

City of Columbus Zoning/Subdivision Code Rewrite

Project Kickoff Meeting 8.6.25

Introduction

The City of Columbus is beginning the process of rewriting its Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance. This could be the City's first full rewrite of the ordinance since 1977. The goals of the project are to:

- Increase user-friendliness, improve clarity, and correct errors
- Match zoning standards to fit existing development, especially in older areas of the community
- Address housing challenges and provide greater flexibility/opportunity
- Reduce the reliance on Conditional Use Permits
- Address state and federal law changes
- Establish standards that encourage high-quality development and promote mixed-use opportunities

City staff and members of Vandewalle & Associates have met several times to discuss the upfront steps associated with this project. Today is the first of several working sessions to review and discuss different elements of the ordinance rewrite process. The focus of today's discussion will be on existing issues, challenges, and ideas to be included within the new ordinance. To note, the Plan Commission will be leading this effort and will oversee the development of the new ordinance. However, the City Council is encouraged to attend those discussions and provide input and will additionally receive regular updates from City staff on project progress and be directly involved in several steps in the process.

Proposed Project Schedule

| Task | Timing |
|---|-----------------|
| Staff Kickoff Meetings | June-July |
| PC/CC Project Kickoff Meeting | TODAY |
| Public Workshop | September 17 |
| Online Survey | September 15-30 |
| Complete Audit Memo | September |
| PC Audit Memo Review Meeting | October 9 |
| Complete Draft Zoning Districts | October |
| Complete Draft Land Uses and Bulk Dimensions | October |
| Stakeholder Meetings | October |
| PC Draft Zoning District, Land Uses, and Bulk Dimensions Review Meeting | November |
| Completed Draft Part 1 | December |
| PC/CC Draft Part 1 Review Meetings + Policy Questions | January |
| Completed Draft Part 2 and Zoning Map | Winter 2026 |
| Completed Draft Subdivision Code | Winter 2026 |
| PC/CC Draft Part 2 and Zoning Map Review Meetings + Policy Questions | Spring 2026 |
| PC Subdivision Code Review Meetings | Spring 2026 |
| Adoption Process | Summer 2026 |

Total:

- Plan Commission Working Sessions = 8
- City Council Working Sessions = 3

Existing Zoning Map Analysis

One of the first steps in the process was running an analysis on existing land uses and conformity with existing residential lot sizes. See attached map.

This analysis shows nonconforming lots exist throughout the community and are concentrated within the older parts of the community. This means that some of the new code's minimum lots sizes and related setback requirements need to be reduced to fit several areas of existing development patterns.

| Residential Zoning District | Single-Family Min. Lot Size | Two-Family Min. Lot Size | Multi-Family Min. Lot Size |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| RD | 87,120 sf | | |
| R-1 | 12,150 sf | | |
| R-2 | 9,000 sf | 12,000 sf | |
| R-3 | 7,000 sf | 12,000 sf | |
| R-4 | 7,000 sf | 12,000 sf | 15,000 sf |
| R-5* | 87,120 sf | | |

* Min. Lot Size is 5,000 sf, but minimum total mobile home park size is two acres.

Discussion Items

1. What's working well with the existing ordinance?
 - Are there example developments that you can point to within the community that you like or that you think were done well?
 - Have there been any recent development projects where you thought that the existing approval process worked well and you were happy with the resulting project?
2. What's not working well and needs to be addressed through this process? Example could include:
 - Obstacles to new housing development and density
 - Barriers to infill, redevelopment, and mixed-use projects
 - Poor building and site design along commercial corridors and in the downtown
 - Consistent need for variances to address similar code requirements
 - Excessive parking requirements or vehicle-only focused development patterns
 - Long and drawn-out processes and procedures
3. Do you have any ideas of potential solutions that could be employed within the new ordinance to remedy these issues? Examples could include:
 - Housing: smaller lot sizes and setbacks, zero lot lines, higher density, more opportunities for mixed residential, accessory dwelling units, missing middle housing, reduced parking standards, etc.
 - Commercial/Downtown/Industrial: allowing mixed-use development by-right, smaller lot sizes and setbacks, defined building materials, articulation, and orientation standards, access and reduced parking standards, etc.
 - Signage: federal law compliant (content-neutral), sign types that reflect modern sign development, clearer standards and procedures, staff approvals, etc.
 - Process and Predictability: reducing CUPs and making more land uses permitted by-right, staff approval vs. Plan Commission approval, metric-based standards vs. interpretations

