

**City of Columbus Zoning Code Rewrite
Draft Part 1 Review Meeting 02.12.26**

Content Included in Part One of the Draft Zoning Code

Part 1 of the draft Zoning Code establishes the City’s new zoning districts, land use regulations, bulk and dimensional standards, and regulations governing nonconforming situations. The initial draft Part 1 has been completed, has undergone preliminary staff review, and is now being presented to the Plan Commission for review and feedback.

To facilitate an efficient discussion, this memo identifies ten high-level policy topics for Plan Commission consideration related to the overall approach. City Staff and Vandewalle & Associates Staff are available to provide additional clarification or to address other topics the Plan Commission may wish to discuss beyond these key issues.

This draft is grounded in concepts previously reviewed by the Plan Commission. In particular, it reflects the proposed zoning districts, permitted and conditional land use framework, and the bulk dimensional standards that were presented in table format at the November 13 Plan Commission meeting. Following that meeting, consultant staff prepared the full draft of Part 1 and conducted an iterative review process with City staff, resulting in refinements and updates based on those discussions.

Part One Discussion Topics

1. Residential Zoning District Mix Bulk Dimensions (Pg. 103)

The draft Zoning Code includes new definitions and regulations for each residential land use, including two single-family districts, two multifamily residential districts, and a mobile home district. The bulk and dimensional standards established in the code, such as lot sizes, represent minimum requirements. Allowing smaller lots allows for a more efficient land use pattern and more affordable development, while enabling larger lots but not requiring it. The two single family districts proposed have minimum lot sizes of 5,000 sf and 8,000 sf. Some existing lots that are 16,000 sf or larger, and have at least 120 feet of lot frontage, could theoretically be subdivided to add new lots in existing neighborhoods.

Please circle your opinion on the proposed approach:

Keep Approach

Remove Approach

Need to Modify Approach

Comments: _____

2. Business Park (BP), Light Industrial (LI), Heavy Industrial (HI) Zoning District Mix (Pg. 34-41)

Three districts are proposed to provide a range of business and industrial development options. The Business Park district is a new zoning category intended to accommodate modern employment, office, and light industrial uses in a high-quality, campus-style setting, emphasizing

enclosed operations and limiting intensive outdoor or disruptive activities to ensure compatibility and attractive design. The Light Industrial district serves as a middle ground, allowing greater operational flexibility than Business Park while remaining less intensive than Heavy Industrial development.

Please circle your opinion on the proposed approach:

Keep Approach

Remove Approach

Need to Modify Approach

Comments: _____

3. Downtown Residential (Pg. 34-41, 50)

Downtown is intended to use a new zoning district called DMU (Downtown Mixed Use). No ground-floor residential is allowed in this district on any parcel that faces Ludington St. or E. James St., thereby protecting the core downtown from encroachment of residential uses and reserving the ground floors for active commercial uses. In other areas not defined as this core downtown, residential may be established on the ground floor.

Please circle your opinion on the proposed approach:

Keep Approach

Remove Approach

Need to Modify Approach

Comments: _____

4. Group Development (Pg. 27)

The proposed code simplifies approaches to Group Developments, defined as more than one principal building per lot. Multiple principal buildings are allowed in the multi-family, business, and industrial districts, but not in the single-family, corridor mixed-use, and downtown districts. In such cases a Group Development CUP is required, and additional standards apply to ensure buildings can be divided in the future and to clarify issues like access and utility service.

Please circle your opinion on the proposed approach:

Keep Approach

Remove Approach

Need to Modify Approach

Comments: _____

5. Historic Preservation (Pg. 14)

The existing Zoning Code contains detail on how a Historic Preservation Commission would be comprised and how they would review and consider certificates of appropriateness for locally designated historic landmark properties. Vandewalle & Associates is continuing to review this issue with Staff to determine whether this information should live in the zoning code or not. Some codes include a historic preservation overlay, which would typically provide design standards for areas such as historic downtowns. It is not clear yet whether a historic preservation overlay district is necessary. Comments:

6. Data Center (Pg. 62, 32)

The existing zoning code (like most peer zoning codes) does not adequately address regulations for the emerging land use of hyperscale data centers. The proposed approach creates a land use definition with built-in regulations designed to ensure the City receives sufficient information to evaluate potential impacts associated with these facilities. Additionally, the proposed framework allows such land uses to only be considered the IOA (Intensive Outdoor Activity) zoning district. In most cases, a project would first need to secure a rezoning (subject to legislative discretion and Comp Plan consistency review by the City) and then obtain a CUP. Notably, a land use distinction is created for minor data centers (less than 20,000 sf in size and less than 5MW of energy use). These minor data centers are treated as light industrial land uses and are permitted in zoning districts where light industrial land uses are allowed.

Please circle your opinion on the proposed approach:

Keep Approach

Remove Approach

Need to Modify Approach

Comments: _____

7. Accessory Dwelling Units (Pg. 35, 80)

The existing code does not explicitly allow ADUs. The draft code allows ADUs as permitted use in residential zoning districts. ADUs are a separate accessory dwelling located on the same lot as a principal residential unit, either in the same building or in a detached building. This is different than In-Family suites, which are located inside an existing dwelling and intended for the family (this accommodates things like a finished basement suite). The draft ADU regulations include:

- a. A maximum of one ADU per lot that's limited to one family

- b. An ADU within a detached structure can only be located in the rear or side yard, must meet accessory building setbacks, and must have a paved walkway or driveway connection to it from the street.
- c. An ADU may not be sold separately from the principal dwelling unit on the lot and must not exceed 8000 sf.

Please circle your opinion on the proposed approach:

Keep Approach Proposed Approach Need to Modify Approach

Comments: _____

8. Accessory Land Uses & Administration

- a. Residential/Accessory Beekeeping (pg. 35-36, 91):
 This land use is not currently accommodated in the zoning code. Do you want to allow this use as described? If yes, do you want to require a permit for it?

Please circle your opinion on the proposed approach:

Keep Approach Remove Approach Need to Modify Approach

- b. Residential Chickens (pg. 35-36,91):
 Columbus currently allows chickens and regulates them in Section 14-19 of the municipal code. This limits properties to having 8 chickens max, requires a license, and has other regulations like setbacks of the coop from residential structures. We intend to keep Section 14-19 and refer to it in the Zoning Code rather than create duplicative or conflicting standards.

Please circle your opinion on the proposed approach:

Keep Approach Remove Approach Need to Modify Approach

- c. Short Term Rentals (pg. 35-36,94):
 The draft Zoning Code proposes detailed regulations for Short-Term Residential Rentals (ie. Airbnb and VRBO). These regulations establish standards for property management, parking requirements, site appearance, neighborhood impacts, and outdoor advertising signs. Additionally, the draft Zoning Code proposes a license for these uses that would give the City a tool to enforce these standards and track where Short Term Rentals are located.

Please circle your opinion on the proposed approach:

Keep Approach

Remove Approach

Need to Modify Approach

d. Home Occupation (pg. 86):

The draft Zoning Code allows Home Occupations to occur within any principal or accessory residential dwelling unit, so long as it doesn't alter the residential character of the structure and lot. This land use has a set of standards to address potential impacts on neighboring properties and to limit these uses to small operations. It addresses hours of occupation, parking, exterior appearance, and intensity of business that is allowed. Existing code Section 114-106 deals with Home Occupations. Both versions have the same intent but this adds some detail on things like number of clients, hours of operation, parking of contractor trucks, and specific uses that are **not** allowed as home occupations. Existing code treats these as a conditional use in all districts. Draft recommends permitted use with no additional license program.

Please circle your opinion on the proposed approach:

Keep Approach

Remove Approach

Need to Modify Approach

Comments (regarding any of the land uses in Section 8):

9. Industrial Building Height (Pg. 68, for example)

The proposed code limits industrial building heights to 60 feet. However, an allowance is made in the industrial land use definitions to permit a taller building height of up to 130 feet if the portion of the building exceeding the standard height maximum is setback from all property lines a minimum distance of 75% of its height. This is proposed to accommodate changing manufacturing needs (e.g. large equipment manufacturing) and building technologies (e.g. indoor cranes). This could be reduced to 90-100 feet and still likely cover many potential uses.

Please circle your opinion on the proposed approach:

Keep Approach

Remove Approach

Need to Modify Approach

Comments: _____

10. Porch Setbacks (Pg. 45, 103, for example)

The proposed code allows unenclosed porches to intrude into the front yard and street side yard, beyond the setback of the principal house. In the SF-1 district for example, the front yard setback for the house is 20 feet, while porches may be located as close as 10 feet to the front property line. Porches may not be enclosed, heated, or used as livable space (see definition of Porch). Allowing porches to be located closer to the street provides flexibility in home design and supports neighborhood patterns that encourage outdoor activity and informal interaction. Front porches create a comfortable transition between the home and the public sidewalk, making it easier for residents to spend time outdoors, engage with neighbors, and maintain visual presence on the street.

Please circle your opinion on the proposed approach:

Keep Approach

Remove Approach

Need to Modify Approach

Comments: _____
