

City of Columbus Zoning Code Update Part 1 Review

**Plan Commission Meeting
February 12, 2026**

Project Schedule

Timing	Project Phase
Fall 2025	Development New Zoning Districts, Land Uses, and Bulk Standards
Winter/Spring 2026	Prepare Draft Zoning Ordinance ←
Summer 2026	Review Draft Zoning Ordinance with City Staff, Plan Commission, and City Council
Summer 2026	Revisions to Draft Ordinance and Map
Fall 2026	Prepare for Adoption of the New Zoning Ordinance and Map

- Last Meeting (November)
 - Reviewed Proposed Zoning Districts and Land Uses
- **Today**
 - Part 1 (Articles 1-5 and 11)
 - Policy Questions
- Next Meetings
 - Draft Zoning Map Review
 - Parking and/or Sign Content
 - Part 2 and Policy Questions

Code Organization

• Proposed Reorganization of the Zoning Code

- Article 1: Introduction
- Article 2: Establishment of Zoning Districts
- Article 3: Land Use Regulations
- Article 4: Bulk Regulations
- Article 5: Nonconforming Situations
- Article 6: Performance Standards
- Article 7: Exterior Building Design Standards
- Article 8: Landscaping Requirements
- Article 9: Signage
- Article 10: Administration and Procedures
- Article 11: Definitions

Part One

A dark grey rounded rectangle labeled 'Part One' has two red arrows pointing to the first and last items of the list: Article 1 and Article 11.

Article 1: Introduction

- Purpose and intent of zoning
- Rules of interpretation
- General provisions
- Word usage and abbreviations

ARTICLE I: INTRODUCTION

Section 114.01.01: Title

- (1) This Chapter shall be known, cited, and referred to as the City of Columbus Zoning Ordinance, except whereas referred to herein, where it shall be known as “this Chapter” or “this Ordinance.”

Section 114.01.02: Authority

- (1) This Chapter is enacted pursuant to the authority granted by the State of Wisconsin Statutes. Specific statutory references are provided within the body of this Chapter solely as a means of assisting the reader. Wis. Stats. § 62.23(7), 62.231, 87.30, and 281.31 Wisconsin Statutes.

Section 114.01.03: Purpose and Intent

This Chapter is adopted for the purpose of protecting the health, safety, and general welfare of the public. It is designed to implement the City of Columbus Comprehensive Plan, which is best done through zoning approaches, as enabled by Wisconsin Statutes. It is also the intent of this Chapter to:

- (1) Promote activity, safety, and economic viability;
- (2) Promote the appropriate density and intensity of development;
- (3) Regulate the location, construction, reconstruction, alteration, and use of buildings, structures, and land;
- (4) Facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewerage, schools, parks, and other public facilities;
- (5) Encourage a mix of land uses, at densities that support multi-modal transportation;
- (6) Provide for safe and efficient circulation of all modes of transportation, including transit, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic;
- (7) Control and lessen congestion in the streets;
- (8) Be adaptable to new types, formats, and mixes of land uses to reflect changing preferences, economics, and technologies;

Article 2: Zoning Districts

- New names and mix of zoning districts
- Overlay zoning districts:
 - Environmental Corridor
 - Historic Preservation
 - Planned Development
 - Shoreland and Watercourse
 - Westwater Treatment
 - Wellhead Protection

- (1) **(SR-1) Single Family Residential-1 Zoning District.**
 - (a) Intent. This district is intended to create, preserve, and enhance areas for single family detached dwellings.
- (2) **(SR-2) Single Family Residential-2 Zoning District.**
 - (a) Intent. This district is intended to create, preserve, and enhance areas for single family detached dwellings at generally higher densities than the SR-1 district. This district is designed for smaller lot front-loaded homes but may accommodate alley-loaded homes.
- (3) **(MR-1) Mixed Residential-1 Zoning District.**
 - (a) Intent. This district is intended to create, preserve, and enhance areas for two family attached dwellings such as duplexes, twin homes, and two flats at generally higher densities than the SR-2 district.
- (4) **(MR-2) Mixed Residential-2 Zoning District.**
 - (a) This district is intended to create, preserve, and enhance areas for multi-family uses such as duplexes, townhomes, two-flat, townhomes, apartment, and multiplex dwellings at generally higher densities than the MR-1 district.

Residential Zoning Districts

SR-1	Single Family Residential – 1
SR-2	Single Family Residential – 2
MR-1	Multi-Family Residential – 1
MR-2	Multi-Family Residential – 2
MH	Mobile Home Residential

Nonresidential Zoning Districts

Mixed-Use

INST	Institutional
CMU	Corridor Mixed-Use
DMU	Downtown Mixed Use

Industrial

BP	Business Park
LI	Light Industrial
HI	Heavy Industrial

Other

PR	Parks and Recreation
C	Conservancy
IOA	Intensive Outdoor Activity

Agricultural

AG	Agricultural
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Overlay Zoning Districts

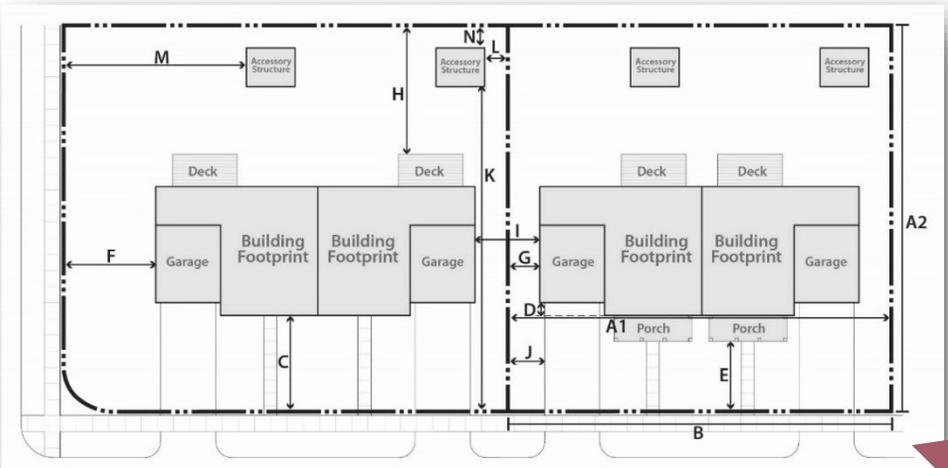
EC	Environmental Corridor
HP	Historic Preservation
PD	Planned Development
SW	Shoreland and Watercourse
WT	Wastewater Treatment
WP	Wellhead Protection

Article 3: Land Uses

Land Use Summary Table

- Land use summary table
- Individual land use details:
 - Diagrams showing bulk standards
 - Land use definitions
 - Unique requirements for each
 - Parking, buffering, location, etc.

Land Uses Permitted:	SR-1	SR-2	MR-1	MR-2	MH	CMU	DMU	INST	BP	LI	HI	AG	CON	PR	IOA
Refer to the detailed definitions and requirements listed for each land use on the following pages.	Single Family Residential -1	Single Family Residential -2	Multifamily Residential-1	Multifamily Residential-2	Mobile Home Residential-1	Corridor Mixed Use	Downtown Mixed Use	Institutional	Business Park	Light Industrial	Heavy Industrial	Agricultural	Conservancy	Parks and Recreation	Intensive Outdoor Activity
P: By Right C: By Conditional Use Permit P/C: Refer to requirements for that land use to determine if a Conditional Use Permit is required															
Residential Land Uses (§114.03.06)															
Apartments/Multiplexes				P		P									
Boarding House Living Arrangement				C		C	C	C							
Mobile Home					P										
Mobile Home Park					P										
Single Family Dwelling Unit	P	P	P	P	P	P						P			
Townhouse				P		P									
Twin House/Duplex/Two-Flat (two unit)			P	P		P									
Mixed-Use Land Uses (§114.03.08)															
Live/Work Unit				P		P	P	P							
Mixed Use Building						P	P	P							

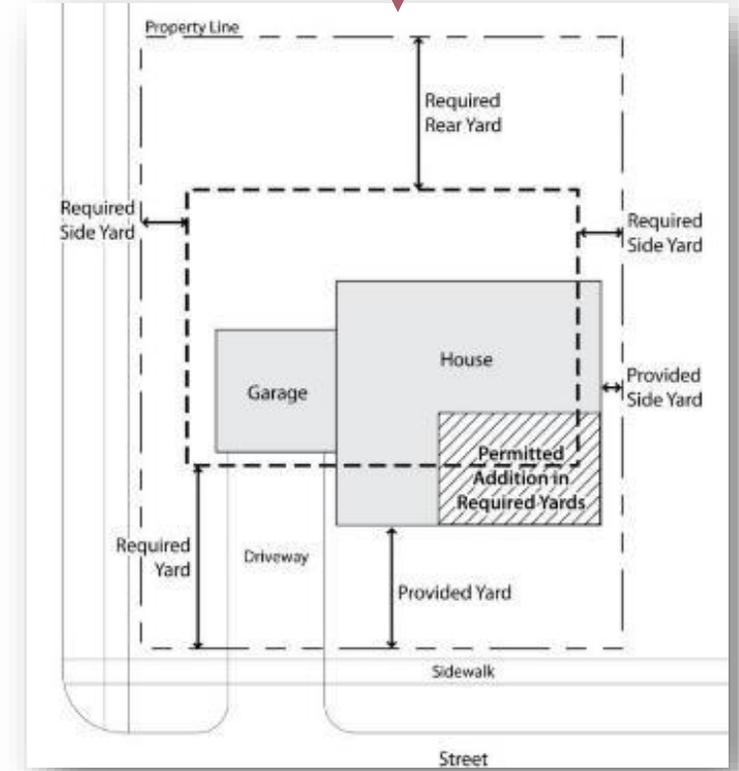


Individual Land Use Diagrams

Article 4: Bulk Regulations

- Bulk dimensions summary table
- Unique situations:
 - Exceptions
 - Yard setback adjustments
 - Projections into required yards

Illustrative Diagrams



Sections 114.04.11 Table of Bulk Dimensions – Residential Zoning Districts

	SR-1	SR-2	MR-1	MR-2	MH
	<i>Single Family Residential</i>	<i>Single Family Residential</i>	<i>Mixed Residential</i>	<i>Mixed Residential</i>	<i>Mobile Home Residential</i>
Density and Intensity Limits					
Maximum Impervious Surface Percentage	60%	70%	70%	70%	70%
Lot Requirements					
Minimum Lot Area (1)	8,000 sq ft	5,000 sq ft	5,000 sq ft or 3,000 sq ft (1)	5,000 sq ft or 3,000 sq ft (1)	5,000 sq ft
Minimum Lot Width (at front setback line) (1)	60 ft	50 ft	50 ft or 25 ft (1)	50 ft or 25 ft (1)	50 ft
Minimum Lot Frontage at Right-of-Way	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft
Principal Building Setbacks					
Minimum Front Yard and Street Side Corner Setback	20 ft	15 ft	20 ft	20 ft	20 ft

Bulk Dimensions Summary Table

Article 5: Nonconforming Situations

- **What is a nonconforming situation?**
 - Anything that does not meet the regulations within the Zoning Ordinance, but was built, established, etc. prior to the regulations going into effect (aka: “grandfathered”)
 - This can include:
 - Existing **land uses** not permitted in the property’s zoning district
 - Existing **parcel configurations** that do not meet minimum requirements
 - Existing **structures** and other site improvements that do not meet minimum sizes or setbacks

Policy Questions Articles 1-5

1. Residential Zoning District Mix
2. BP, LI, & HI Zoning District Mix
3. Downtown Residential
4. Group Developments
5. Historic Preservation
6. Data Centers
7. Accessory Dwelling Units
8. Accessory Land Use Administration
9. Industrial Building Height
10. Porch Setbacks

Policy questions identified by Staff and V&A during drafting of Part 1.

Use provided worksheet as a guide, for your notes...

- Each Policy Discussion Asks:**
- **Keep the proposed approach**
 - **Remove proposed approach**
 - **Modify the approach**

1. Residential Zoning District Mix

- Draft Zoning Code establishes definitions and regulations for all residential land uses:
 - (2) Single-Family Districts
 - (2) Multifamily Districts
 - Mobile Home District
- Bulk and dimensional standards such as lot size are minimums, not maximums.
- Modest baseline provides flexibility allows larger lots or lower-intensity development without requiring it.
- Limited number of existing large lots reduces risk of significant neighborhood character changes.

Should we...?

- **Keep the proposed approach**
- **Remove proposed approach**
- **Modify the approach**



2. Business & Industrial Zoning District Mix

Three industrial districts proposed to provide a range of development options

- BP (Business Park)
- LI (Light Industrial)
- HI (Heavy Industrial)

Business Park

- Modern employment, office, and light industrial uses
- Campus-style setting with enclosed operations
- Limits intensive outdoor/disruptive activities for compatibility and design quality

Light Industrial

- Middle ground between Business Park and Heavy Industrial
- Greater operational flexibility while remaining less intensive than Heavy Industrial

Heavy Industrial

- Not currently mapped in city, reserved for intense uses

Should we...?

- Keep the proposed approach
- Remove proposed approach
- Modify the approach



3. Downtown Residential

New DMU zoning district for downtown areas

Ground-floor use restrictions

- No residential on parcels facing Ludington St. or E. James St.
- Protects core downtown and reserves ground floors for active commercial uses

Other areas

- Ground-floor residential allowed outside the core



Should we...?

- Keep the proposed approach
- Remove proposed approach
- Modify the approach

4. Group Development

Existing Code

- CUP required in multiple situations, creating complexity

Proposed Approach

- Group Developments apply **only when there is more than one building per lot**
- Exempts single-family, corridor mixed-use and downtown

CUP Standards

- Additional standards apply when required
- Buildings must be designed to be divisible in the future (*e.g., comply with setback requirements*)

Does not apply to multiple Land Uses

- More than one principal land use allowed if:
 - Permitted or Conditional in the district
 - Standards are met
 - CUP obtained if required



Should we...?

- Keep the proposed approach
- Remove proposed approach
- Modify the approach

5. Historic Preservation

Downtown or general HP Overlay:

- Still evaluating whether this is needed

Historic Preservation Administration:

- Potentially include as a separate article in the zoning code
- Potentially move and update existing HPC provisions from Division 9 to a separate part of the municipal code

Comments on
direction, potential
approach?



6. Data Centers

Zoning Approach

- Existing zoning does not address hyperscale data centers
- New land use definition with standards to evaluate impacts

Hyperscale Data Centers

- Limited to IOA, Intensive Outdoor Activity District
- Typically require rezoning + CUP

Minor Data Centers

- < 20,000 SF and < 5 MW
- Treated as light industrial
- Permitted where light industrial uses are allowed



Should we...?

- Keep the proposed approach
- Remove proposed approach
- Modify the approach

7. Accessory Dwelling Units

Existing Code

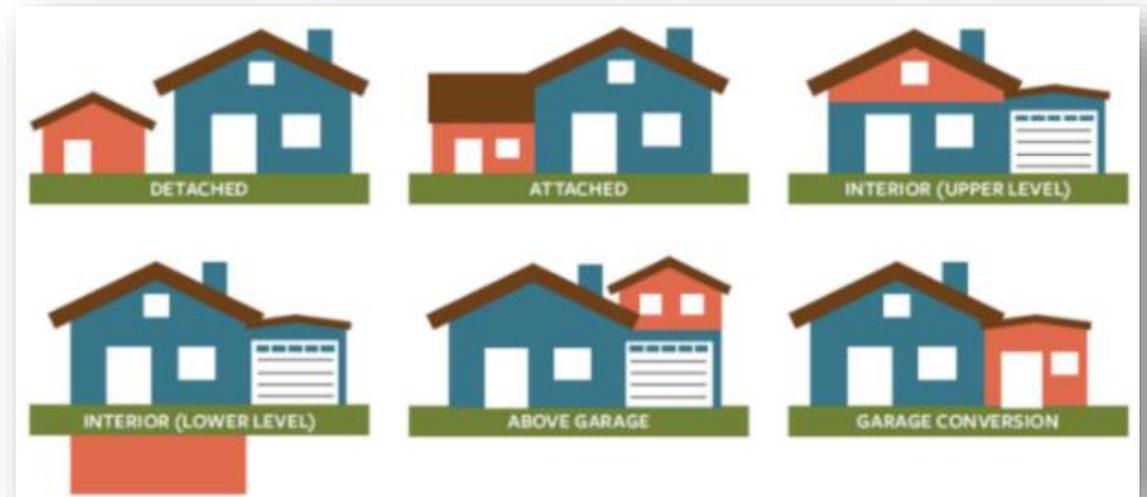
- Not permitted

Draft Code Approach

- Permitted use in residential zoning districts
- Distinct from In-Family Suites, which are internal to an existing dwelling

Key ADU Standards

- Maximum 1 ADU per lot, limited to one family
- Detached ADUs must be in rear/side yard, meet setbacks, with walkway/driveway
- ADU cannot be sold separately and must not exceed 800 sf



Should we...?

- Keep the proposed approach
- Remove proposed approach
- Modify the approach

8. Accessory Land Use Administration

Accessory Beekeeping (new)

- Not currently listed
- Allow? Require Permit?

Residential Chickens

- Existing rules remain - max 8 chickens, license required
- Reference Section 14-19 in Zoning Code

Short-Term Rentals

- New regulations for management, parking, appearance, neighborhood impacts, signage
- Local license?

Home Occupations

- Allowed in principal or accessory dwelling without altering residential character
- Standards cover hours, parking, exterior appearance, intensity of business
- Existing code treats as Conditional Use; draft proposes permitted use with more detailed standards
- Require Permit?

Should we...?

- Keep the proposed approach
- Remove proposed approach
- Modify the approach



9. Industrial Building Height

Proposed Height Limits

- Standard maximum: 60 feet
- Up to 130 feet allowed if:
 - Portion exceeding is set back 75% of its height from all property lines

Purpose

- Accommodate evolving industrial needs and technologies

Alternative

- Heights could be reduced to 90-100 feet and still meet most needs



Should we...?

- Keep the proposed approach
- Remove proposed approach
- Modify the approach

10. Porch Setbacks

Proposed Approach

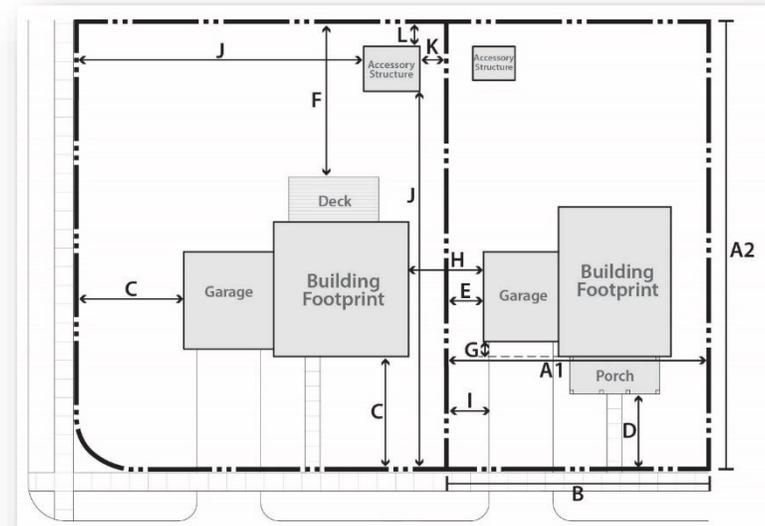
- Unenclosed porches may intrude into the front yard beyond the principal house setback
 - Example: SF-1 District
 - House setback: 20 ft
 - Porch allowed: as close as 10 ft to property line
- Porches cannot be enclosed, heated, or used as livable space

Intent & Benefits

- Provides design flexibility for homes
- Supports neighborhood patterns encouraging outdoor activity
- Creates comfortable transitions from home to sidewalk, enhancing neighbor interaction and street presence

Should we...?

- Keep the proposed approach
- Remove proposed approach
- Modify the approach



Next Steps and Other Questions

Next Steps

- Future Plan Commission Working Meetings:
 - Sign Ordinance, Parking Tables
 - Zoning Map
 - Part 2

Based on your review of the Draft Part 1 Zoning Code, is there anything else you'd like to discuss?