

MEETING SUMMARY
ZONE IN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ORIENTATION MEETING

Michael B. Coleman Center
111 N. Front Street
Columbus, OH 43215
November 10, 2022 | 3:00 PM – 4:15 PM

The members of the Zone In Advisory Committee (ZAC), a group convened by the City of Columbus (the City) to advise the City on the Columbus zoning code update, held their first meeting November 10, 2022. The ZAC is composed of representatives from businesses, community organizations, developers, and others. The ZAC is scheduled to meet monthly during the zoning code update process. More information is available at www.columbus.gov/zoningcodeupdate or by emailing zoningupdate@columbus.gov.

The next ZAC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 7, 2022, 4:00 – 5:30 pm.

Welcome & Introductions

Building & Zoning Services Director Scott Messer provided the initial welcome. He stated that the overarching goals of the zoning code update are to streamline code processes and to link the code with where the City is going strategically. He stressed the importance of this opportunity to look at the code comprehensively, and that this effort would be challenging. He urged the ZAC to be thoughtful, intentional, and future-facing. He noted that when other cities were unsuccessful, it was because they did not involve the community in their process. This is why the City has issued two contracts for the zoning code update – one for Lisa Wise Consulting, a technical consultant with experience in planning and code updates, and one for RAMA Consulting, a local community engagement firm with strong roots in Columbus.

Maria Mone, facilitator from RAMA Consulting, welcomed the group and asked all committee and project team members to introduce themselves. The group was asked to share their favorite place in Columbus to spend an afternoon, and responses ranged from many of Columbus' parks to local food establishments.

In addition to the ZAC members (see roster [here](#)), the Zone In Project Team was introduced:

Zone In Columbus is a joint effort between the City of Columbus Building & Zoning Services and the Department of Development. Assistant Director Kevin Wheeler is the project manager and co-leads the project with Deputy Directors Jennifer Fening and Anthony Celebrezze.

The technical consultant is Lisa Wise Consulting (LWC), a firm that has worked on zoning code initiatives with over 70 different municipalities across the country. The LWC Project Team members attended virtually and included Lisa Wise, Kathryn Slama, Roger Eastman, Peter Park, and Jennifer Settle.

The Community Engagement consultant is RAMA Consulting, a stakeholder engagement and facilitation firm that has worked in the community for 20 years. RAMA Team members present were Leslie Westerfelt and Maria Mone.

Project Overview

Department of Development Assistant Director Kevin Wheeler discussed the impetus for the zoning code update (view the Project Overview PowerPoint [here](#)). The ZAC was then invited to ask questions:

Will the ZAC be advising on potential conflicts with other initiatives (i.e., setback conflicts with bicycle mobility plans)? *Kevin Wheeler: yes, this group will be asked to advise on this type of coordination.*

What does success look like and what does it look like if we miss the mark? *Kevin Wheeler: Success is an updated code and map that provides a zoning framework in these mixed-use target areas that allows development to occur by right, but also reflects community values. We need to get away from every project needing variances (the majority are actually not controversial); and we need to think beyond what we want/need now because we must plan for growth. Director Messer: Success means the code is more equitable, it reduces barriers, and is simplified/streamlined. We also hope this can help ease the symptoms of the housing crisis by finding a way to responsibly build and increase density because we know we need more housing.*

Advisory Committee Overview

Facilitator Maria Mone provided an overview of the role of the ZAC and the responsibilities of committee members (view the ZAC Overview PowerPoint [here](#)). The ZAC was then invited to ask questions:

If we (committee members) cannot make a meeting, can we join in remotely? *Kevin Wheeler: Initially we would like to have people in person; if you can't make a meeting, we will help you catch up. We are going to be working to build knowledge, we recognize folks are coming in with varying levels of comfort with the code.*

Maria then asked committee members to share any resources they think may be helpful for the group by emailing those resources to zoningupdate@columbus.gov.

Project Background & Resources

Lisa Wise shared a brief overview of the Zoning Code Assessment Report, which will be reviewed in more detail at the next meeting. She noted they will be providing education and other resources throughout the project.

Wrap Up

Mayor Ginther gave a special welcome to the committee members. He stated that the zoning code update is probably the most difficult, challenging, and critical work that our City will do. He asked the committee to be willing to debate, challenge each other and the City, and push the City to do better. He noted that many people in our community are unaware of how zoning codes were historically used to exclude and wants the committee to help Columbus plan for growth differently and more equitably. He stressed the importance of the guidance this committee will provide, noting that Columbus will likely see faster growth than even projected – so the next 10 years are critical. While he acknowledged there will be no easy answers, he feels confident in the committee's ability to look at this effort thoughtfully and comprehensively.