

CTM Minutes – Special Meeting on Connected Communities

By Barry Gee, Secretary

Date: May 1, 2024, 6:30pm

Location: In-person at Clifton Recreation Center

Board Members Present (9): In Person: Barry Gee, Nestor Melnyk, Tim Noonan, Justin Ogilby, Jan Checco, Gerald Checco, Rachel Wells, Steve Goodin, Mindi Rich,

Absent (4): Genet Singh, Jayme Ritter, Leah Kottyan, John Whedon

A quorum is present. Meeting called to order at 6:42pm by Steve Goodin.

(U) below will represent a unanimous vote.

Public Attendance (62): Tom Lienhart, Kathy Smart, Eric Urbas, Toni Alterman, Gillian Sella, Maryann Schmidt, Bob Hyland, Marilyn Schiers, Mel Cohen, Dough Ford, Kevin Leahy, A. Noonan, Bill Hautz, Brian Templeton, Stephanie Alvarez, Margie Matthews, Nancy Fluharty, Michelle Schwenkner, Stella Urbas, Jane Scupham, Linda Goldenhar, Brian Curwin, Michael Miwihan, Charles Matthews, Mike German, Linda Ford, Jon Hautz, Nathaniel Stein, Patrick Etter, Karen Donath, Peggy Moses, Elain Eckstein, Ben Pantoja, Chris Pantoja, Julie Brown, Cathy McLeod, Michael DeFrancesco, Tomio F., Kathy Barber, Bill Smart, Susan Buring, Steve Slack, Barbara Heidt, Mary Urbas, Maureen Keeley, Karim Tiro, Christopher Cain, Olivia Archambault, Jacquie Stewart, Vanesa Jankin, David Meyer, Adam Hyland, Kevin Marsh, Martha Fellerhoff, Lynn Hughes, Evgeny Mikmeeu, Evin Delaney, Jessica Anderson, Joanne Abitabku, Gerry Kraus, Merwin Kraus, Amy Brewer

Welcome to our meeting – Contact the CTM email at contactctm@cliftoncommunity.org

Biographical information on Councilmember Reggie Harris (from the City of Cincinnati website)

Reggie is a retired professional ballet dancer, trained clinical social worker, and licensed therapist who most recently worked in affordable housing development. He is also the founder of InContext Advising, LLC, where he has worked with state and local campaigns, nonprofits, educators, and healthcare providers on issues related to mental health, LGBTQIA+ equality, and social policy. He was appointed to the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) Board of Directors by the Hamilton County Commission in January 2020 and served as the board chair for Equality Ohio — the state's leading LGBTQIA+ civil rights organization. He was elected to Cincinnati City Council in the 2021 election and is the chair of the Budget & Finance Committee.

Presentation by Councilmember Reggie Harris

Councilmember Harris stated that he and his husband came to Cincinnati nine years ago when he took a job at Miami University and bought a home here. He said that he looks at the city through the lens of a transplant.

Comments by Councilmember Harris on the attached slide presentation.

Slide 4: He said that he often hears that people want the ability to remain in Cincinnati through their life stages. However, there is an increasing gap between wages and housing cost and the City Council is working on ways to close that gap.

We are lagging other cities in the development of new housing units, including Dayton.

Slide 5: Harris said that most neighborhoods in Cincinnati have had a net loss in the number of units over the last year.

Slide 6: Harris said the city looked at the variance requests related to density over the last year and 50% of those were allowed under the current code. He said that we are artificially capping the number of units allowed by 50%.

Slide 7: The reasons for Connected Communities outlined by Harris are increases in housing prices, housing construction is lagging, and the current zoning code is capping supply.

Slide 8-10: Harris stated that the City Council has been accused of not engaging with the community on the Connected Communities proposal. He pushed back on this and said that community engagement started back in June of 2022 with the Housing Summit, eight Connected Communities events in 2023 and several more in 2024.

Slide 13-17: Harris said the proposed changes focus on three major domains: neighborhood business districts, major corridors and citywide. They have identified 13 business districts (and a ¼-mile buffer around them) as areas to focus on. They are also focusing heavily on Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes that will serve the major corridors in the city. These changes will have a ½-mile buffer and include the East/West Tier 2 streets as well that feed the BRTs. He stated that Cincinnati had the only bus system in the Midwest that grew during the pandemic.

Slide 18: Connected Communities proponents have identified the following tools that will be utilized by the program: middle housing, reduced regulatory barriers, eliminating minimum parking requirements, affordable development, human scale development and process improvements.

Slide 19-23: Connected Communities defines Middle Housing to include duplex, triplex, fourplex, rowhomes, cottage court and small mixed-use developments. Harris stated that any of these housing types could be built in the target areas and would have the same setback and height requirements as currently defined except a one-story bonus would be allowed along BRTs that are not in Single Family zones.

Slide 25-27: Summary of Middle Housing requirements:

- 2/3/4 family units permitted within ¼ mile of a Neighborhood Business District.
- 2/3/4 family units permitted along Major Corridors.
- Permit rowhomes by right in SF-2.

Slide 28: Summary of Reduced Regulatory Barriers:

- No density restriction within Neighborhood Business Districts. No change to form regulations.
- No density restrictions and a 1-story height bonus along Major Transit Corridors. (Excludes SF Zones)
- No citywide proposal.

Slide 31-33: Summary of proposed Parking Policies:

- Relax parking requirements for new construction within ¼ mile of Neighborhood Business Districts.
- Eliminate parking minimums along Major Transit Corridors.
- Eliminate parking minimums for existing building renovations (citywide). Reduce residential minimum to 1 space/unit.

Harris stated that parking minimums were not based on real science. He says that the city is not going to require you to build a certain number of spaces but is confident that developers will still have parking per the market. He also stated that parking minimums in Neighborhood Business Districts will not be eliminated but will be cut in half.

Slide 34: Harris stated that zoning reform is not specifically an affordable housing intervention. It has an impact on affordability, but it isn't by itself an affordable housing intervention.

Summary of Affordable Development Policies:

 LIHTC awarded projects given height, density and parking bonuses if approved through the existing review process.

Slide 35-36: Summary of Human Scale Development Policies:

• Require parking lots to be located in the rear and increase landscaping requirements.

- Expand EV parking permissions.
- Allow property owners to place bus structures in the front yard of all zones.
- Design requirements for new Missing Middle Housing. Entrance location; distinct base, middle, top; no vast expanse of wall.

Slide 39: Summary of Process Improvement Policies:

- Simplifying the appeal process to one hearing.
- Making outdoor dining easier.
- Cleanup of non-conforming property rules.
- General cleanup to make the Zoning Code easier to navigate for emerging developers and citizens.
- Make daycares permitted in multi-family zones.
- Reduce the minimum size of Planned Development from 2 acres to 1.5 acres.

The timeline shows that Connected Communities proposal will be voted on by the City Council in June.

Comments from CTM President Steve Goodin

Pres. Goodin was asked to speak on what Connected Communities might mean specifically for Clifton.

Pres. Goodin said he is hearing concerns from the city about increasing density and that we need more affordable housing. He has heard from some residents in Clifton that wonder if removing these zoning restrictions will cause developers to not respect the historic nature of the neighborhood.

He said the Bus Rapid Transit lines will operate similarly to the old streetcar lines, with fewer stops and will improve the ability for people to get to and from work. He stated that a large portion of Metro riders are going to or from work. The BRT that will serve Clifton will be an articulated bus that can carry more people.

Pres. Goodin asked if Additional Dwelling Units (ADUs) are part of the changes. Councilmember Harris responded that they will still be tied to single family homes.

Questions from the audience

Questions were received from the audience during the meeting. Gerald Checco will read some of the questions.

Question: Cincinnati ranks at the bottom of home ownership. Bottom 2.0% in Ohio and bottom 9% amongst the 100 largest American cities. Generational wealth is intimately tied to home ownership. With 2/3 rentals and codes favoring rentals, we are condemning Cincinnati to be a poor city for generations. When we talk to developers, they say that building condos is not financially feasible. Why don't we incentivize homeownership by allowing some of the new proposed code only to owner occupied residences (Condominium or single-family homes) and end the cycle of poverty instead of perpetuating it?

Councilmember Harris: "So when we talk about homeownership zoning in many ways, and particularly when we think about a Cincinnati context, and how we tried to think about addressing home ownership is by permitting duplexes, triplexes, and quads."

"When you buy a duplex, the bank allows you to use what would be the revenue from the second unit as a way to get a mortgage, so it is absolutely an entryway to homeownership."

"The second thing we talk about homeownership one is about downpayment. It is about credit scores, it is about access to capital. "

Harris said helping to solve these issues is how we are going to increase home ownership in Cincinnati. He stated that the city has increased funding for the downpayment assistance program by two and a half million dollars, is working with credit recovery programs to increase potential buyers' credit scores and is trying to create a market for investment here in Cincinnati.

Question from Steve Goodin: Should the proposed changes protect us from developers such as VineBrook acquiring single-family homes, tearing them down and building multi-family dwellings?

Councilmember Harris: He said that zoning has no impact on institutional investors such as VineBrook. Their model is to buy houses in areas that have experienced decades of disinvestment. He stated that for example, VineBrook wouldn't buy a house on McAlpin because the incentive wouldn't be there. He said it is possible that a high-end developer might buy a single-family home, tear it down and put up a four-family dwelling but that would not negatively impact the property values of that neighborhood. He stated that if you live in a million-dollar home you still might move into that \$4 million dollar four-family dwelling.

The audience was booing Councilmember Harris at this point.

Councilmember Harris said that he will not tolerate boos because we are a community, and we can't say that we have a housing crisis, but we don't want people to live in our community.

Trustee Rachel Wells tried to restore order and stated that she is a renter, doesn't own a car and has spent hundreds of hours on the Housing and Zoning Committee and advocating to preserve history in our community. She stated that she will not tolerate audience members heckling our guest or stating that renters are bad.

Steve Goodin asked that since Clifton is already 60% - 65% renters, is there anything in Connected Communities to encourage home ownership, particularly for first time buyers?

Councilmember Harris responded that no, you wouldn't do that with zoning but rather with residential tax abatements.

Question: Is it possible to just include that multi-family be owner-occupied in some fashion, particularly four-families?

Councilmember Harris responded that having to enforce such a requirement would be prohibitive. This could potentially create a whole separate city bureaucracy.

Question: What are we doing to ensure that quality of life issues will be addressed in a specific proposal dealing with absentee landlords?

Councilmember Harris: "Yeah, absolutely. So, we're addressing all of those things. So, the first thing that we say about quality of life is that, for the past five years, potentially, we have been grossly understaffed in building inspections. We were something like 33 inspectors short. So many of the quality-of-life issues in many ways are due to being overwhelmingly short staffed. Director Dahlberg was the director of building inspections and worked with our city administration and lobbied the state to change the requirements so that we can create a pathway of building inspectors to begin to get more people. So, we actually have, and we started in February, the first building and inspections academy, and what that does is that it allows people to come in with no training, spend nine months apprenticing, and then entering into level one training, moving up level two, moving up level three, we have 44 people in that class. So, we will be at the point where we're starting to reach our full complimentary strength by the end of this year, and then we will start a new class. So just in terms of just having the sheer number of people to be able to enforce and address quality life issues, we're doing that."

Question: Are you guys really going to vote on this in June? Is there any chance that the Connected Communities proposal might be pushed back until after the summer recess to allow for additional community engagement?

Councilmember Harris: Harris stated that he believes that the proposal is still on track for a June vote in City Council and that adequate community engagement was done on this proposal over the past two years.

Question: Why assume that increased density and population growth are inherently good?

Councilmember Harris: "So, I think the reality is that when we think back, you know, and many of you are more of Cincinnati historians than I will ever be. But you know, in 1850 Cincinnati was the sixth largest city, at the height of its density there were 509,000 people, we're currently like 310,000 people, so 210,000 people below what the city was built for. So, we absolutely have the capacity for increased folks, we also have a city structure where 70% of our revenue comes from our city earnings tax. So yes, we make more money as a city. I know that that sounds pretty gauche, but we've made more money as a city when we have

more people. Also, the other thing that I think is really important, everyone thinks about infrastructure and sewers, and being overloaded. New development helps all those infrastructure systems. Because when the development comes in, and it goes to coordinated site review, and if the city deems that whatever existing infrastructure can't support that plan, they have to fix it. They have to do that investment. So, the more new development, the more new eyes, we actually get on the surrounding infrastructure, and the improvements that comes with that. So, to me, those are three added benefits, you know, more eyes on our infrastructure, increased tax base, and getting back to density peak."

Question: Has the city considered a pilot program in selected communities and neighborhoods? Is there an off ramp? Will there ever be any flexibility for individual neighborhoods in terms of implementation to opt out if not successful?

Councilmember Harris: "Okay. So, will there be zones for each of the 52 neighborhoods? The answer is no. That's an administrative nightmare. And I'll be very honest, you don't want to live in a city in which every neighborhood has its own zoning code. That would be a nightmare." "A city with 52 zoning codes is a city that is not functioning, and it's not building buildings and developments in any sort of logical way."

"In terms of off ramping, right, the reality is that this is why we're calling it Connected Communities. You have to think about development, and you have to think about zoning cohesively, because what happens in one neighborhood will trickle down to the next neighborhood, right?"

Question: Would you ever consider or be open to an amendment connected to the legislation which would limit the number of multifamily houses on a given street, particularly a street that is currently single-family?

Councilmember Harris: "So my personal philosophy is no, because I just think development doesn't work that way. But I have one vote. Right. But no, that's not a part of my personal development philosophy and is not informed by anything that I have seen professionally. And just in the city that is growing, putting these arbitrary caps on what we are trying to build is antithetical to that stated goal."

Question from Julie Brown: "College Hill was one of four neighborhoods who opted into form-based code." "My question is, how will Connected Communities impact those business districts of College Hill, Walnut Hills, Westwood and Madisonville when so many of their single-family homes that are within that quarter mile or half mile of the business district already have some other set of requirements? And that's how I found out that my single-family home is not in a single-family zone. And how will the Connected Communities legislation change impact those four neighborhoods that opted in to form-based code?

Councilmember Harris: "That's a great question. So, here's what we chose to do. We chose that any existing overlays that Connected Communities would not preempt those. We're not preempting them. So, if you are in a historic overlay, that historic overlay takes precedence, right? If you are in a form-based code overlay, these current overlays would not be preempted by Connected Communities."

Question from Bob Hyland: "You said earlier that our zoning has not been looked at in 20 some years. In that time, atmospheric carbon dioxide has gone from 375.98 parts per million to 418.53 parts per million. We are in an existential climate crisis, you can look at all the research, it shows that we need density, it shows that we need mass transit. We need public transportation, if any of you think that you're progressive, or environmentalist, or you care about future generations, you have to support Connected Communities. My question is, can you underline for us, the benefits to the environment?"

Councilmember Harris: Harris stated that Connected Communities is one of the best things that we can do in terms of sustainability. To use bus rapid transit, and having more people in our city draws less on existing resources. The overlap of sustainable practices is also outlined extensively in the Green Cincinnati Plan.

President Goodin thanked Councilmember Harris for coming and presenting.

Next Steps

CTM will compile all the submitted questions (attached) and send those to Councilmember Harris' office to request that the city answer them. CTM will also

distribute a CTM survey about the different aspects of the Connected Communities proposal.

Motion to adjourn at Steve Goodin, Barry Gee second. (U)

Respectfully submitted, Barry Gee, Secretary

Attachments:

Reggie Harris Presentation on Connected Communities Connected Communities handouts used at the meeting



Why Connected Communities?

Cincinnati is a great place to call home, but a difficult place to find housing.

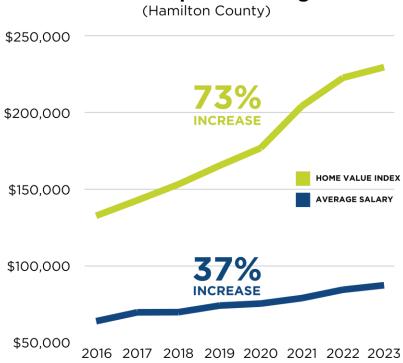
Connected Communities is peoplefocused approach to land use and zoning so that we can build a more accessible, diverse, and sustainable community

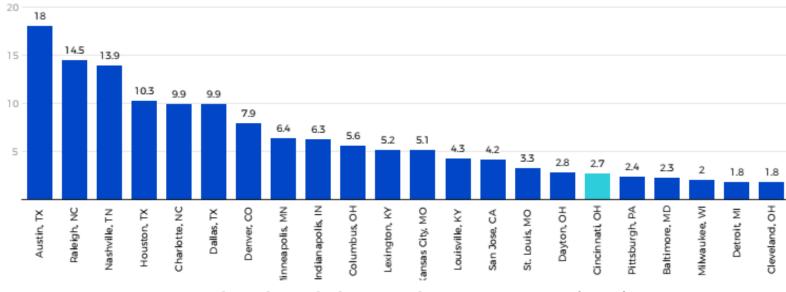




State of Housing in Cincinnati

Home Value Compared to Wage Growth

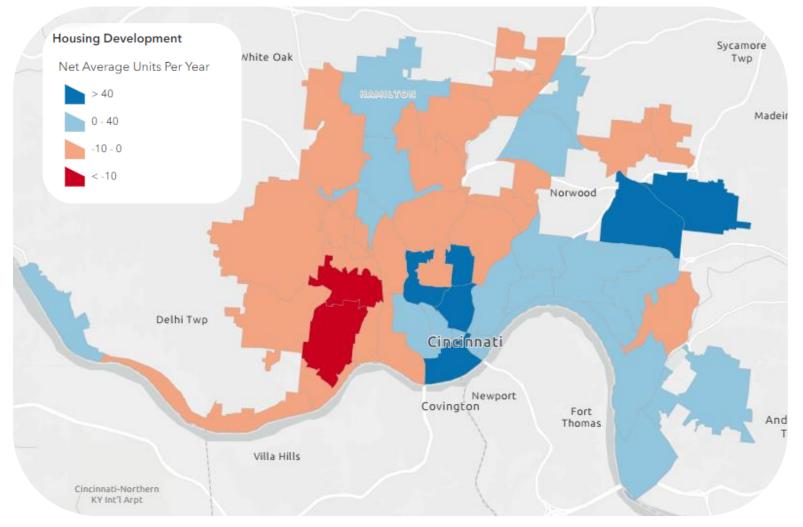


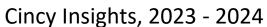


Residential Building Permits Per 1K People (2022)

Wages are stagnating behind housing cost increases.

Housing production is woefully staggering behind our peer cities.







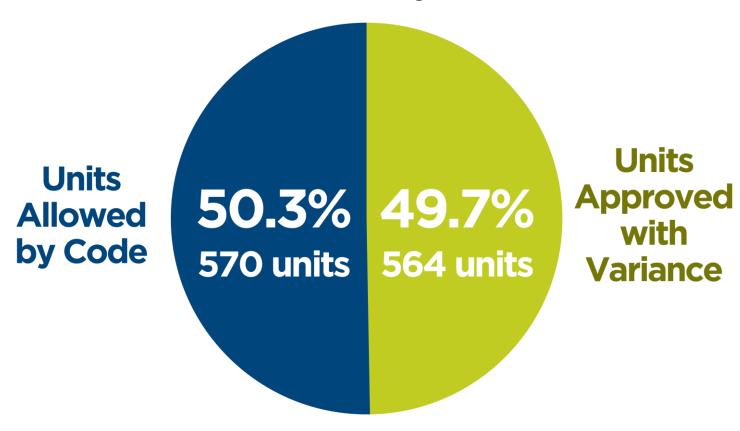
 Vast majority of Cincinnati neighborhoods have had negative or zero net housing unit growth.

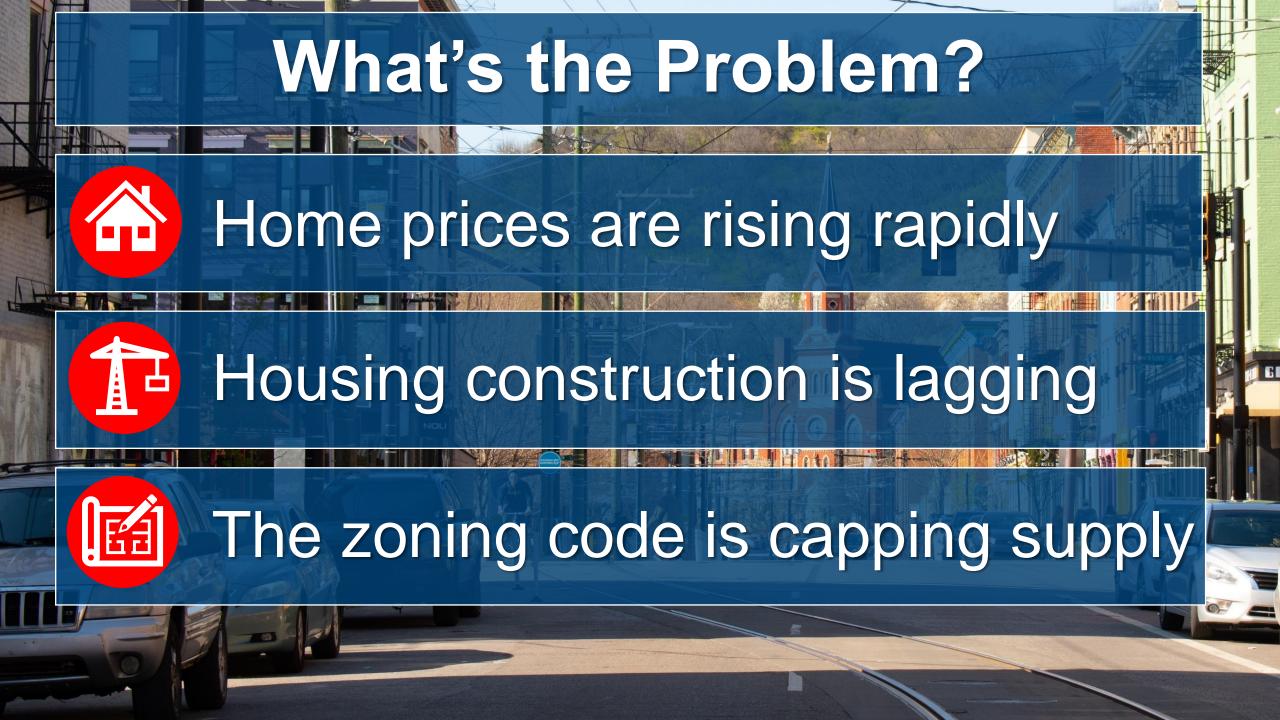


The zoning code is capping supply

- Over 550 new housing units in the City were subject to variance hearings.
- Connected Communities aims to cut red tape that delays housing and costs money.

2017-2023 Density Variances





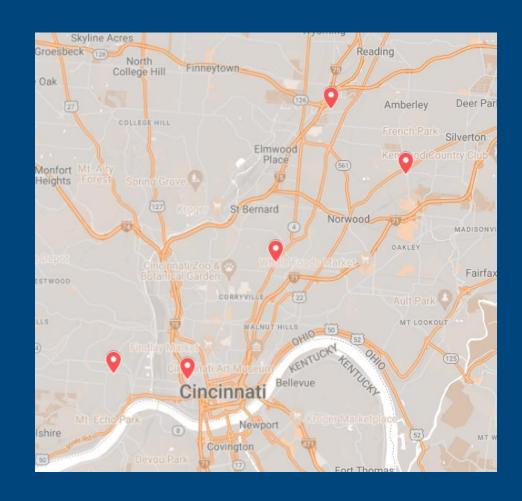
Connected Communities Engagement Events

2022: Initial Concept Conversations

- June 11th: Housing Summit (East Price Hill)
- Summer: 5 virtual meetings with professional stakeholders to learn about housing challenges

2023: Connected Communities Events

- January 30th: Hirsch Rec Center (Avondale)
- February 7th: Price Hill Rec Center
- February 21st: Pleasant Ridge Rec Center
- February 23rd: Virtual
- March 1st: Lincoln Rec Center (West End)
- March 11th: Neighborhood Summit
- April 6th: "All-In" Virtual Engagement
- April 11th: New Prospect Baptist Church



400+ Attendees
11 events

Interactive Booth at Neighborhood Summit

40+ Neighborhoods represented

1,271 Survey Responses 100+

Professional Stakeholders

Including Affordable & Market-rate Developers

200+ Attendees
Housing Summit

Connected Communities Engagement

2024 Engagement Events









Where to Implement?



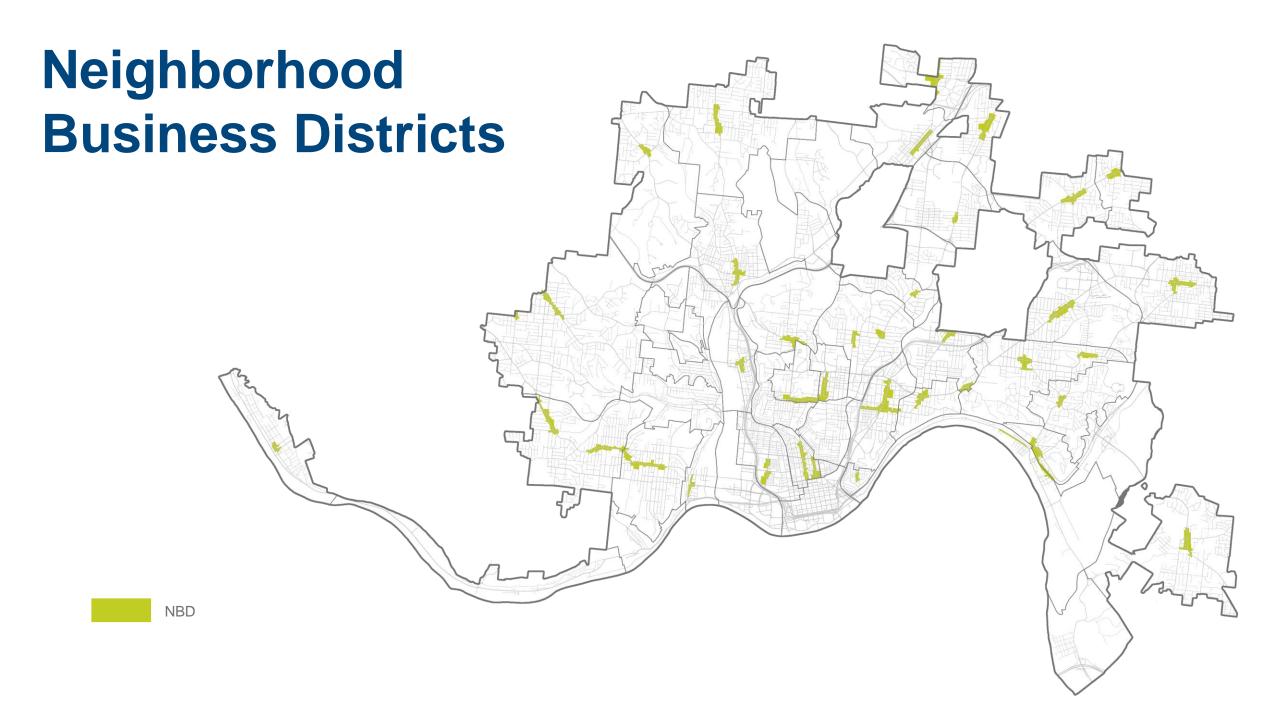
Business Districts

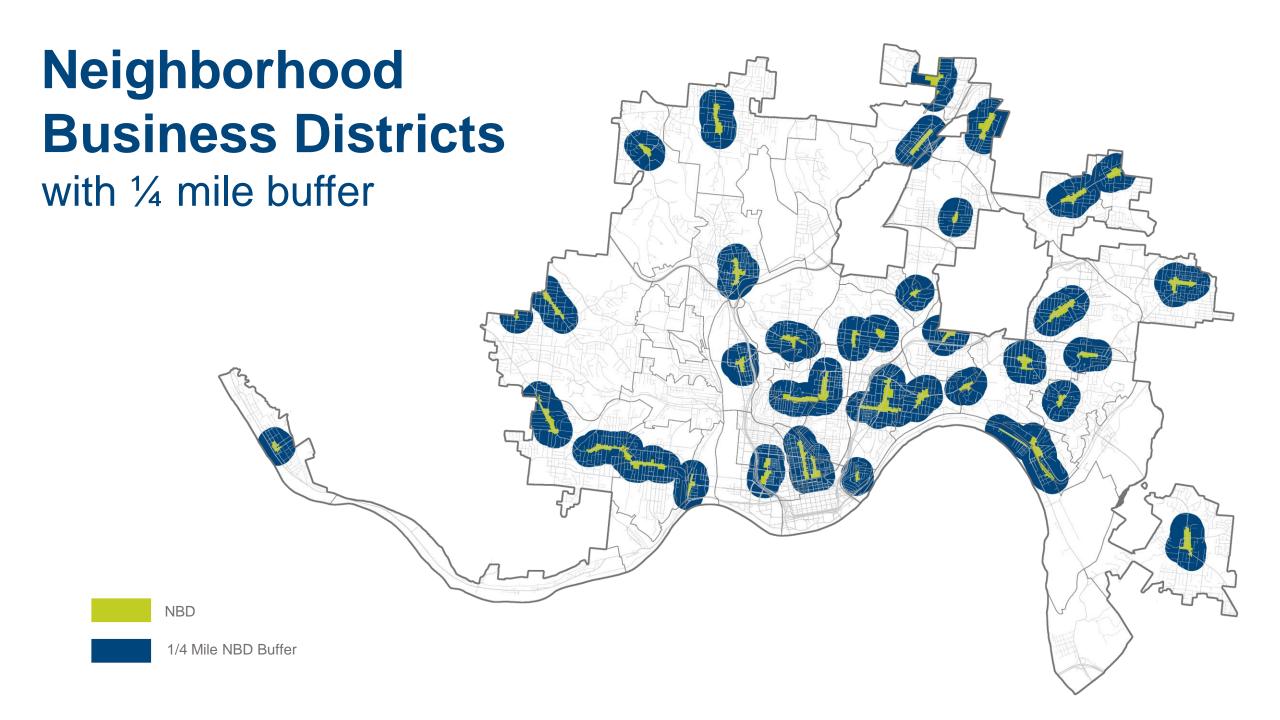


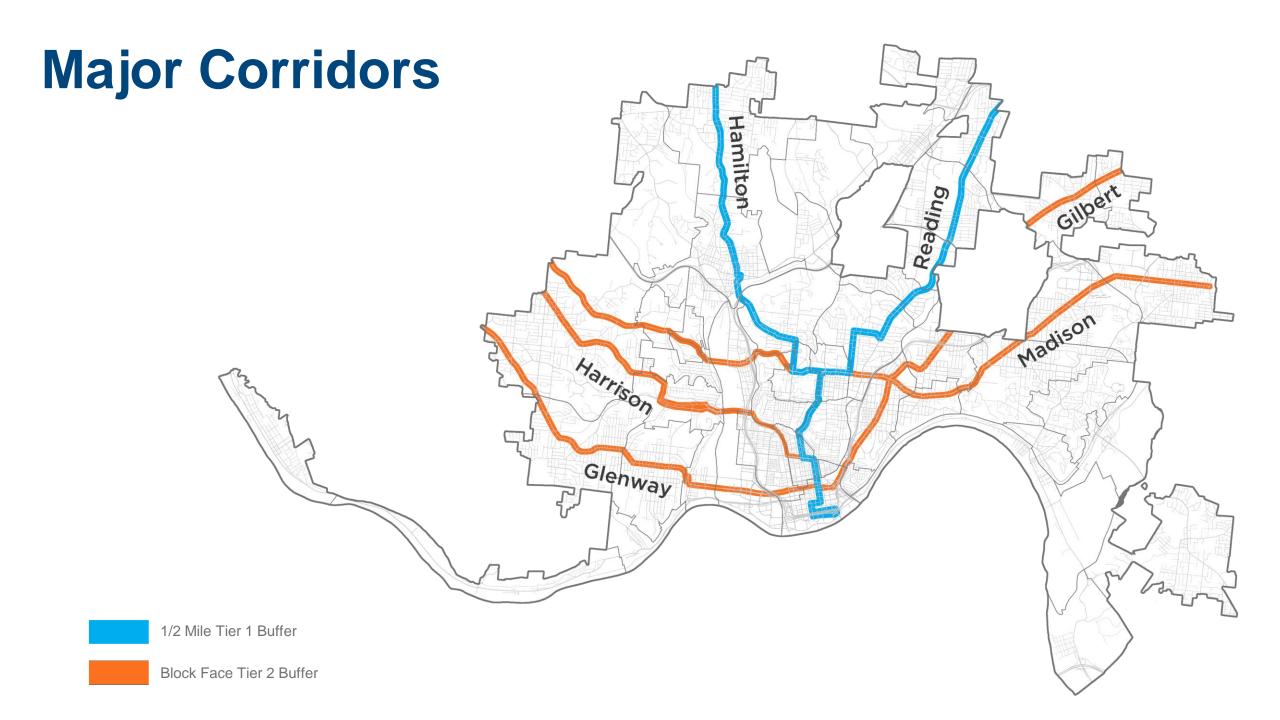
Major Corridors

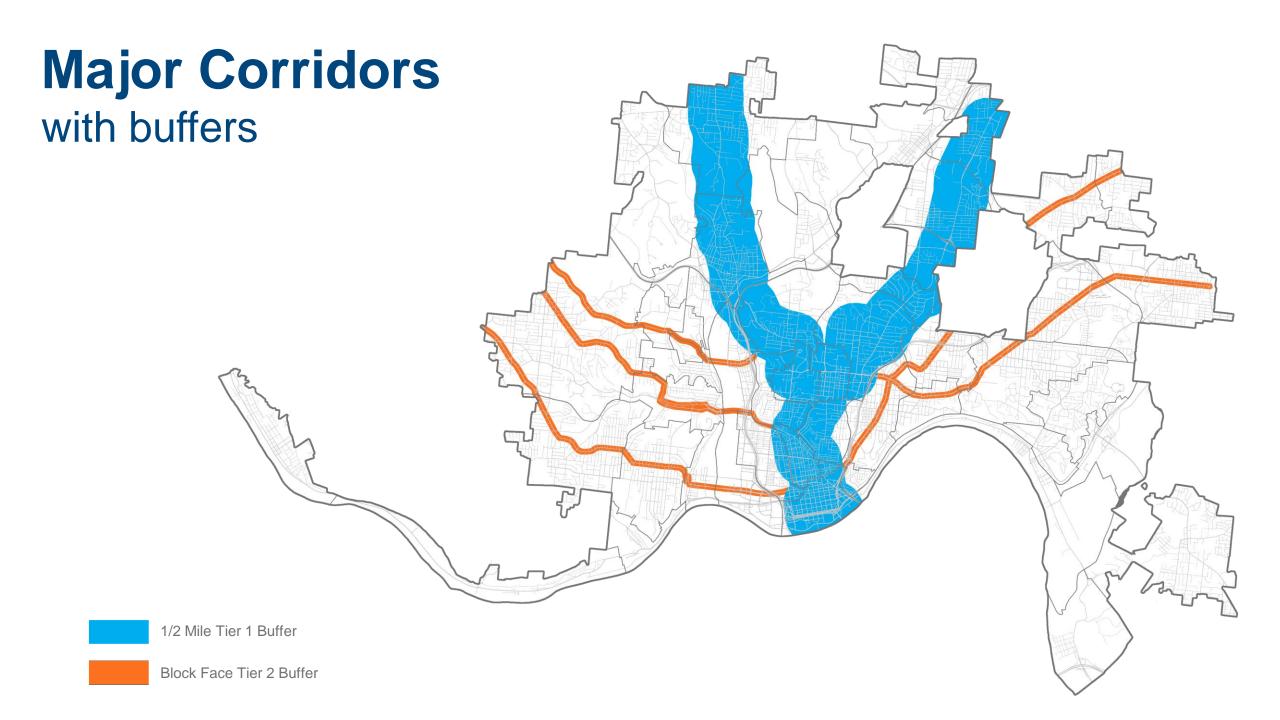


Citywide











What are the Tools?









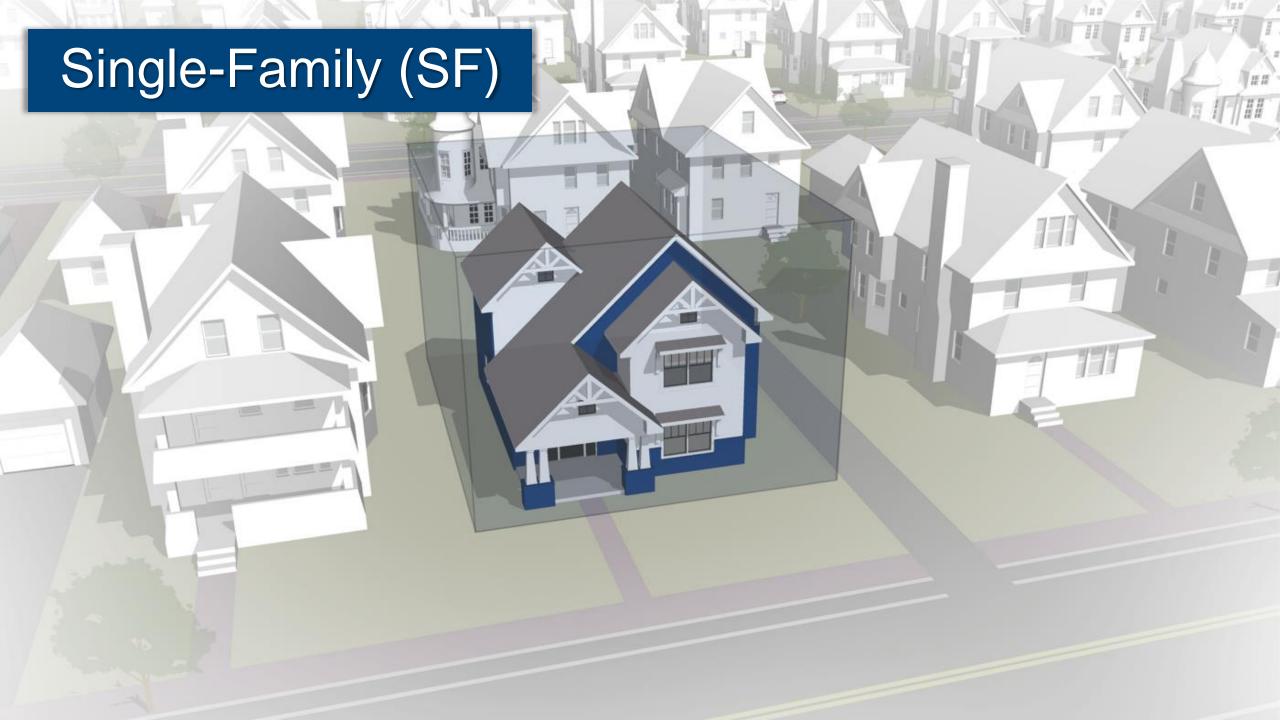


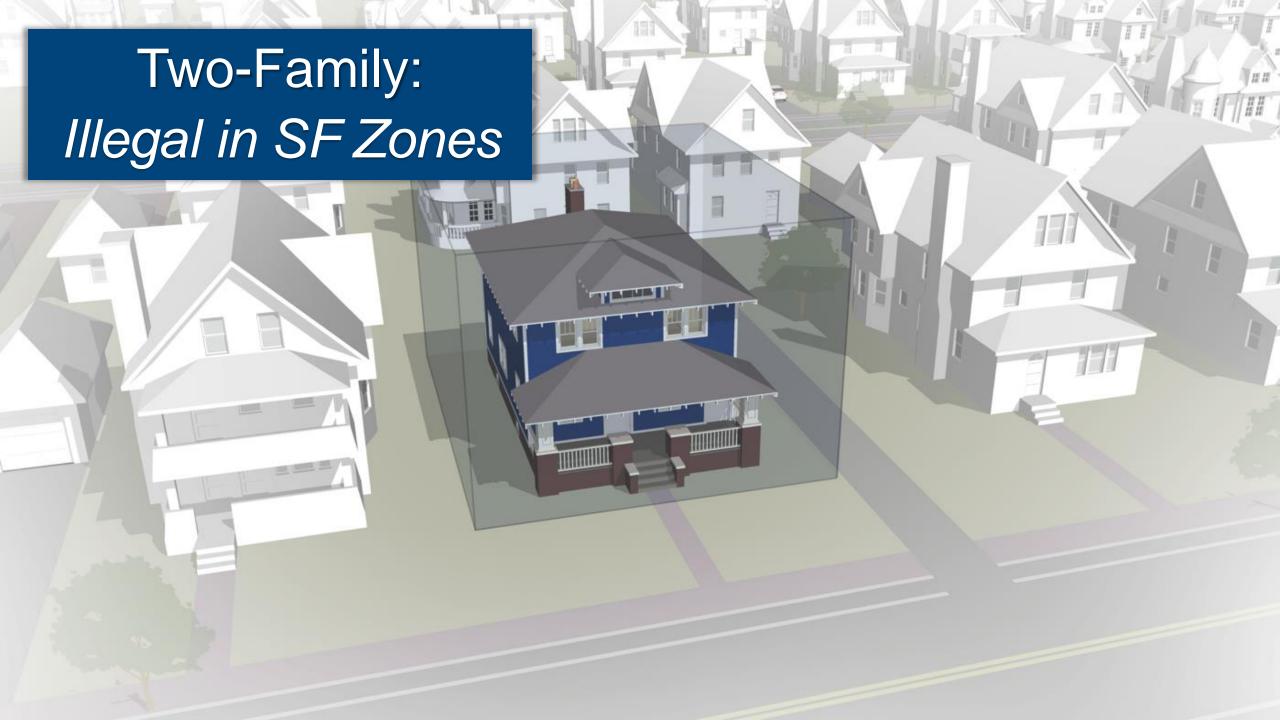


What is Middle Housing?





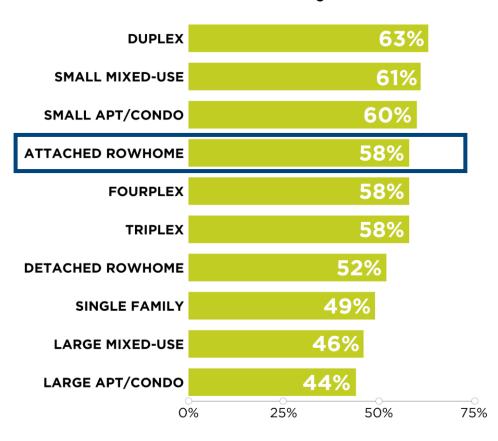






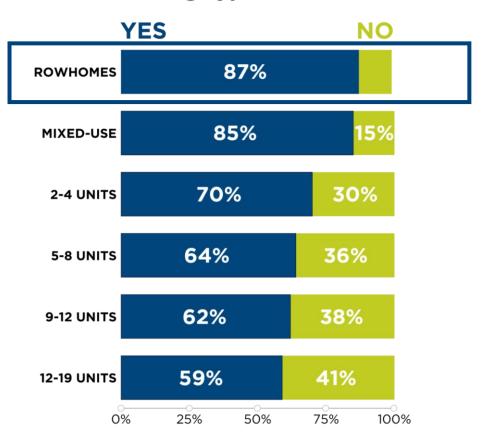
Stakeholder Engagement

What Housing Types Do You Want Citywide?



Public Survey

Is there a market for these Middle Housing types in Cincinnati?



Professional Stakeholders



Middle Housing Policies



2/3/4 family units permitted within ¼ mile of a Neighborhood Business District.





Middle Housing Policies



2/3/4 family units permitted within ¼ mile of a Neighborhood Business District.



2/3/4 family units permitted along Major Corridors.





Middle Housing Policies



NBDs

2/3/4 family units permitted within ¼ mile of a Neighborhood Business District.

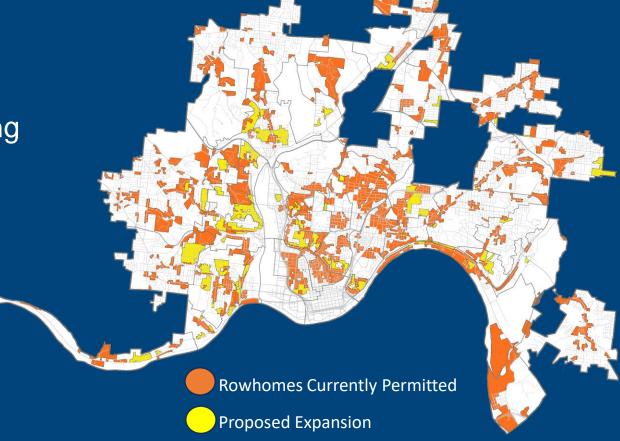


2/3/4 family units permitted along Major Corridors.



Permit rowhomes by right in SF-2.

*SF-2 is our densest Single-Family Zone



What are Regulatory Barriers?

Density

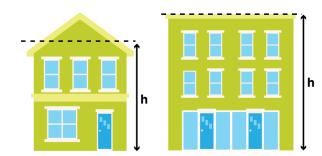
Maximum number of housing units per property





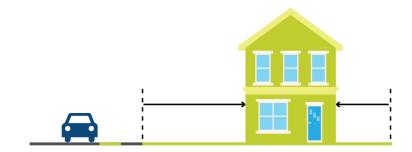
Height

Maximum distance from ground to top of building



Setback

Minimum distance from property lines





Reduced Reg. Barriers Policies



No density restrictions in Neighborhood Business Districts. No change to form regulations.



Corridors

No density restrictions and a 1-story height bonus along Major Corridors.

*Excludes SF zones



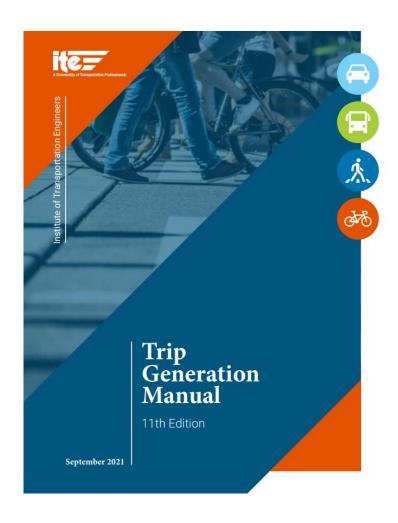
No citywide proposal.



What is a parking requirement?

Minimum parking requirements mandate a certain number of parking spaces for a building.

The number of required spaces depends on the type of activity in the building—housing, shopping, office activity, etc.

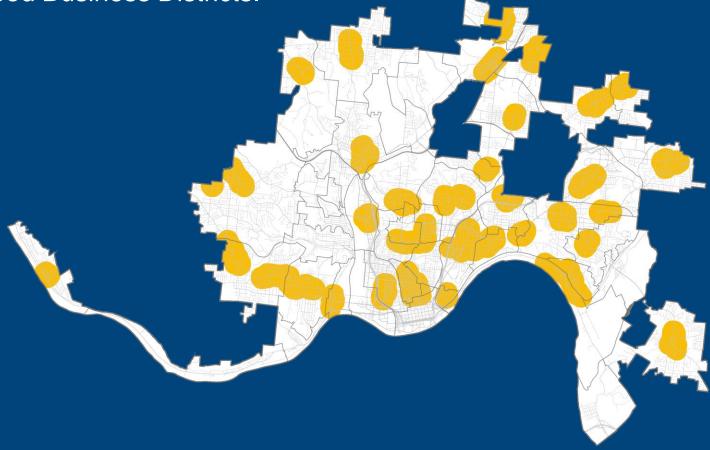




Parking Policies



Relax parking requirements for new construction within ¼ mile of Neighborhood Business Districts.





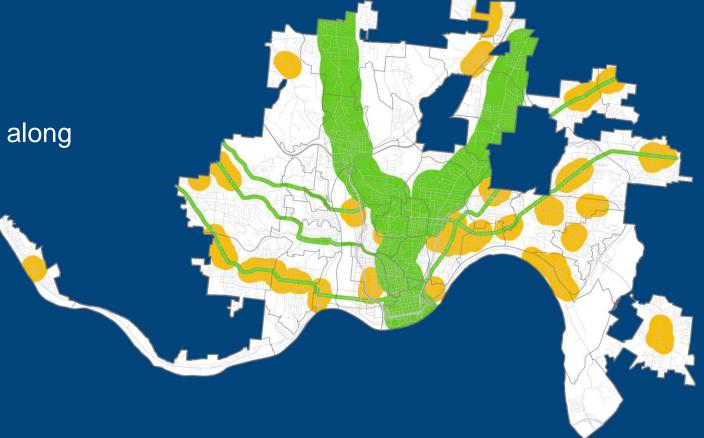
Parking Policies



Relax parking requirements for new construction within ¼ mile of Neighborhood Business Districts.



Eliminate parking minimums along Major Corridors.





Parking Policies



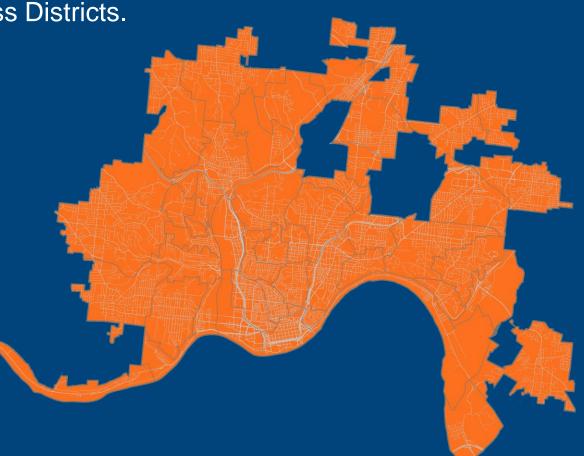
Relax parking requirements for new construction within ¼ mile of Neighborhood Business Districts.



Eliminate parking minimums along Major Corridors.



Eliminate parking minimums for existing building renovations. Reduce residential minimum to 1 space/unit.





Affordable Development Policies



LIHTC awarded projects given height, density and parking bonuses if approved through the existing review process.

Since 2015, LIHTC projects have contributed **1,416 units** at **60% AMI or less**

- This amounts to 98% of all deeply affordable housing in the City



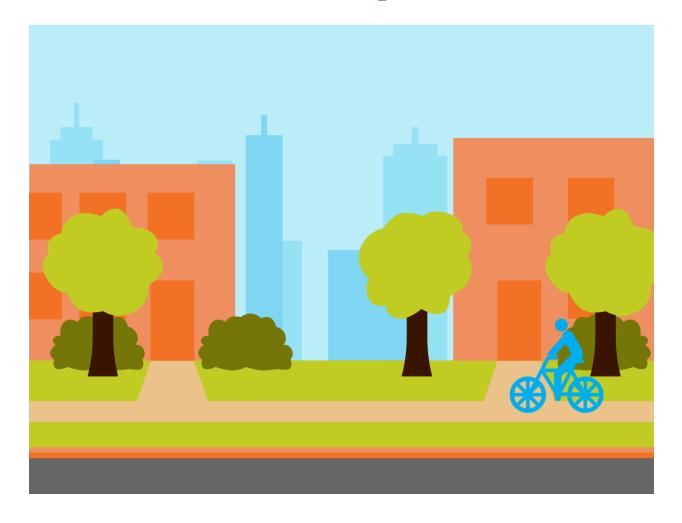
John Arthur Flats, Northside



Victory Vistas, North Avondale

What is Human-Scale Development?

Development and building patterns that prioritize an active, safe, comfortable, communal, and pedestrian environment as opposed to a sprawling, isolated, and auto-centric one.





Human-Scale Development Policies



- Require parking lots to be located in the rear and increase landscaping requirements.
- Expand EV parking permissions.
- Allow property owner to place bus structures in the front yard of all zones.
- Design requirements for new Missing Middle Housing
 - Entrance location, distinct base, middle, top, no vast expanse of wall.







Process Improvement Policies



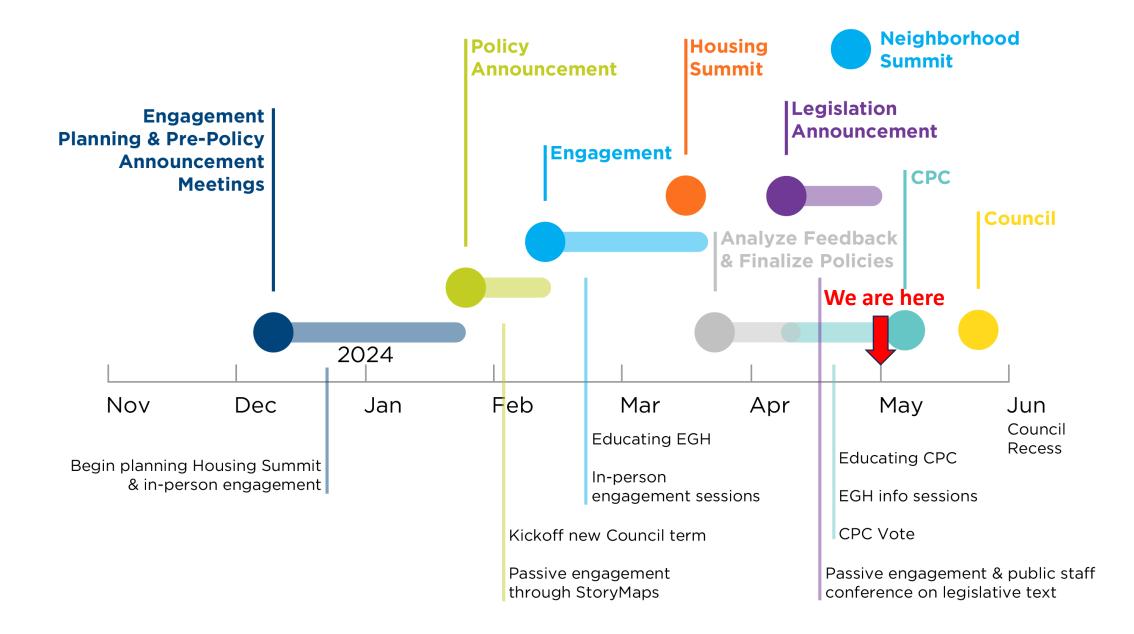
Citywide

General code cleanup including:

- Simplifying appeals process to one hearing
- Making outdoor dining easier
- Cleanup of legal non-conforming property rules
- General cleanup to make the Zoning Code easier to navigate for emerging developers and citizens.
- Make Daycares permitted in multi-family zones
- Reduce minimum size of Planned Development from 2 acres to 1.5 acres

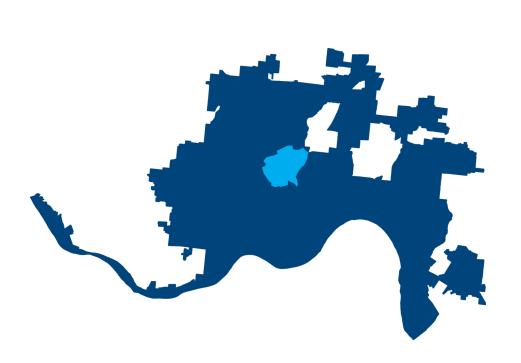


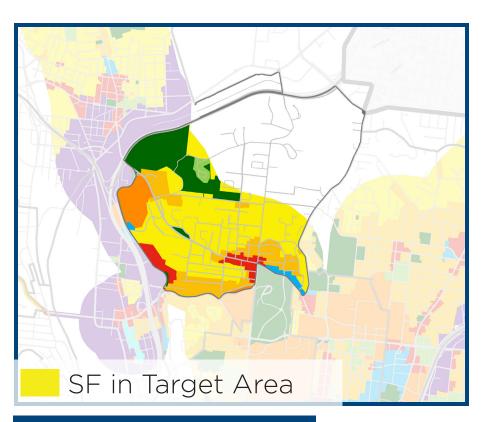
Timeline



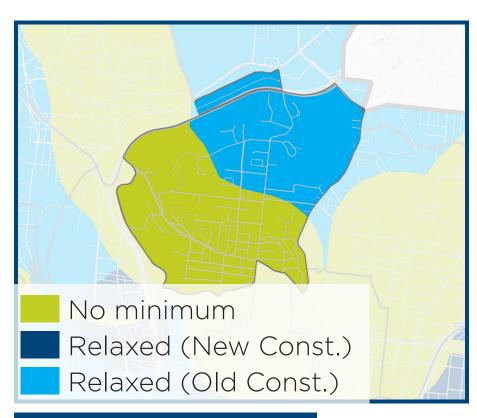
Questions?

CLIFTON

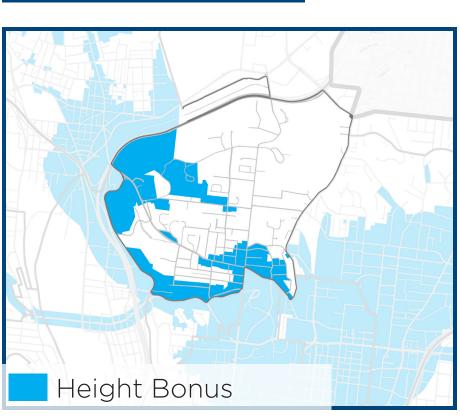




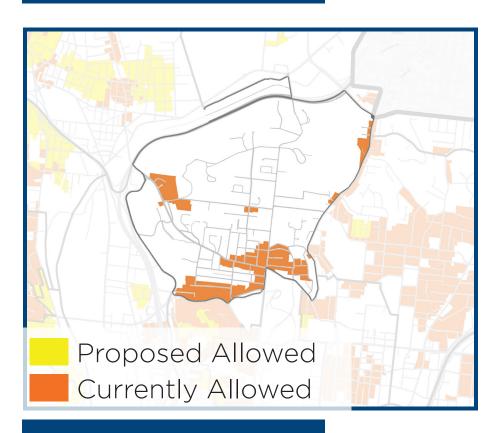
Middle Housing



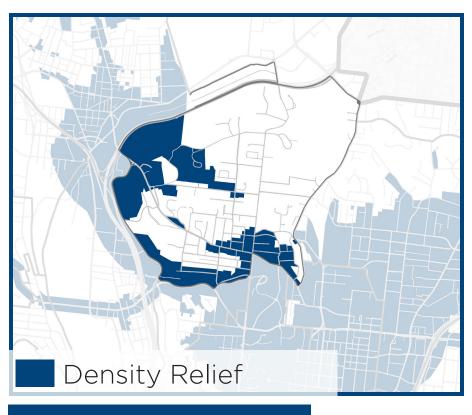
Parking



Relaxed Height



Rowhouses



Density Relief

EXPLORE CONNECTED COMMUNITIES BY NEIGHBORHOOD

Use the neighborhood maps to get a sense for how the proposed policies might apply. The boundaries used are primarily conceptual. For a parcel-by-parcel map, refer to the searchable Proposed Policy map.

QUICK GUIDE

Middle Housing

Single-Family zoning districts within the Connected Communities target areas are called out since those zones currently do not allow 2-, 3-, or 4-family buildings. The proposed policy would allow those building types in the highlighted areas.

Parking

For details about how parking minimums are proposed to change in each target area, refer to the Connected Communities StoryMap.

Rowhouses

On the maps, yellow indicates the SF-2 zoning district. This is the densest single-family zone in Cincinnati. Connected Communities proposes allowing rowhouses in these zones.



SCAN FOR PROPOSED POLICY MAP

http://tinyurl.com/3bxe2h4b

Height & Density

Proposed changes to height and density do not impact single-family zoning districts.