

**City of Columbus Zoning Code Rewrite
Project Update Meeting – Council and Plan Commission
May 19, 2026**

Process

Public Meetings/Key Discussions	Timing
Plan Commission #1: PC & Common Council Kick Off Meeting	August 6, 2025
Public Workshop	September 17, 2025
Online Survey	September 15-30, 2025
Plan Commission #2: Evaluation Memo Review	October 9, 2025
Plan Commission #3: Bulk Dimensional Standards and Land Use Tables Review (Art. 2, 3, 4)	November 13, 2025
Plan Commission #4: Full Part 1 (Art. 1-5) & Definitions (Art.11)	February 12, 2026
Plan Commission #5: Parking Standards Review (Art. 6)	March 12, 2026
Stakeholder/Focus Group Listening Session	April 29, 2026
Plan Commission #6: Historic Preservation, Signage (Art. 2, 7, 9)	May 14, 2026
Future – Zoning Map	
Future – Remaining Part 2	
Future – Subdivision Code	
Future – Council and Plan Commission full draft review	
Future – Plan Commission Recommendation	
Future – Council Adoption	

Project Goals

- Implement the Comprehensive Plan
- Modernize ordinance and its regulations
- Improve user-friendliness, flexibility, and predictability
- Simplify and consolidate zoning districts
- Expand housing opportunities
- Allow gentle increases in residential density
- Improve walkability and non-motorized transportation
- Revise the conditional use permit process
- Improve site and building design standards
- Update the historic preservation ordinance
- Develop a new zoning map

Outcomes of Meetings/Discussions

August 6, 2025: Plan Commission and City Council Kick Off Meeting

This meeting provided information about the process and gathered input on key issues and priorities. A summary of that discussion is provided below:

- Residential neighborhoods in the past have required many Planned Unit Development elements to enable the development to take place and those should be instead built into the new code.
- Zoning amendments in the past have taken a considerable amount of time and the new code should reflect the statutory requirements for the process to be streamlined.
- Vet whether the existing code a barrier to new development. The City has needed to take it upon themselves to generate new housing over the past several years because the market was not providing it. Seeking input from developers through this process could help identify barriers. Cutting out red tape from the new code could be one solution to make Columbus more attractive to developers.
- Reducing parking could be one method of reducing costs for new development, especially for infill and redevelopment projects that the City wants to see happen.
- Impact fees need to be evaluated because there are obvious benefits to having them, but its often one way that the community can reduce costs for new development.
- Need to explore the right impervious surface ratios because the community has lots of wetlands, floodplain, and low-lying areas, but wants to enable new development opportunities.
- Duplexes are treated as condominiums today within the code and require HOAs and CUPs. Addressing this issue within the existing residential zoning districts is needed.
- Examples of good development: Red Bud Trail, Highland Ridge, Meadow Lane, and the Golf Course neighborhoods.

September 17, 2025: Public Workshop

A public workshop was held at the Community Center Building in Columbus.

Approximately 15 people were in attendance and provided feedback on key issues and opportunities to be addressed within the ordinance rewrite.

September 15-30, 2025: Online Survey

An online survey was provided to gather the same input for those unable to attend the in-person event. A total of 60 online survey responses were collected.

October 9, 2025: Evaluation and Audit Memo Findings

Overarching issues to be addressed during the rewrite:

1. Address housing barriers and bulk dimensional standards
2. Increase user-friendliness and improve consistency of the code
3. Allow a mix of uses and promote infill and redevelopment
4. Determine appropriate exterior design and landscaping standards
5. Update and standardize performance standards
6. Address parking requirements
7. Make the zoning and subdivision ordinance compliant with state and federal law changes
8. Update definitions for increased clarity and consistency
9. Modernizing the subdivision code
10. Determine the best-fit impervious surface approach

November 13, 2025: Bulk Dimensional Standards and Land Uses

Draft Bulk Dimensions were provided for Plan Commission review and discussion.

Discussion topics included:

- Reduced setbacks and lot sizes
- Simplify Standards
- Increasing Height
- Residential Accessory Structures
- Add Setback-Related Design Considerations (Porches & Garages)
- Reduce CUP Reliance for Bulk Dimension Flexibility

Draft New Land Uses were provided for Plan Commission to review and discuss.

Discussion topics included:

- Land Use Definitions
- High Intensity Zoning District
- Mixed Use
- Accessory Land Uses

Other feedback included:

- Moderate design guidelines for downtown and the business park, avoiding overly regulatory requirements and potentially intimidating design review boards.
- Further discussion on development near Park Ave/Hwy 73 and the 151 interchange.
- Test and evaluate single-family lot size and lot width standards to ensure reasonable lot splits and redevelopment options.
- Review accessory building standards, including height and possible story limits to maintain neighborhood scale.
- Continue reviewing permitted and conditional uses in zoning tables.

- Discuss implementation and minimum size standards for accessory dwelling units (ADUs).
- Emphasize balance in the new draft code, ensuring flexibility while maintaining appropriate development standards.

February 12, 2026: Full Draft Part 1

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, undergone staff review, and was presented and discussed by the Plan Commission. Key themes of Part 1 were also reviewed with the Focus Group.

- Article 1: Introduction
 - New code purpose, rules of interpretation, and general provisions
- Article 2: Establishment of Zoning Districts
 - New base districts, modified Planned Unit Development district, and retention of existing Overlay Districts
- Article 3: Land Use Regulations
 - Updated land use definitions with new example diagrams and regulations
- Article 4: Bulk Regulations
 - New bulk dimensional standards and unique situation provisions
- Article 5: Nonconforming Situations
 - New nonconforming approach for structures, lots, and sites

To facilitate an efficient discussion, Plan Commissioners focused their Part 1 discussion around 10 key policy issues.

Part One Discussion Topics

1. Residential Zoning District Mix Bulk Dimensions

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. We are not retaining a larger lot size – in theory, some existing lots that are 16,000 sf or larger, and have at least 120 feet of lot frontage, could be subdivided to add new lots in existing neighborhoods. Such lots are few and far between. *PC approved approach.*

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. *We are keeping LI and HI for now and will continue to review whether BP is needed. PC approved approach.*

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. *PC approved approach.*

4. Group Development (Pg. 27)

The proposed code simplifies approaches to Group Developments, defined as more than one principal building per lot. The proposed approach is as follows. 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. *PC approved approach.*

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. *Historic preservation will be further discussed at the May 14 PC meeting.*

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. *PC approved approach.*

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.

PC approved approach.

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? PC approved 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.

PC approved 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.

PC approved 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. PC approved approach.

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. *PC approved approach.*

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. *PC approved approach.*

March 12, 2026: Plan Commission Parking Standards Review

The Plan Commission supported a general reduction in required parking minimums (less parking stalls required). This was supported by examples that shows the current minimums are not “right-sized” to the way most developments actually occur, and the high amount of parking required does not appear to be warranted.

- Residential Parking: proposed 1.5 per studio apartment, and 2 per any other unit. Removal of garage requirement. No maximum limit.
- Commercial: proposed 1 per 5 seats or 1 per 500 sf of space. Industrial 1 per employee on largest shift. Maximum 1.5 times the requirement.
- Downtown: no minimum (same as current code).
- Bicycle parking: 0.25 per multi-family unit. Commercial flat amount of 4 per use.