

**MEETING SUMMARY**  
**ZONE IN ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Michael B. Coleman Center  
111 N. Front Street  
Columbus, OH 43215  
December 7, 2022 | 4:00 PM – 5:30 PM

The members of the Zone In Advisory Committee, a group convened by the City of Columbus (the City) to advise the City on the Columbus zoning code update, met on December 7, 2022. The committee is composed of representatives from Columbus Area Commissions, businesses, community organizations, developers, and others. The committee is scheduled to meet monthly during the zoning code update process. More information is available at [www.columbus.gov/zoningcodeupdate](http://www.columbus.gov/zoningcodeupdate) or by emailing [zoningupdate@columbus.gov](mailto:zoningupdate@columbus.gov).

The next ZAC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 4, 2023, 4:00 – 5:30 pm.

**Welcome & Introductions**

Maria Mone, facilitator from RAMA Consulting, welcomed the group and asked all committee and project team members to introduce themselves.

**Project Overview – View the presentation [here](#)**

Lisa Wise from Lisa Wise Consulting (technical consultant) began the meeting by providing an overview of the Columbus Zoning Code Assessment that was completed in 2021. Lisa reviewed the key findings of this report and local project examples. Committee members were then invited to ask questions and react to the key findings:

Several members noted that creating more predictability would be a big benefit. East Franklinton, where the zoning code had been updated to reflect the neighborhood plan, was cited as a good example of this. Expectations are clear, making it easier for developers to present good initial proposals. Additionally, several members who serve/served on Area Commissions noted that predictability would reduce the time needed to review variances on smaller projects and allow the commissions to focus on the larger, truly different projects being proposed in their neighborhoods. They stated that they wind up spending a lot of time rehashing decisions during the variance process, even when the community has already identified a good solution. Some committee members expressed a desire for the code to better reflect expectations and community goals up front, and create a less adversarial process between developers and the community. This was seen as a way to reduce barriers for projects, particularly led by smaller developers, by reducing the time and resources needed for the variance review and approval process.

The committee members discussed form-based codes as a way to provide more predictability and guidance for developers about what the community wants and design standards to best integrate with the existing neighborhood. Form-based codes focus on the physical form and design of buildings more than use.

Several committee members noted that updating the code is going to be a long process and wondered if there were some simple solutions or “quick wins” that could be used to ease the burden on developers and area commissions. This could be helpful particularly for small, frequent variance requests that are always approved.

Peter Park, a subconsultant to the Lisa Wise team, then discussed the 6 recommendations that came out of this assessment. Committee members were then invited to ask questions and react to the key findings:

Some committee members noted that while we are focused on the goals of the zoning code, we also need to ensure that we have simultaneous conversations about gentrification. It was noted that zoning codes impact investment patterns and we are already seeing displacement of residents and drastic changes in our historically black neighborhoods (i.e. Old Town East). Kevin Wheeler noted that a key question for this project is how to address the housing shortage and work with regional partners to provide more housing in more locations. Lisa Wise also noted that her team is conducting market/pro forma analyses to get a better understanding of how gentrification would be impacting specific neighborhoods, as well as other economic impacts of the code changes.

### **Mixed-Use Districts**

Kevin Wheeler presented an overview of the first areas of priorities for updating the code: Mixed-use Districts along transit corridors. He noted that we can't do the entire city all at once, and so the project team is recommending prioritizing main corridors in the city. Main corridors are typically the “heartbeat” of a community, and many of these areas already have adopted plans that have incorporated community input. Additionally, access to transportation is very important so alignment with LinkUs will help ensure a coordinated, more comprehensive update. He noted that some area plans, such as the Hilltop plan, recommend mixed-use districts but the zoning code doesn't currently match. This means that the plans that reflect community desires cannot be fully realized because of the code. By starting with these areas, we can reduce barriers that are impeding community progress.

Committee members were then invited to ask questions and react to the key findings:

Some committee members expressed concerns about the current status of the city's transit plans, such as LinkUs and COTA improvements. There were concerns that these efforts would not be implemented comprehensively or in a timely manner and could then reduce the effectiveness of the zoning code updates. Jennifer Fening (Department of Development Assistant Director) noted that an updated zoning code that supported transit goals would better position LinkUs to pursue federal funding opportunities. Some committee members also noted that as our older neighborhoods are seeing population declines and there is less density, this reduces market feasibility for public transportation.

It was also noted that conversations about transportation should not just be limited to buses and transit plans should support multiple modes, including walking/biking. Some neighborhoods still suffer from a lack of sidewalks or safe places to wait for buses. Additionally, language barriers and disabilities can be a big impediment to using traditional public transportation, so a broader view of transportation should be included in our thinking.

The project team then asked committee members if there was anything that appeared to be missing from the team's approach and what they had already been hearing from their communities/networks:

- How does this align with the City's Climate Action Plan? Would like to see more emphasis on this.
- This work needs to be significant to be valuable. Can we provide the community with examples of outcomes from other cities that have gone through this process?
- Make sure we provide examples and illustrations to help the community understand how this will impact them.
- Equity needs to be a clearly stated priority and we should be able to provide examples of how this kind of change has had/could have positive impacts on communities and advanced goals.
- Make sure to emphasize form and how this will reduce variance review processes which will improve efficiencies to creating the change that residents want to see in their community.

### **Community Engagement Update – Undesign the Redline Exhibit Tour**

Leslie Westerfelt (RAMA Consulting – Outreach & Engagement Consultant) provided the committee an update on the Undesign the Redline exhibit, which is currently touring at 5 area community centers. The first event at Barnett Recreation Center was held on December 6<sup>th</sup>. Leslie asked committee members to continue to share the information to their networks. Committee members have been provided with electronic flyers and social media content to share.

Leslie was asked if the information in the exhibit was translated into other languages. While the developers of the exhibit have not provided this resource, Leslie stated the team will work with local organizations to identify facilitators to provide guided tours in other languages.

### **Wrap Up**

Kevin Wheeler asked if committee members would be interested in doing a city tour to review specific locations and considerations. Several members indicated yes, so Kevin will work on finding a date.

Maria Mone concluded the meeting. The next meeting will be held January 4, 2023.