Creating Affordable Housing	7.7
Accommodating a Growing Population	7.6
Other (respondents were able to submit additional topics)	7.42
Encouraging Historic Preservation/Conservation	7.41
Protecting Employment Centers	6.39

While participation rates varied for demographic questions, it is important to note that the results of the question regarding priorities vary based on such factors as home tenure, age, race, and income as reported. Examples include:

- Respondents indicating that they are renters varied from all respondents in their support for:
  - Creating Affordable Housing (higher at 8.80)
  - Improved Transit (higher at 8.79)
  - Promoting Equity (higher at 8.48)

- Respondents indicating that they were under 35 varied from all respondents in their support for:
  - Improved Transit (higher at 8.67)
  - Accommodating a Growing Population (higher at 8.17)
  - Encouraging Historic Preservation/Conservation (lower at 6.89)

- Respondents indicating that they were African American varied from all respondents in their support for:
  - Promoting Equity (higher at 9.17)
  - Improved Transit (higher at 8.78)
  - Creating Affordable Housing (higher at 8.65)
  - Protecting Employment Centers (higher at 7.97)

- Respondents indicating that they had household incomes of less than $50,000 varied from all respondents in their support for:
  - Creating Affordable Housing (higher at 8.55)
  - Promoting Equity (higher at 8.42)
  - Protecting Employment Centers (higher at 7.00)

Code and Process Elements: Respondents were asked to indicate how well they thought different code/process elements were working. A substantial number of respondents stated that they were neutral or selected NA in answering this series of questions.

Category	Working Well	Not Working Well	Neutral	NA	Did not select a response	# of Submitted Written Comments
Districts and Uses (Available districts and permitted/prohibited land uses).	12.1%	28.5%	46.5%	9.0%	3.9%	362
Building and Site Design Development Standards (Building size, height, setback, landscaping, scale, etc.)	16.5%	37.3%	37.3%	5.8%	3.2%	542
Parking and Circulation Standards (Amount of required parking spaces, vehicle and pedestrian access, circulation, etc.)	13.2%	47.4%	32.5%	3.9%	2.9%	591
Community Review Process (Consideration by area commissions and civic associations of proposed rezonings (changes to zoning map) and variances).	15.7%	37.5%	36.1%	7.6%	3.1%	516
Public Hearings (for rezonings and variances - Development Commission, Board of Commission Adjustment, Graphics Commission and City Council).	15.8%	29.5%	42.3%	9.1%	3.4%	414
Other	1.1%	7.6%	4.1%	11.2%	76.0%	281

Additional Respondent Comments: The survey included a number of opportunities to amplify responses. Over 5300 comments were submitted. Nearly 1600 were provided as additional priorities to consider for the update. Another 1600 comments were shared as additional observations. The remaining comments came from the categories addressed in the "What is working/not working?" questions. Staff continues to review the comments. The following table represents general categories and sample comments.

Affordability & Development Incentives	
Key Topics	Affordable housing, tax incentives, businesses
Sample Comments	*Affordable housing is about more than the number of units. It needs to be about building community and ensuring that people who live in neighborhoods targeted for reinvestment have a chance to remain, and invest, and share in any new wealth that is generated.*
	Supporting small businesses as they pursue property for growth, promoting the community through economic development and self-sufficiency.
	Goal of updates to Zoning code should balance need for affordable housing / increased density with an appreciation for the efforts of existing property owners who have spent years saving and making old neighborhoods safe and attractive.
	Flexibility and form based zoning could be used to help foster local communities and entrepreneurs developing local businesses. This could in turn help create more walkable neighborhoods as barriers to small business formation are lowered. High density neighborhoods do not equal walk ability if everyone has to get into their car to go to a restaurant, buy food etc.
	More transparency about tax abatements and other planning tools. When an area is designated for some special status, the public (and local organizations) need to understand the purpose, the costs, and how the success of the effort will be assessed.
	Stop handing out tax abatements.
	Too many steps that slows the process down for developers and add cost to projects which hurts developments like affordable housing.
	Affordable housing in all areas of the City, not clustered in certain neighborhoods.
	*No more NIMBYs. We need a mix of single family, duplex, apartment, etc. styles of *affordable* housing to meet all needs.*
	The #1 priority MUST be ensuring that all residents have access to affordable housing. None of the rest matter without ALL residents having adequate shelter. Prices are skyrocketing and residents, particularly BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) residents, are being priced out of their quickly gentrifying neighborhoods. Investing in affordable housing will also pay off in reduced costs for other services, and it's a critical human rights issue.
Land Use & Urban Design	
Key Topics	Density, walkable neighborhoods, historic preservation, architecture, accessory dwelling units, mixed-use.
Sample Comments	*Auto-oriented uses are too pervasive. Neighborhood-compatible uses sometimes unnecessarily require a variance due to outdated definitions (and parking requirements).*
	Responsible infill, good design, architectural integrity and appropriateness are paramount.
	The districts and uses we still use today were established at the height of redlining and other racist policies. Undesirable land uses are more heavily concentrated in areas where black and brown residents live.

	Walkable neighborhoods with shops and food, and improved public transit and parking options. Better signage for parking and road names.
	While respecting existing neighborhoods, historic context and job centers, there is great need to incentivize (not just allow) dense mixed-use development with affordable housing around high capacity transit nodes.
	Zoning shouldn't only focus on increasing density. There are places where new codes and variances make sense and projects and neighborhoods where a more conservative approach is best. A "build as much as we can, where ever we can" approach will not serve Columbus in the long run, especially with no changes to infrastructure and walkable neighborhoods.
	Continue building density downtown and along major arterial streets / thoroughfares before major changes to neighborhood zoning. Public transportation needs continued improvement to allow for single or no vehicle households.
	In regards to housing, prioritize the ability for smaller developers to create multi-family housing in the 4-8 unit range. Allow for Accessory Dwelling Units in existing neighborhoods. For larger developments, incentivize Transit Oriented Development along key corridors.
	Resist high-density development in older established neighborhoods.
	Density = equity. We need to create density in order to create a more equitable community.

Sustainability & Green Space	
Key Topics	Urban farming, community gardens, natural resources, sustainable energy, parks, trees, green buildings, stormwater management.
Sample Comments	*Make urban agriculture easy and accessible for residents.*
	Including ample green space across all neighborhoods.
	As this city continues to grow we need to preserve as much green space as possible, especially in the urban environments.
	I think allowing more green space like community gardens, tree lined walking paths, or even just patches of green grass with a bench. I think that would go a long way to improve people's mental and physical health.
	Zoning for resilience, climate change adaptation and mitigation, adding additional green space.
	Please keep moving Columbus in a green direction- clean energy, public green spaces, and increased tree cover.
	Using green energy resources. Preserving existing green spaces. Increasing tree cover and preserving existing trees.
	Preserving natural resources and recognizing the value of these features.
	Green spaces and community garden spaces throughout the city!
	Development and green space preservation are not incompatible. The effects of climate change on the built environment must be taken into account. That will require a focus on green space preservation and tree canopy, in part to combat the heat island effect. But also because green space makes life pleasant for residents. It shouldn't be luxury for only those in the suburbs or wealthy areas.

Mobility	
Key Topics	Transit, parking, walkability, bicycle facilities, traffic
Sample Comments	*A lot of importance is placed on parking availability that could otherwise be solved through investments in transit.*
	All new developments should weigh pedestrian and bicycle access at least as heavily as parking needs.
	Are you 100% sure we won't have cars in 20 years?
	Eliminate parking minimums city-wide.
	Not enough off street parking spaces are required. Many households have two cars. Public transportation in Columbus is not adequate or easy to use to get quickly from place to place at this time.
	This needs to be part of a larger conversation and be dealt with hand in hand with the zoning conversation because while we want to make Columbus more accessible and have more transportation options, right now the fact is it is very difficult to get around Columbus without a car...
	Assuring new development eases rather than exacerbates traffic congestion and pedestrian safety.
	Parking requirements in urban neighborhoods are excessive and do not promote walkable neighborhoods.
	Too much focus on parking and not enough on walkability, connectedness, and transit.
	Accessible for wheelchair bound and additional citizens with mobility limited to wheels. MORE ramps and accountability for keeping areas clear and paths consistent. "Walkable" needs to apply to everyone!
Safety & Code Enforcement	
Key Topics	Safety, health, code enforcement
Sample Comments	*Enforcing codes around property maintenance.*
	Promoting public safety through environmental design.
	Encouraging development and improving safety in higher-crime neighborhoods.
	Enforceable code and effort put into enforcement is also important. I would also like to see the Zoning code fit together with other City priorities like Vision Zero to promote healthier, safer neighborhoods.
	Zoning and the associated land uses are only part of the picture. Effective codes and laws, and their regular and effective enforcement, are also needed, especially those that involve public health and safety, and/or impact the quality of life of owners/residents/customers of neighboring properties.

Review Process & Engagement	
Key Topics	Equity, access, public notice, consistency, transparency, area commissions, City Council, city commissions.
Sample Comments	*Process often feels piecemeal - there are overarching issues that are not being addressed in communication between Commissions and City divisions; follow up/follow through on the big picture is challenging. Often, Area Commissions can't provide the answers or complete picture that residents with concerns want and need.*
	Inconsistent processes and criteria make for an extremely cumbersome and unpredictable process.
	Seems like not enough vulnerable people are involved in shaping the laws/policies that are intended to improve their quality of life.
	I would note that more transparency and public education surrounding the process would be helpful. Many residents have unfortunate misconceptions about the process that has eroded public trust.
	Public generally feel that there is too much deference to developers especially in city hall. It leads to cynicism and the assumption of corruption and a feeling of helplessness and anger. OTOH, the public is very NIMBY with regards to affordable housing issues. More education and a better idea of the reasons for things like tax abatements and TIFs would be helpful. Also publicizing how agreements are monitored/followed up would be reassuring.
	Area Commissions input should be taken more seriously by the city.
	Area commissions have too much influence.
	You tend to only hear from people who live immediately next door and usually it's because they don't want change. There does not seem to be the infrastructure to explain/educate the general public before a site specific controversy starts.
	Community feels like their concerns are not being heard.
	Again, a lot of inconsistencies from meeting to meeting and neighborhood to neighborhood. Often commissioners are not trained in the details of development.

We need your input!

The City of Columbus has initiated a Zoning Code update process and we need your input. As Columbus looks to the future, it is important that the Zoning Code be positioned to help manage growth and reinforce community priorities.

While there have been many revisions over the years, the Columbus Zoning Code has not undergone a comprehensive update since the 1950s. The first phase of this Code update effort is an assessment of the current Code and process. Phase one is currently underway and will conclude in summer 2021. The assessment will guide the Code update which will take place in phase two of the process.

As a member of the community, your input is valuable now in setting the stage for the upcoming changes. Thank you for your help!

For more information about the zoning code update, visit the project website.

This survey will be available through February 28, 2021

What best describes your basis of interaction with the zoning Code?

(Check all that apply)

- [ ] Area Commission or Civic Association Member
- [ ] Business Owner/Representative
- [ ] City Commission or Board Member
- [ ] Developer or Builder
- [ ] Development Representative (Attorney, Agent)
- [ ] Organization Representative
- [ ] Project Designer (Architect, Engineer, Landscape Architect, Planner)
- [ ] Property Owner
- [ ] Public Sector
- [ ] Resident/Interested Citizen
- [ ] Other (please specify)

[   ]

Which of the following best describes your level of familiarity with the Columbus Zoning Code?

(Choose one)

○ Not familiar

○ Somewhat familiar

○ Very familiar

○ Familiar with specific sections

○ Other (please specify)

[   ]

How important should the following goals be as changes to the Zoning Code are considered?

Please score on a scale of 0 to 10.

0 being "Not a Priority"

10 being "Very High Priority"

Creating Affordable Housing

0 - Not a Priority	10 - Very High Priority	

Encouraging Historic Preservation/Conservation

0 - Not a Priority	10 - Very High Priority	

Accommodating a Growing Population

0 - Not a Priority	10 - Very High Priority	

Promoting Equity

0 - Not a Priority	10 - Very High Priority	

Fostering Walkable Neighborhoods

0 - Not a Priority   10 - Very High Priority

Promoting Good Design for New Development

0 - Not a Priority   10 - Very High Priority

Encouraging Conservation of Natural Resources

0 - Not a Priority   10 - Very High Priority

Protecting Employment Centers

0 - Not a Priority   10 - Very High Priority

Supporting Improved Transit

0 - Not a Priority   10 - Very High Priority

(Optional) Other
(Please specify in the comment box below)

0 - Not a Priority   10 - Very High Priority

(Optional) Please indicate the zoning code goal for "Other" above, if used.

How well do you think the following aspects of the zoning code and process are working?

	1 - Not Well	2 - Neutral	3 - Well	N/A
Districts and Uses (Available zoning districts and permitted/prohibited land uses)	○	○	○	○

Comments

[   ]

	1 - Not Well	2 - Neutral	3 - Well	N/A
Building and Site Design Development Standards (Building size, height, setback, landscaping, scale, etc.)	○	○	○	○

Comments

[   ]

	1 - Not Well	2 - Neutral	3 - Well	N/A
Parking and Circulation Standards (Amount of required parking spaces, vehicle and pedestrian access, circulation, etc.)	○	○	○	○

Comments

[   ]

	1 - Not Well	2 - Neutral	3 - Well	N/A
Community Review Process (Consideration by area commissions and civic associations of proposed rezonings (changes to zoning map) and variances.)	○	○	○	○

Comments

[   ]

	1 - Not Well	2 - Neutral	3 - Well	N/A
Public Hearings (For rezonings and variances - Development Commission, Board of Zoning Adjustment, Graphics Commission, and City Council)	○	○	○	○

Comments

[   ]

	1 - Not Well	2 - Neutral	3 - Well	N/A
Other (Please specify in box below)	○	○	○	○

Comments

[   ]

What additional observations would you like us to keep in mind as we work to improve our Zoning Code?

(No character or word limit)

[   ]

Tell Us About Yourself

The following questions are optional. They are intended to help us better understand stakeholder input and inform future public engagement.

All inputs are anonymous and results will be summarized.

Do you live in the City of Columbus

○ Yes

○ No

What Zip Code do you **live** in?

[   ]

What Zip Code do you **work** in?

[   ]

Are you a homeowner or a renter?

○ Homeowner

○ Renter

What is your gender?

○ Female

○ Male

○ Non-Binary

○ Prefer not to answer

What is your age?

○ Under 18   ○ 45-54

○ 18-24   ○ 55-64

○ 25-34   ○ 65+

○ 35-44   ○ Prefer not to answer

What racial group do you most closely identify with?

○ White or Caucasian   ○ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

○ Black or African American   ○ Two or more races

○ Asian or Asian American   ○ Another race

○ American Indian or Alaska Native   ○ Prefer not to answer

Other (please specify)

[   ]

Are you Hispanic or Latino?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Prefer not to answer

What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

○ Less than high school degree

○ High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)

○ Some college but no degree

○ Associate degree

○ Bachelor degree

○ Graduate degree

○ Prefer not to answer

What is your total household income?

(All members of your household in 2020)

○ Less than $20,000

○ $20,000 to $34,999

○ $35,000 to $49,999

○ $50,000 to $74,999

○ $75,000 to $99,999

○ $100,000 to $149,999

○ $150,000 to $199,999

○ $200,000 or more

○ Prefer not to answer

Thank you for participating in the survey!

The survey is now complete and your answers have been recorded.

Let's keep in touch!

Click the image above, or the link below, if you would like to join our mailing list to receive future updates about the zoning code update.

Join Our Mailing List

Attachment 4:
City Process Flowcharts

Rezoning Process

START

↓

SUBMIT APPLICATION
BUILDING SERVICES

↓

APPLICATION
REVIEWED FOR
COMPLETENESS

↓

APPLICATION
ACCEPTED
FEES DUE

↓

ARCHITECTURAL
REVIEW OR AREA
COMMISSION
NOTIFIED → ARCHITECTURAL
REVIEW OR AREA
COMMISSION REVIEW
& RECOMMENDATION

↓

CASE PREPARED FOR
STAFF REVIEW &
RECOMMENDATION

↓

CITY
DEPARTMENT
REVIEW

↓

STAFF
RECOMMENDATION
MADE

↓

AGENDA TO CITY
CLERK & COMMUNITY
GROUPS NOTICES TO
PROPERTY OWNERS

↓

STAFF REPORT &
RECOMMENDATIONS
SENT TO COMMISSION
& APPLICANT

6 WEEKS

CONCURRENT WITH PROCESS

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Rezoning Process
Continued

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION
MEETING

RESULTS TO APPLICANT
W/ADDITIONAL
REQUIREMENTS &
RECOMMENDATIONS

APPLICANT SUBMITS
ADDITIONAL ITEMS
FOR ORDINANCE
PREPARATION

PREPARE ORDINANCE
& RECOMMENDATION
BY STAFF—SEND
ORDINANCE TO CLERK

*AT THIS POINT
BUILDING SERVICES
REVIEW IS COMPLETED
AND SENT TO
CITY COUNCIL
FOR PRESENTATION*

AT LEAST 4 WEEKS

CITY CLERK SCHEDULES
FOR COUNCIL HEARING
PUBLISHES &
MAILS NOTICES

CITY COUNCIL
HEARING

APPROVAL/
DISAPPROVAL

END

Council Variance Process

START

↓

SUBMIT APPLICATION
& CERTIFIED ADDRESS
TO BUILDING SERVICES

↓

FEE
DETERMINED
& PAID

↓

REVIEW
APPLICATION

↓

NOTIFY
NEIGHBORHOOD
SERVICES
WHERE REQUIRED → AREA OR
ARCHITECTURAL
COMMISSION REVIEW
& RECOMMENDATION

↓

CASE PREPARED
FOR
STAFF REVIEW

↓

CITY
DEPARTMENT
REVIEW

↓

STAFF
RECOMMENDATION
MADE

↓

PREPARE ORDINANCE
CONTACT APPLICANT &
AREA OR ARCHITECT
REVIEW COMMISSIONS

↓

FINAL
APPLICATION
APPROVAL

↓

ORDINANCE
AND PACKET
TO COUNCIL

↓

HEARING BEFORE
COUNCIL
(APPLICANT MUST
BE PRESENT)

↓

APPROVAL/
DISAPPROVAL

↓

END

4-5 WEEKS

CONCURRENT WITH PROCESS

Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA)/ Graphics Commission/Variance Review

START

PRE-FILING MEETING w/STAFF → AREA OR ARCHITECTURAL COMMISSION REVIEW & RECOMMENDATION

FILE APPLICATION & REVIEW

FEE DETERMINED & PAID

PACKETS SENT TO APPROPRIATE AREA GROUPS

FIELD STUDY FOR CASE REVIEW

CASE PREPARED FOR STAFF REVIEW

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCURRENT WITH PROCESS

APPLICANT NOTIFIED OF RESULTS

PREPARE REPORT

NOTIFICATION OF PROPERTY OWNERS

PUBLIC HEARING BOARD DISCUSSION & VOTE

BOARD ORDERS ISSUED

FILE & RECORD

END

Commerical site plan approval process

Commercial Plan Review Process

Submit preliminary site compliance plan

Route plans and schedule meeting with the applicant

Rezoning or variance needed? —Yes→ Contact Zoning to begin process

No ↓

Is a Certificate of Appropriateness required? —Yes→ Contact Development Department

No ↓

Are there improvements in the r/w? —Yes→ Public Service issues scope of work

No ↓

Submit various required plans, documents and fees

Rezoning or variance approval → Water service plan

Final site compliance plan → Certificate of Appropriateness

Sidewalk waiver or fee in lieu of → Sanitary plan

Stormwater management plan → Right-of-way and easements

Lot combination → Water main extension plan

Lot split → Street construction plan

Parkland Dedication Ordinance fee → Bicentennial Bikeway fee

Final site compliance plan approved

Are the building plans approved? —No→ Hold site plans until approved

Yes ↓

Attach site plans to building plans and send to Permitting

Verify contractor information and issue building permit