

Tunnell Spangler Walsh

THE CITY OF INDIANAPOLIS METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT

Preservation by Design: Making Zoning Work for Historic Places

PHP Conference

10.1.2026

Tunnell, Spangler, Walsh & Associates



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Coding Lead

City of Indianapolis

Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission



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Principal Architectural Reviewer

Results, Not Roadblocks

1. **Approach**
2. **Infill Housing**
3. **Economic Development**
4. **Assessment**

IHPC

Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission









- Historic districts
- Conservation districts

INDIANAPOLIS
METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT

IHPC

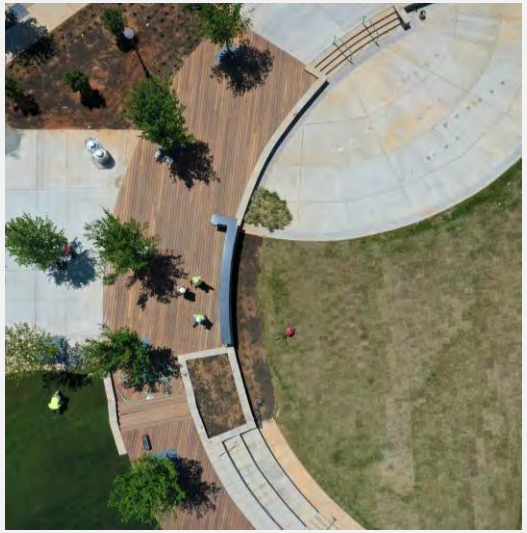
Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission





- Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA)
- Hearing Examiner for the Metropolitan Development Commission







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Planning, Architecture, Landscape Architecture

- Lexington, KY
- Atlanta, GA
- Chattanooga, TN
- Tulsa, OK

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Mission

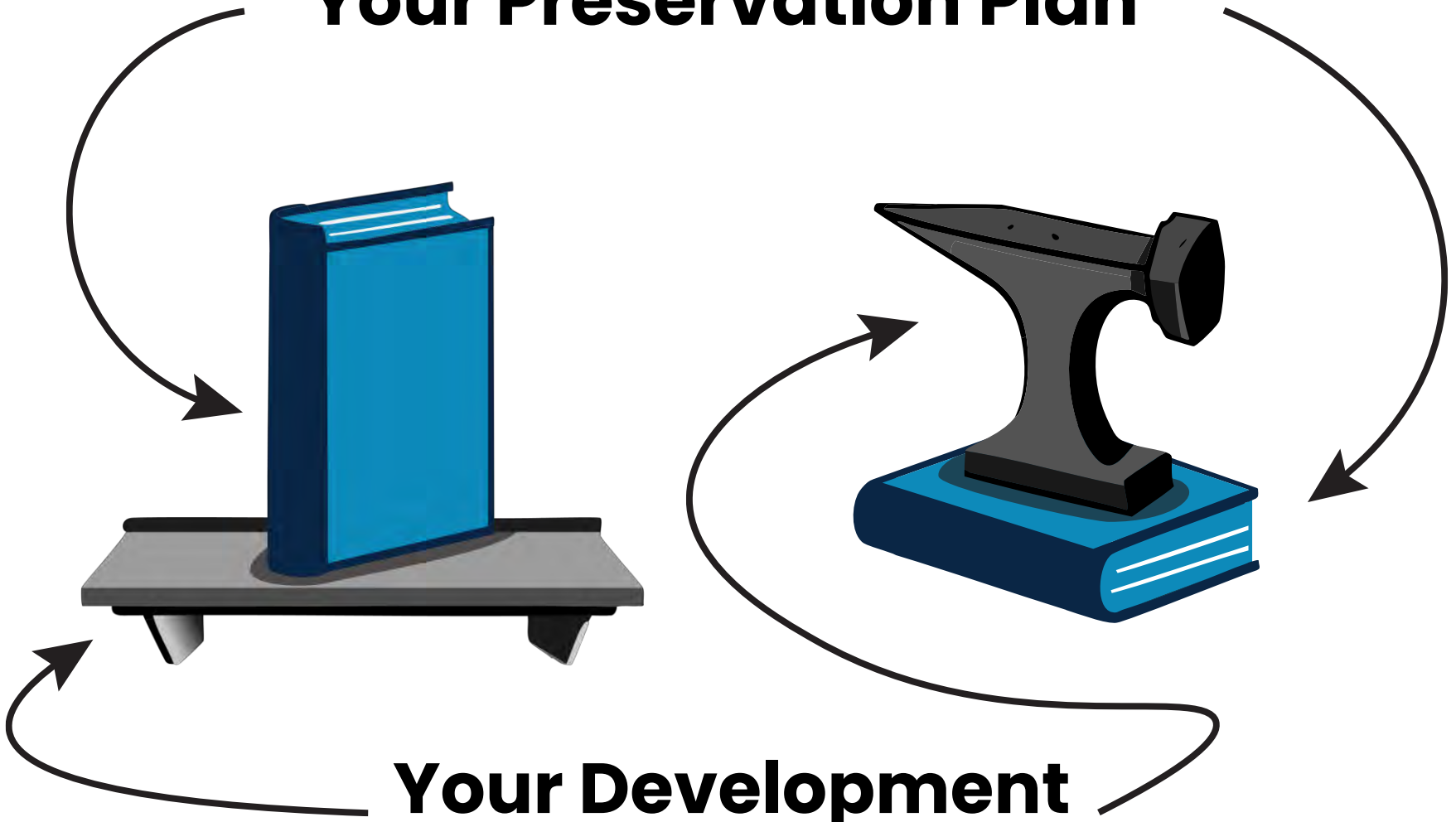
To improve lives and strengthen communities through design.

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Approach

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Walsh

Your Preservation Plan

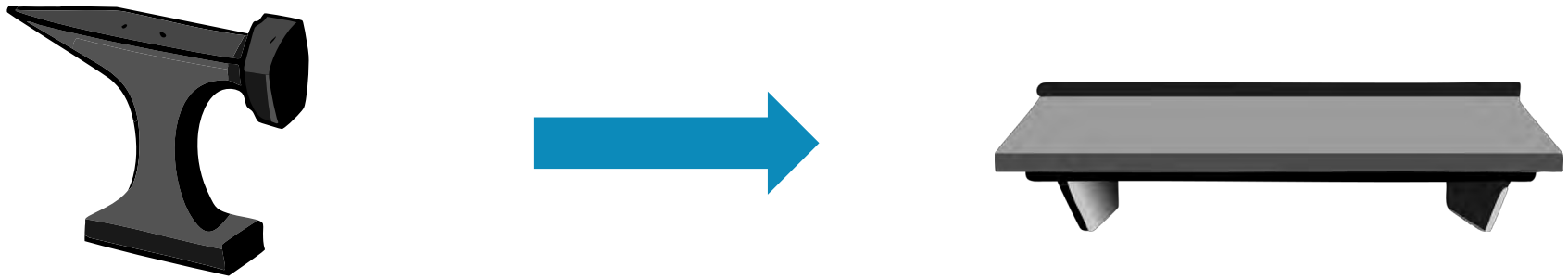


Your Development Laws?

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Approach

Change Zoning from Anvil to Shelf



- Built elsewhere
- Layered information
- Outdated definitions
- Conflicting standards
- Barriers

- Built for **you**
- Tailored for outcomes
- Intuitive organization
- Dynamic & flexible
- Helpful

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Approach

Build from your preservation plan.

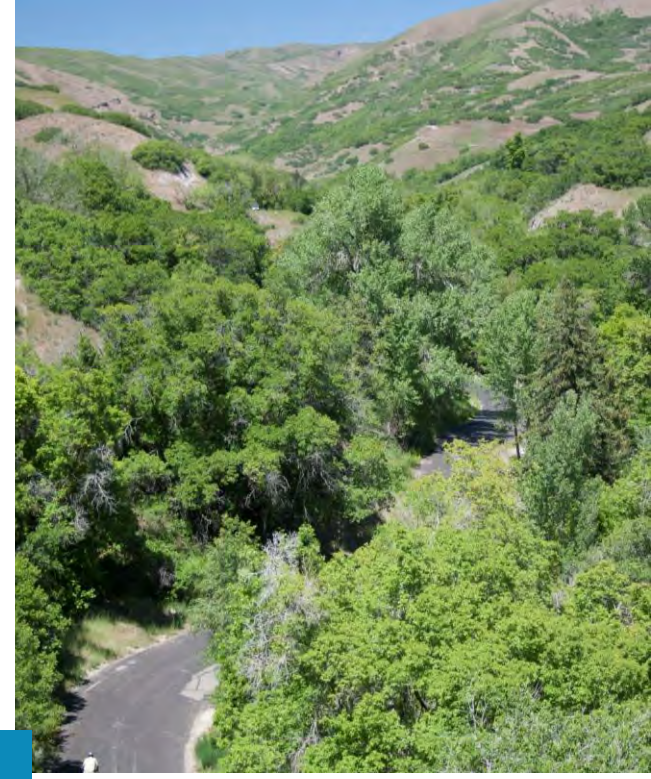


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Restricting development in sensitive areas?







Setting minimum and maximum setbacks for infill?





Supporting additions that allow business growth?





Requiring people-scaled design choices?



What if we don't have a preservation plan?

Create one. Talk to people.



(who are here today and who were here in the past)

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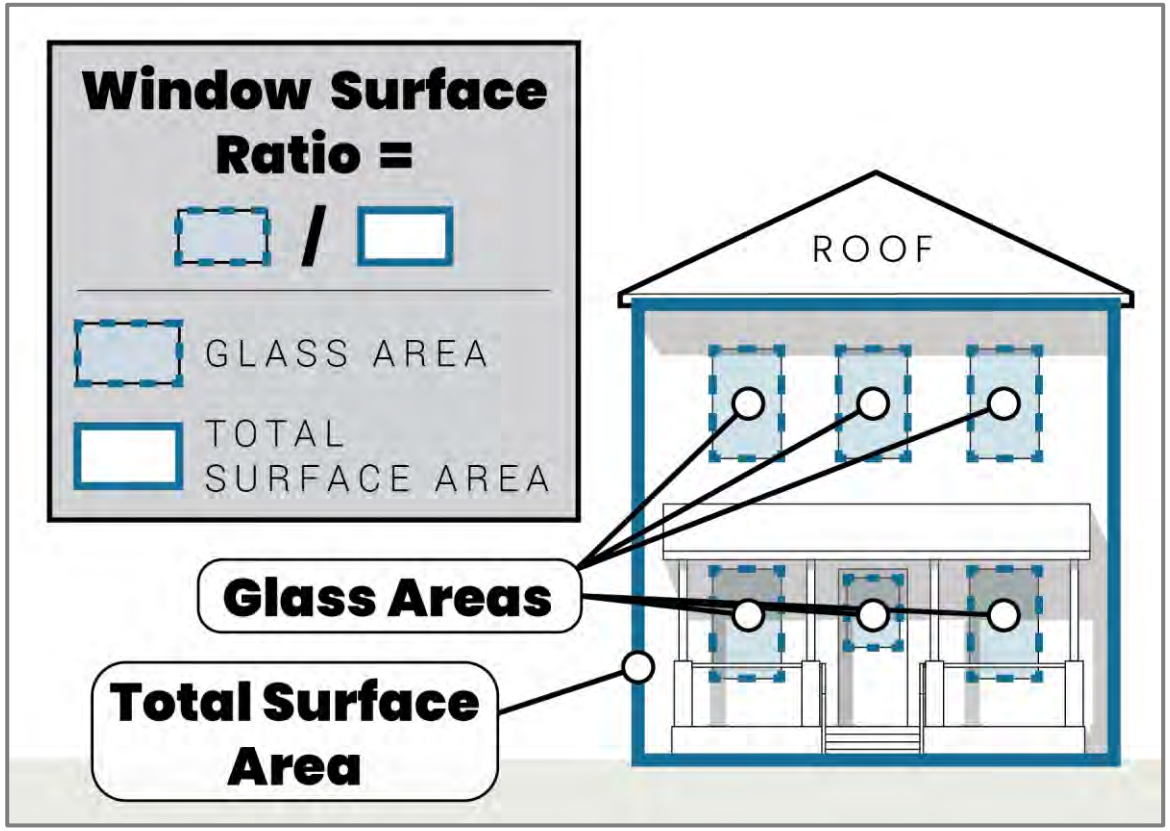
Approach

Use graphics.

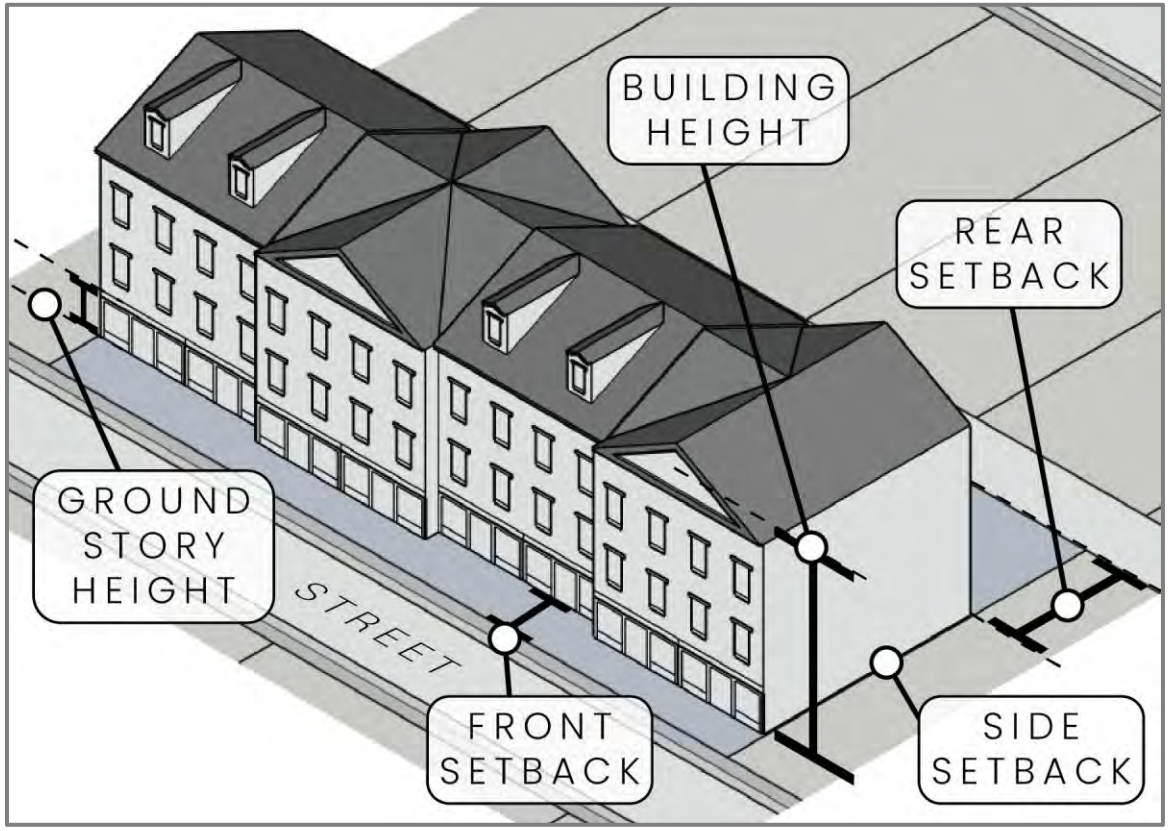


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Approach



Illustrated: **Window Surface Ratio Calculation**



Illustrated: **Building Dimensional Standards**

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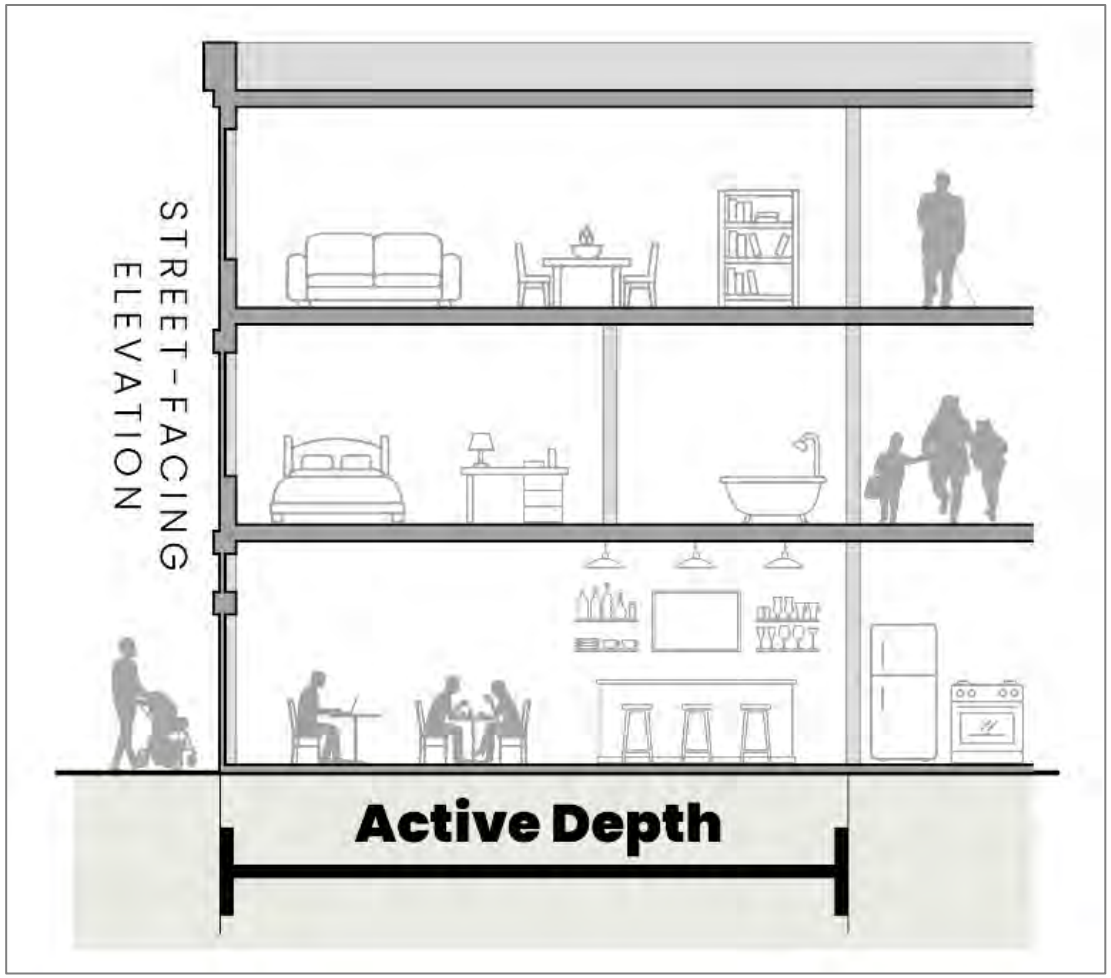
Approach

Focus on the long-term.



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Approach



(a) Retail-ready construction required. Buildings constructed for mixed-use purposes must have a ground story minimum height of 14 feet, as measured in accordance with 1103.02 (Rules of Height Measurements), for at least 80% of the ground floor area. This provision must not be construed as prohibiting the adaptive reuse of existing buildings with smaller ground-story heights for mixed-use purposes.

(b) Active depth required. An active depth area of at least 20 feet along front lot lines is required for all mixed-use buildings, subject to the following:

(1) No more than 10% of the floor area of the required active depth may be used for inactive uses such as storage, hallways, stairwells, elevators, utility rooms, and equipment rooms. This restriction does not apply to areas designated for bicycle parking.

(2) Active depth uses must be provided within buildings for the entire length of said building elevation facing a street.

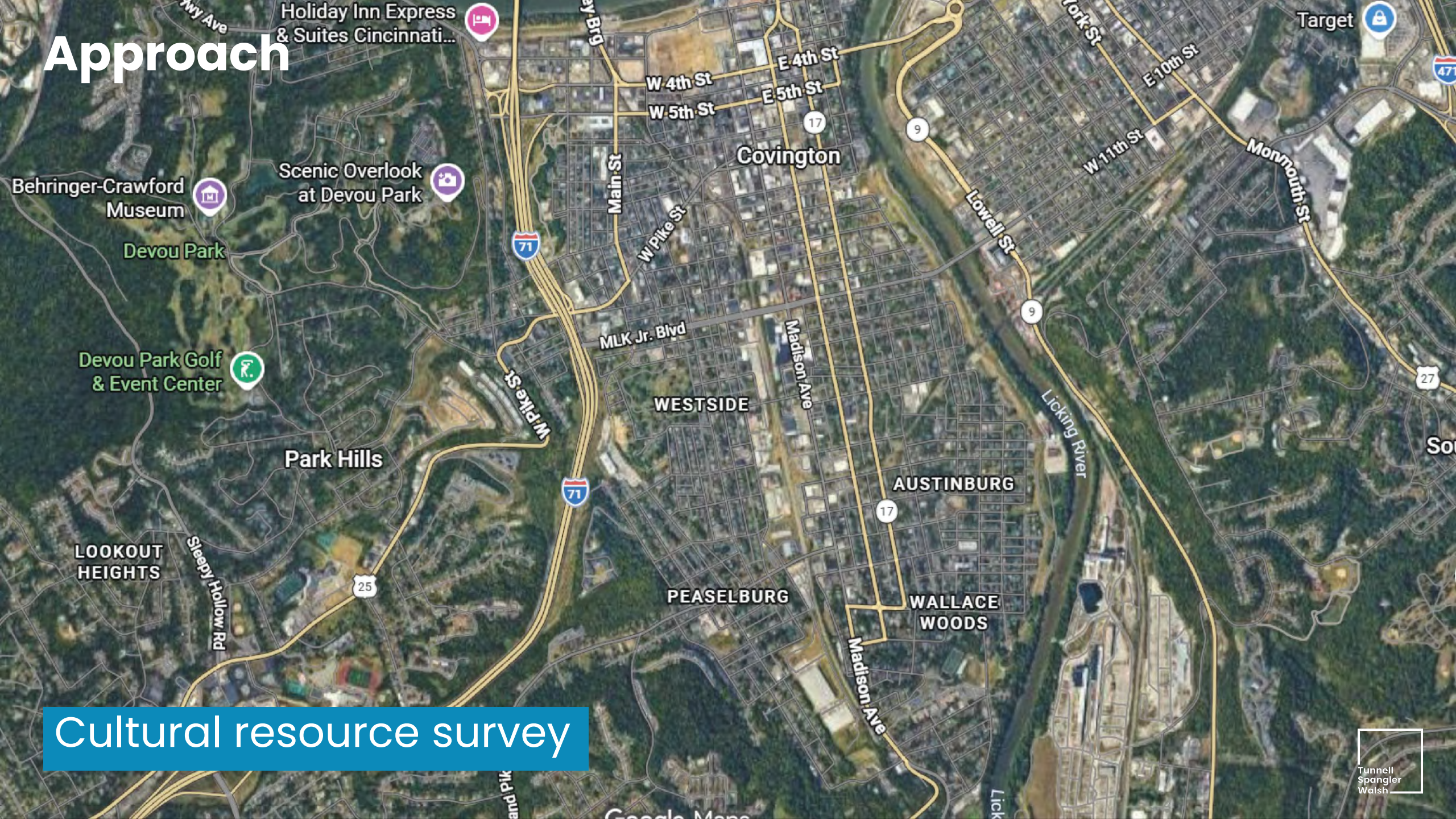
(c) Prohibited uses within active depths. No portion of an active depth area may be used for vehicular parking spaces, drive-thru service windows, or vehicular use areas.

DRAFT

Retail-ready construction | Active depths

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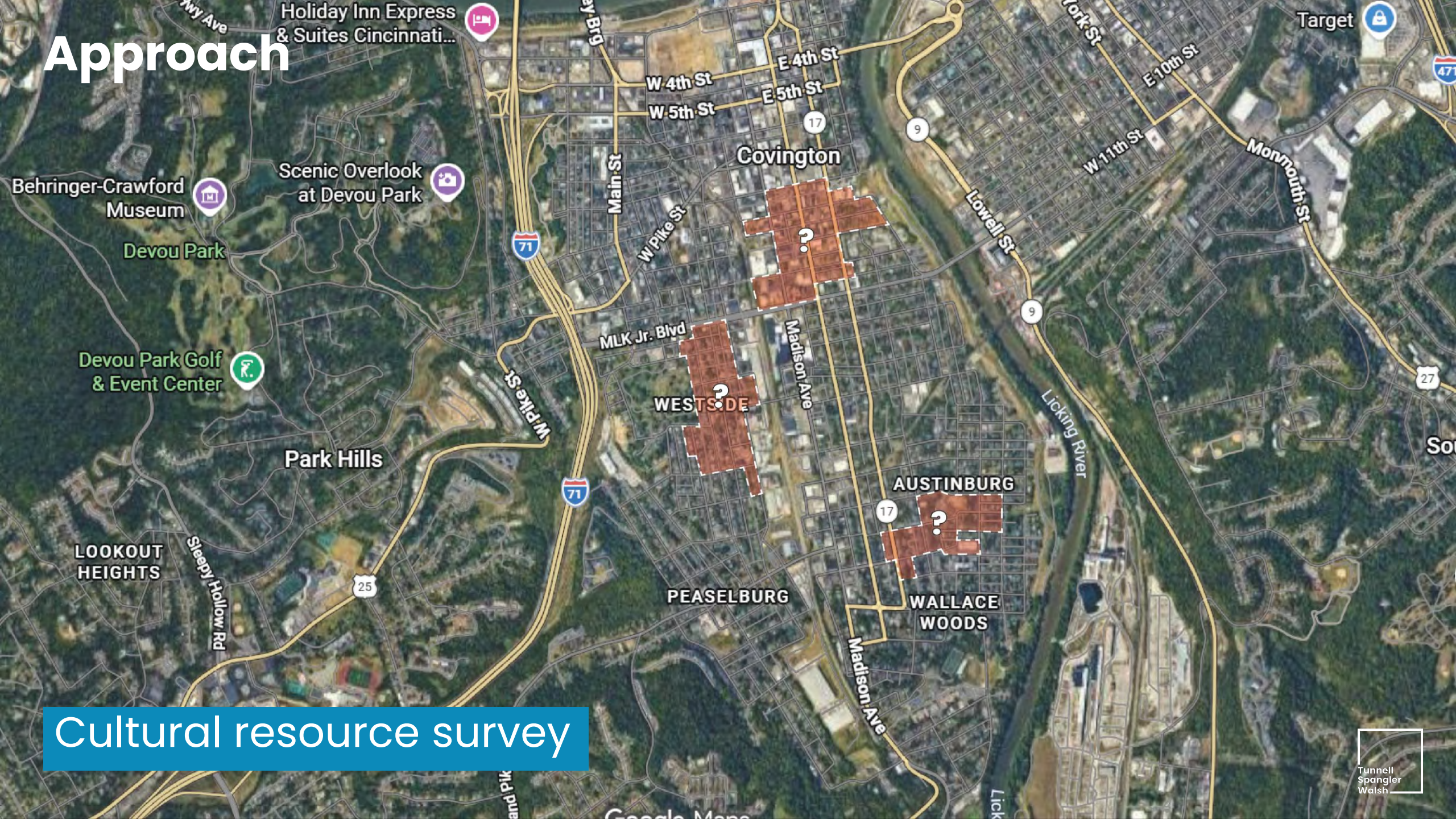
Approach



Cultural resource survey

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Approach



Cultural resource survey

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Approach

Avoid unnecessary complication.



Effective March 2, 2026

City of Indianapolis

Consolidated Zoning / Subdivision Ordinance



Sign Code Exemptions





Type | Number | Area | Height | Illumination | Location

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METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT

Approach

Best Practices Learned

- Make the right type of development easy (based on **your** preservation plan)
- Use graphics
- Focus on the long-term
- Prioritize the end-user's viewpoint to inform the organization of the code – logical, consistent, and searchable

What Works for IHPC

- Eliminate steps in land use review
- Flexibility in the standards
- No one-size-fits-all formula
- Meet neighborhoods where they are

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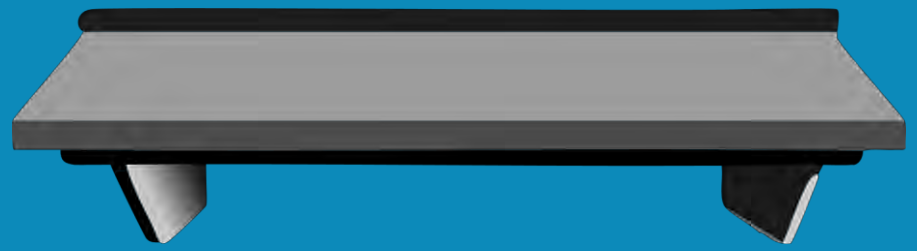
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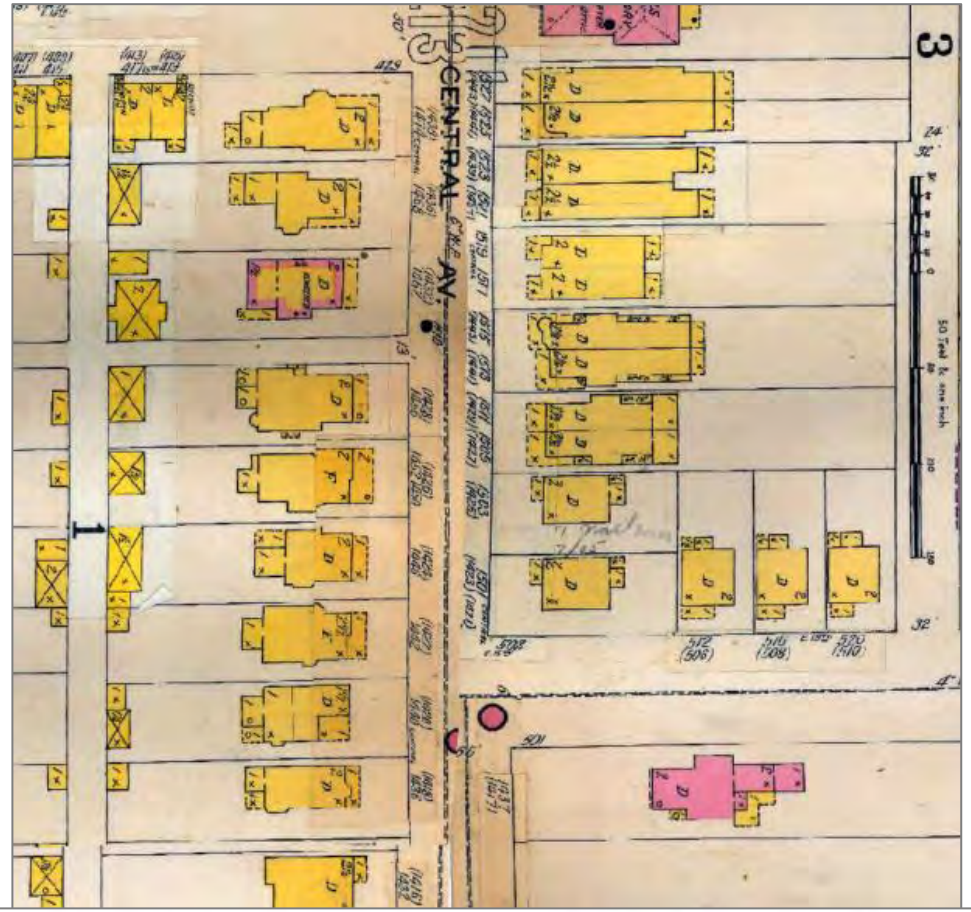
Infill Housing

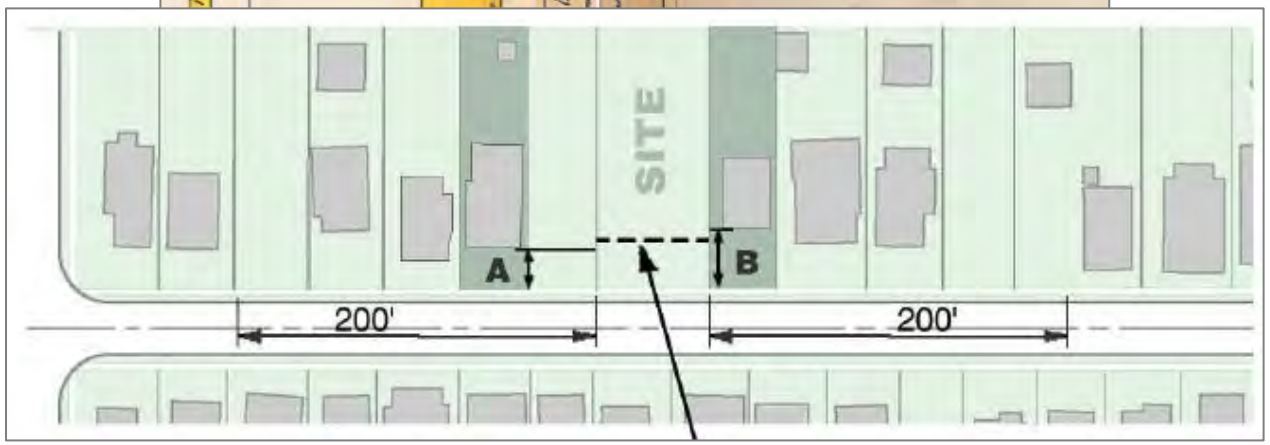
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Housing

Allow and encourage infill housing.







B. Development Standard Exceptions in Historic Preservation Areas

All lots in a Dwelling district or Commercial district that are located within a locally designated historic preservation area as established by, and under the jurisdiction of, the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission (IHPC):

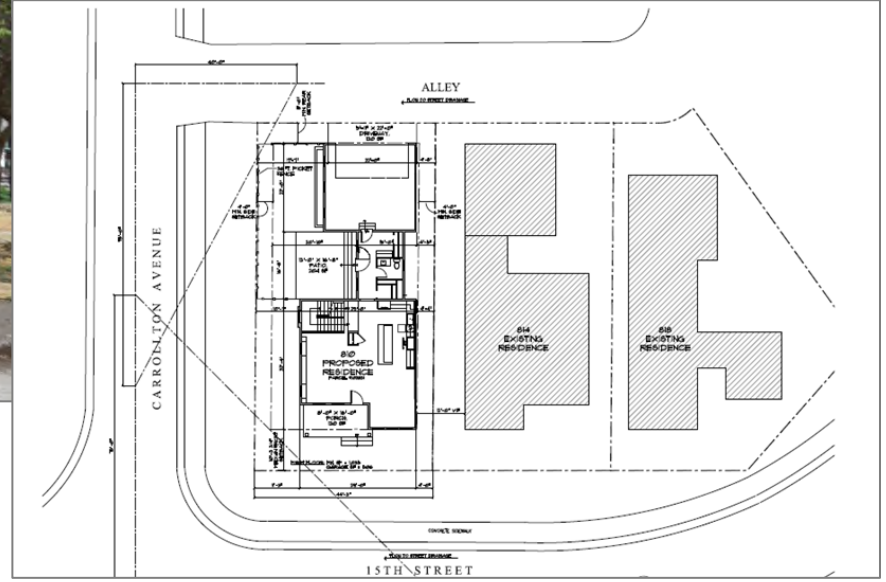
1. Not fronting on a thoroughfare, as designated on Official Thoroughfare Plan shall be exempt from the provisions of Chapter 744, Article II Lot and Building Dimensions, regarding required minimum front, side and rear yard setbacks. The minimum required front, side and rear yard setbacks for lots located within such historic preservation areas shall be as determined by the IHPC. The minimum required front, side and rear yards shall be as set forth in and specified by the grant of a Certificate of Appropriateness following all procedures set forth by the IHPC.
2. Fronting on a thoroughfare, as designated on the Official Thoroughfare Plan shall be exempt from the provisions of Chapter 744, Article II Lot and Building Dimensions, regarding required minimum side and rear setbacks. The minimum required side and rear yard setbacks for lots located within such historic preservation areas shall be as determined by the IHPC. The minimum required side and rear yards shall be as set forth in and specified by the grant of a Certificate of Appropriateness following all procedures set forth by the IHPC.

3. Shall be exempt from the provisions of Chapter 744, Article II Lot and Building Dimensions, regarding maximum height of primary buildings and accessory structures. The maximum height of primary buildings and accessory structures located within such historic preservation areas shall be as determined by the IHPC. The maximum height of primary and accessory buildings shall be set forth in and specified by the grant of a certificate of appropriateness following all procedures set forth by the IHPC.

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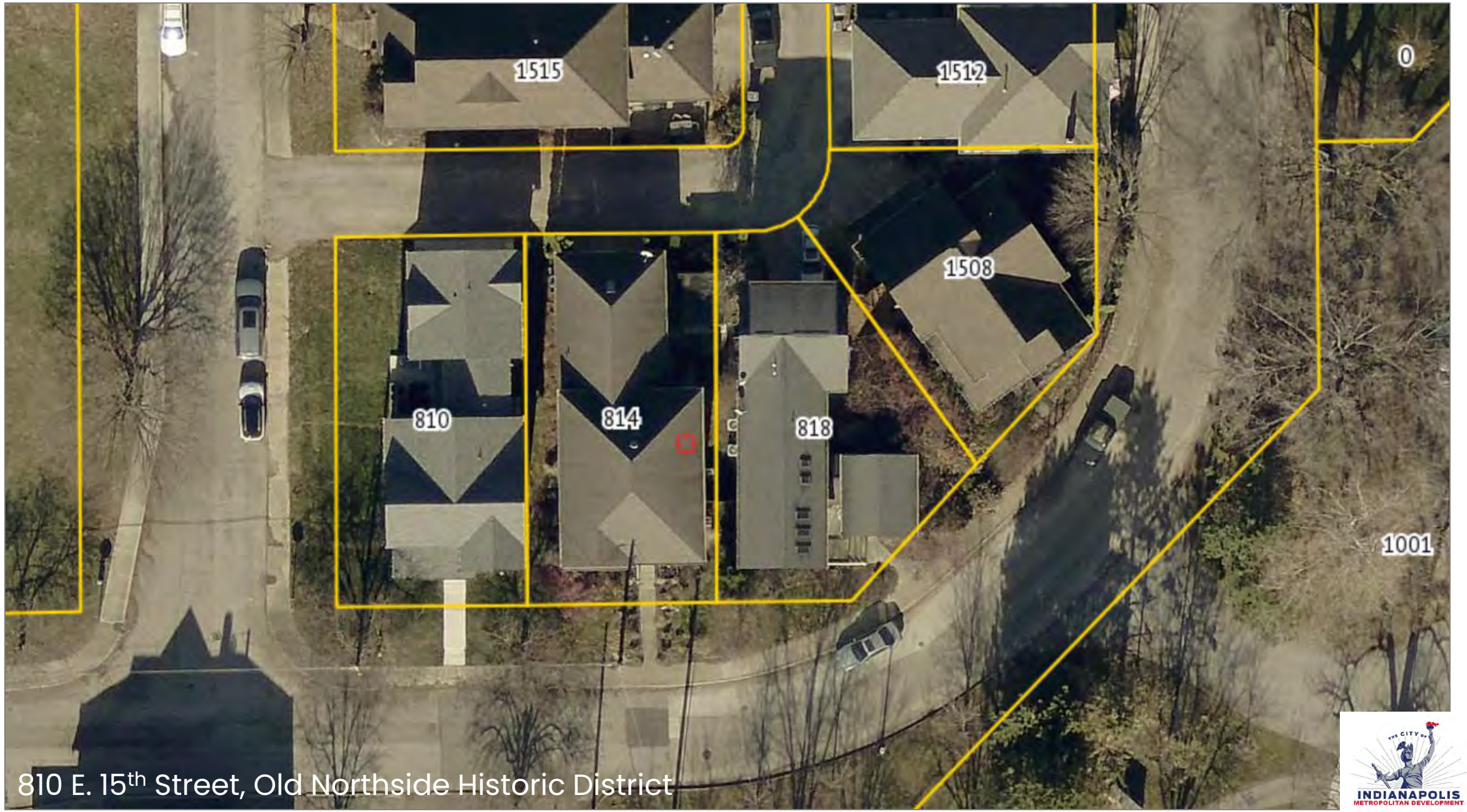






810 E. 15th Street, Old Northside Historic District

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810 E. 15th Street, Old Northside Historic District

The Zoning Ordinance – Indianapolis-Marion County – Effective March 2, 2026

TABLE 742.103.03 – RESIDENTIAL BUILDING TYPE STANDARDS

Name/Type	Lot (min.) [1]		Setbacks (min.)				Building		Zoning Districts				
	Area (s.f.)	Width	Front	Side	Corner Side	Rear	Height (max.) [2]	Open Space [3]	D5	D5I	D8	D9	D10
Detached House – Medium Lot	≥ 7.2K	60'	See Section 744. Article VII. Section 01.C. Private Frontage Types	7'	10'	20'	35' / 2.5 story	60%	■	■			
Detached House – Small Lot	≥ 5K	40'		5'	8'	20'	35' / 2.5 story	40%	■	■	■		
Detached House – Compact Lot	≥ 2.5K	25'		3'	8'	15'	35' / 2.5 story	20%		■	■	■	
Duplex (2 units)	≥ 7.2K	60'		5'	8'	20'	35' / 2.5 story	60%	■	■	■		
Multi-Unit House (2-4 units) – Small Lot	≥ 5K	40'		5'	8'	20'	35' / 2.5 story	40%	■	■	■		
Multi-Unit House - Compact Lot (2-4 units)	≥ 3.5K	35'		3'	8'	10'	35' / 2.5 story	20%	■	■	■	■	
Row House – Large Lot (2 – 8 units / building)	≥ 2K	20'		5' / 0' if party wall	8'	15'	40' / 3 story	15%		■	■	■	■
Row House – Small Lot (2-12 units / building)	≥ 1.2K	16'		5' / 0' if party wall	8'	15'	40' / 3 story	10%			■	■	■
Small Apartment (3 – 12 units)	4K – 12K	40' – 100'		5'	10'	10'	50' / 2-4 story	100 s.f./ unit			■	■	■
Medium Apartment (13-50 units)	12K – 1ac.	100' – 200'		5'	10'	10'	75' / 3-6 story	75 s.f. / unit				■	■
Large Apartment (51+ units)	≥ 1 ac.	150' min.		5'	10'	10'	150' / 3-12 story	60 s.f. / unit					■

Lot minimum area + open space

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Measurement Before



Measurement After

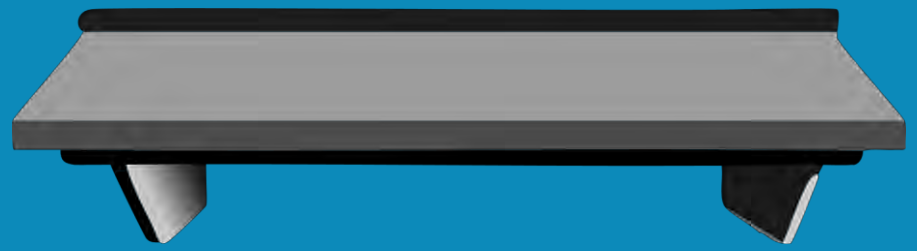


Clear sight triangle

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Housing

Incentivize housing diversity.



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Housing



Is this the only type of housing that’s legal to build?

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Housing



What types of housing do people **need**?

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Housing



What types of housing do people **need**?

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Housing

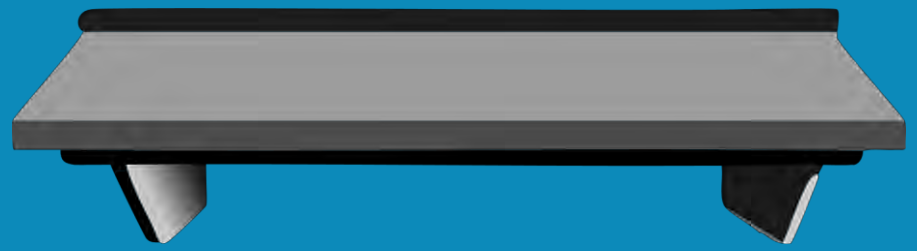


What types of housing do people **need**?

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Housing

Increase housing attainability.



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Housing

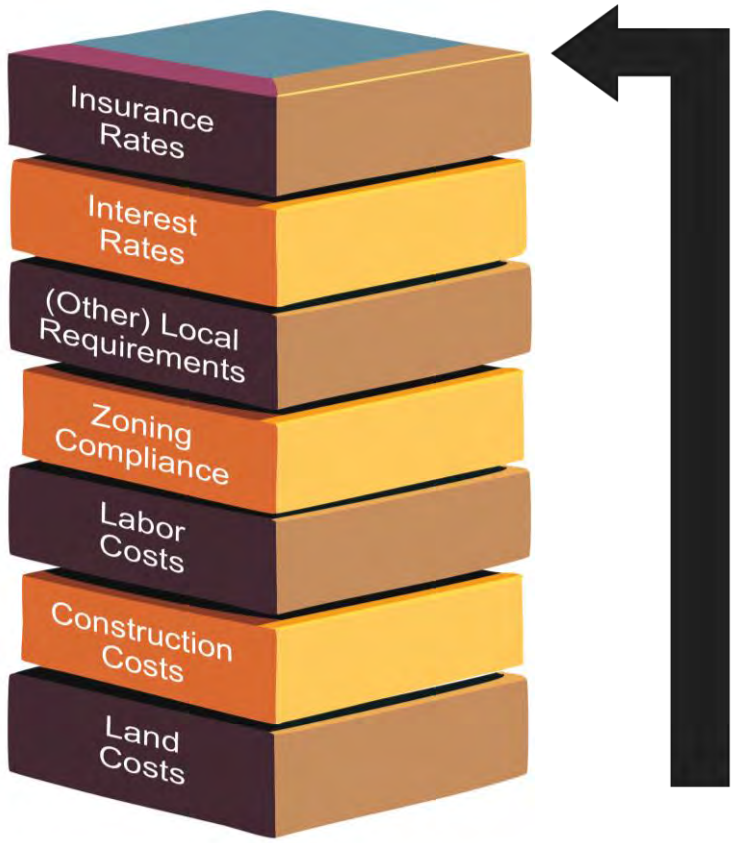
Which regulations impact housing options within your community?

- Minimum lot size
- Garage requirements
- Minimum dwelling size
- Exterior material standards
- Nonconforming housing
- Non-zoning regulations



Housing

Affordability/Attainability

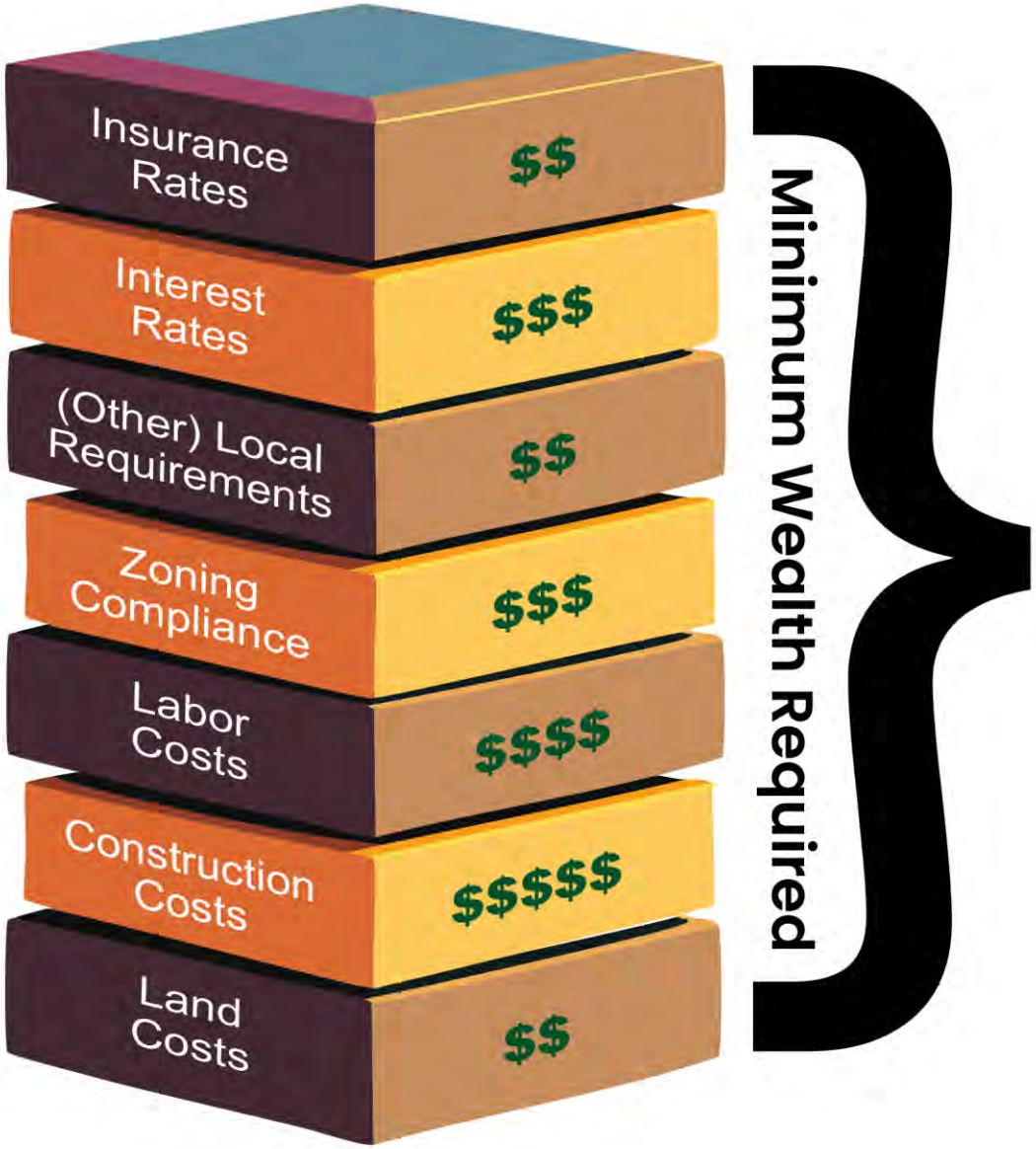


Minimum Required Wealth



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Housing



Least Expensive Legal House:

$$$$$$$$$$$$

Minimum Income* Required:

* Assumes 20% down payment; 7% interest

$$$$

Households Making ≥ $$$$:

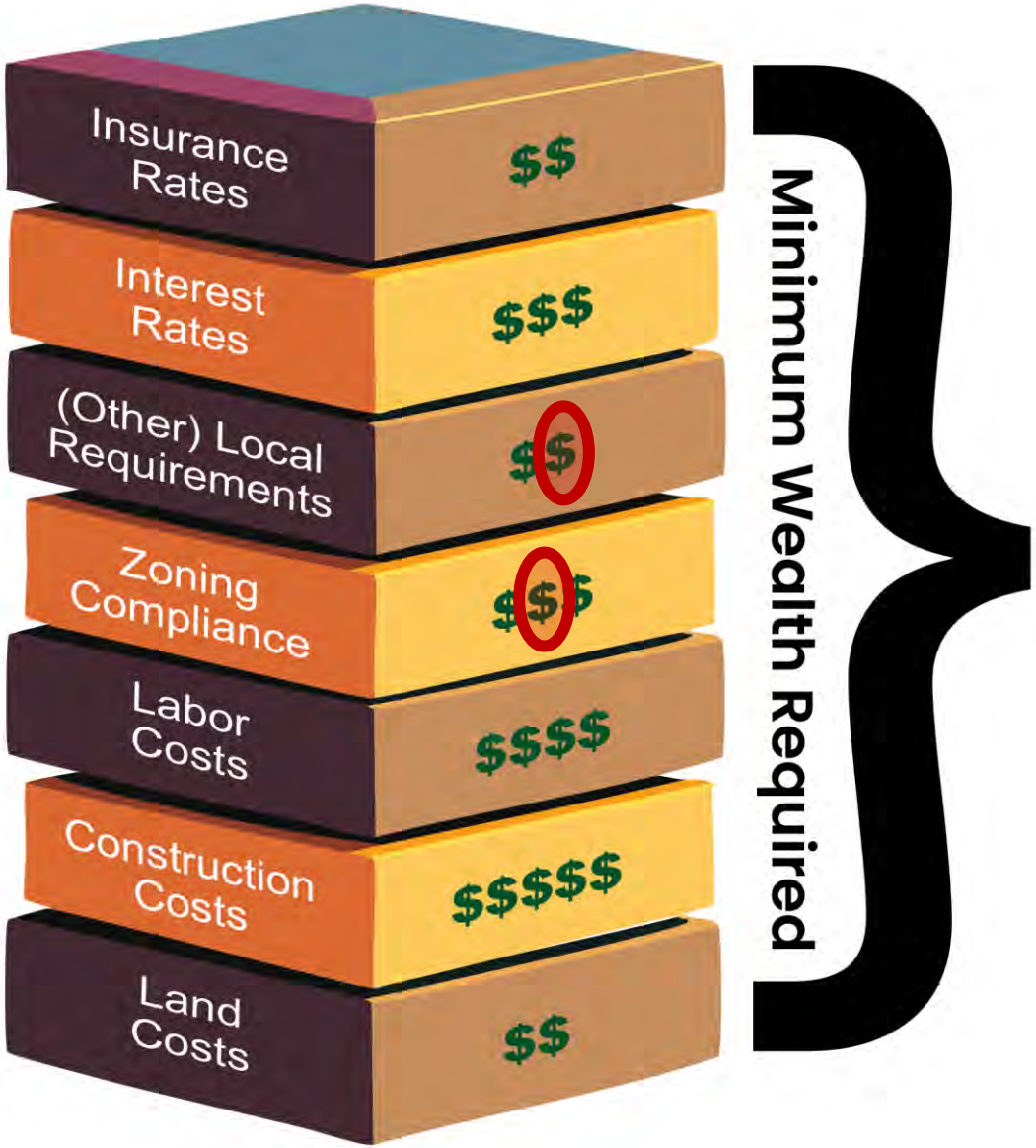
Less than XX%*

* U.S. Census Data

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Housing

Improve Factors that Affect Attainability

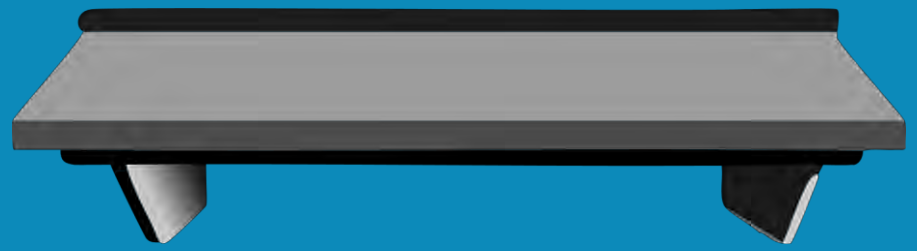


Least Expensive Legal House:

$$$$$

Housing

Legalize more housing options.



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Housing



Is this legal to build in your community?

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Housing



Is this legal to build in your community?

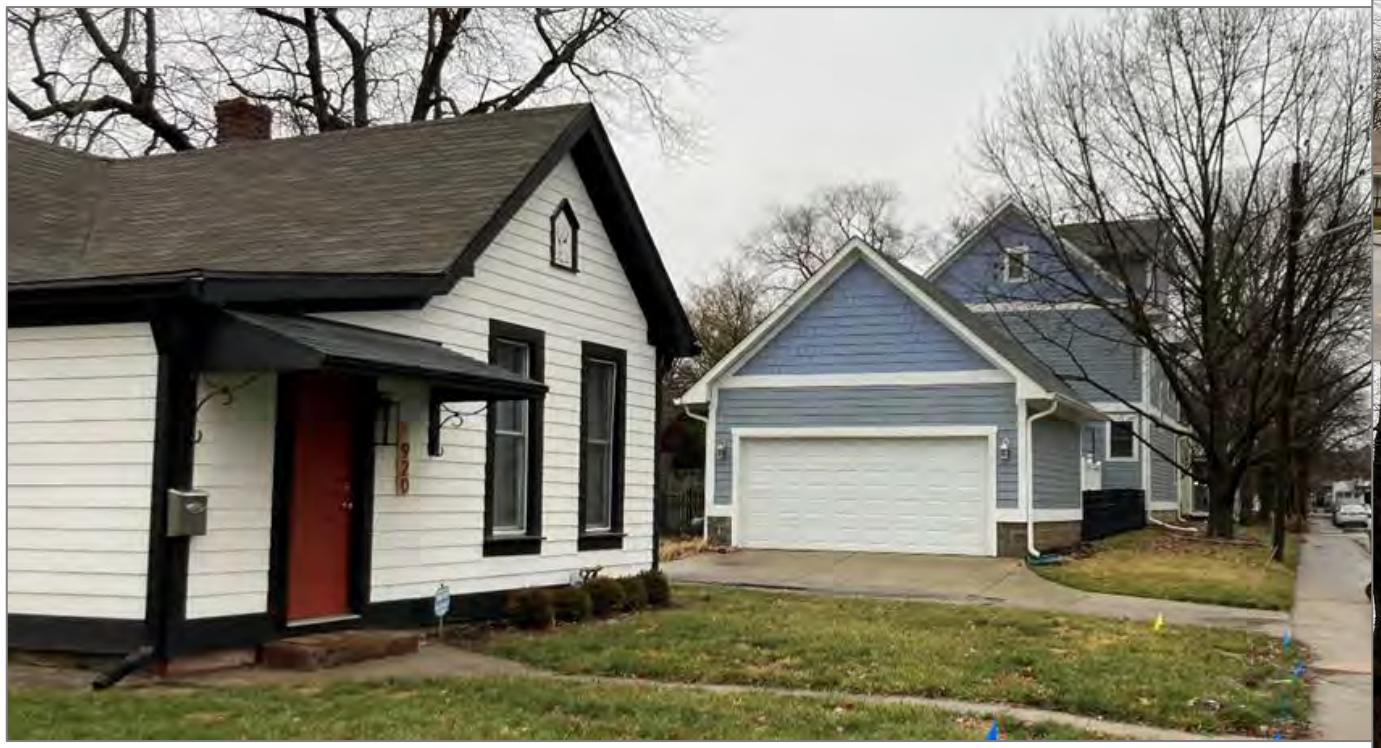
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Housing



Is this legal to build in your community?

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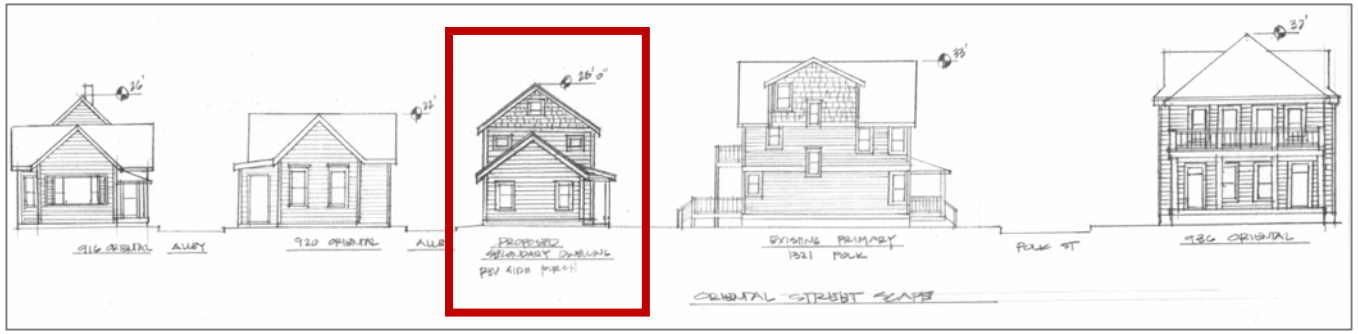




1323 Polk Street,
Cottage Home Conservation District







1323 Polk Street,
Cottage Home Conservation District

Infill Housing

What Works for IHPC

- Setback exceptions
  - Front
  - Side
  - Rear
  - Minimum space between buildings
- Height exceptions
- Open space dictated by lot size, not by residential district

Best Practices Learned

- Legalize historic dwelling types
- Incentivize more housing options
- Reduce minimum wealth requirements

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Economic Development

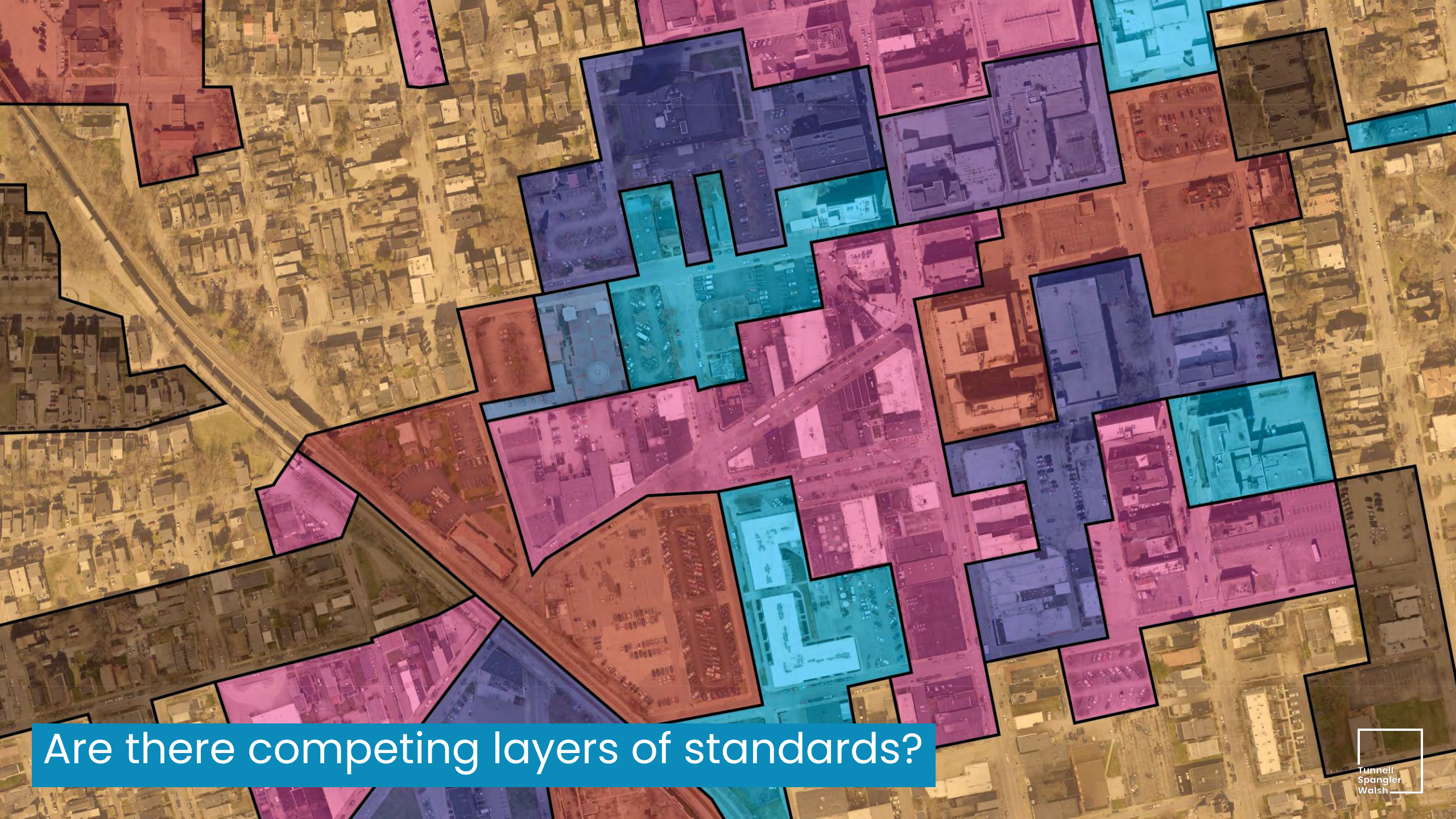
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Economic Development

Review your plans and zoning map.



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Barriers will send investment elsewhere.

Are there competing layers of standards?

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702 Lexington Avenue, Fletcher Place Historic District

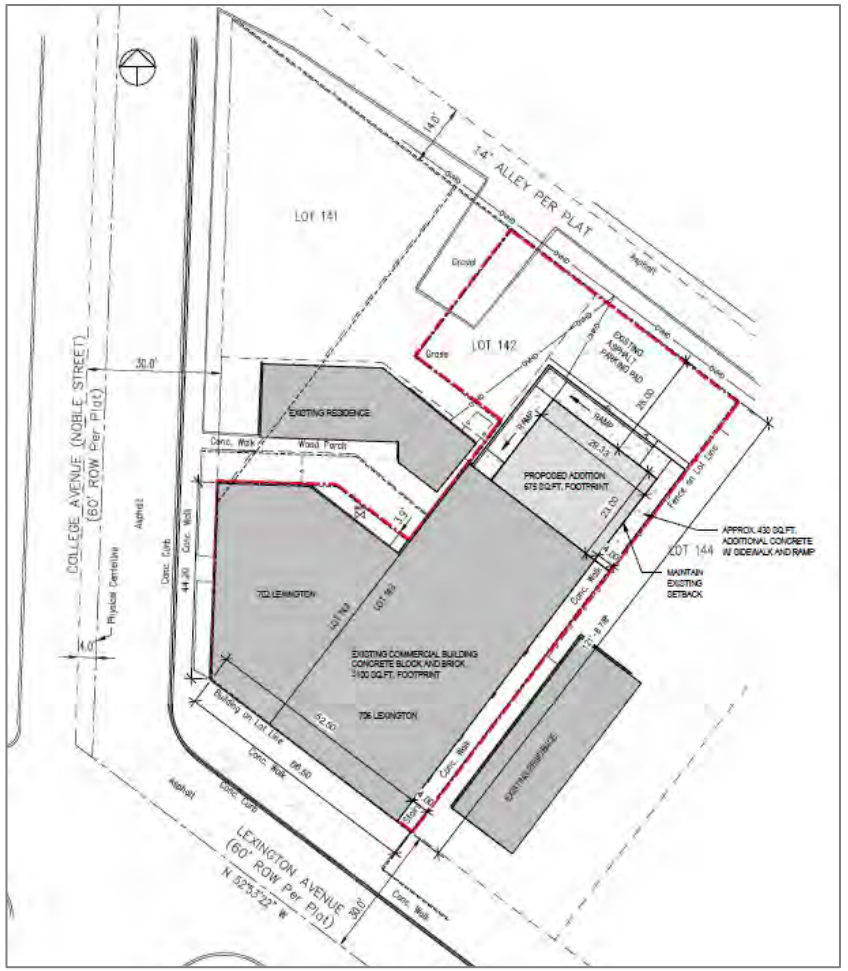


Update the plans

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Petitioner commits to exclude the following uses:

1. Emergency Shelter, daily
2. Check cashing or validation service
3. Outdoor advertising off premise sign
4. Tattoo Parlor
5. Bar or tavern
6. Pawn shop
7. Wireless communication facility
8. Vape shops
9. Laundry
10. Mortuary, Funeral home
11. Business, art, or other post secondary proprietoary school
12. Community Center
13. Religious use
14. Elementary, middle or high school
15. Animal care/boarding, veternarian clinic
16. Printing services
17. Information Technology R&D
18. Logistics R&D
19. substation and utility distribution node
20. Transit center
21. Drive thru component
22. Re cycling collection point
23. Renewable energy facility, solar or geothermal
24. Transporation facilities and accessories (Ground)
25. Temporary construction yard, office, or equipment storage
26. Blood donor station
27 Second hand appliance store



VARIANCE PETITION #2021-VHP-008:

<u>To approve</u> Variances of Development Standards to allow reduced transitional yards, and less parking than required.

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Economic Development

Support small business.



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Economic Development

Permissions by Use Categories

Antique Store Clothing Shop Hardware Store	**Retail Sale (Non-Perishable Goods)**
Barber / Beauty Shop Self-Service Laundry Tool Rental	**Service-Oriented Use**
Auditorium Exhibit Hall Movie Theater	**Entertainment Use (Non-Adult)**

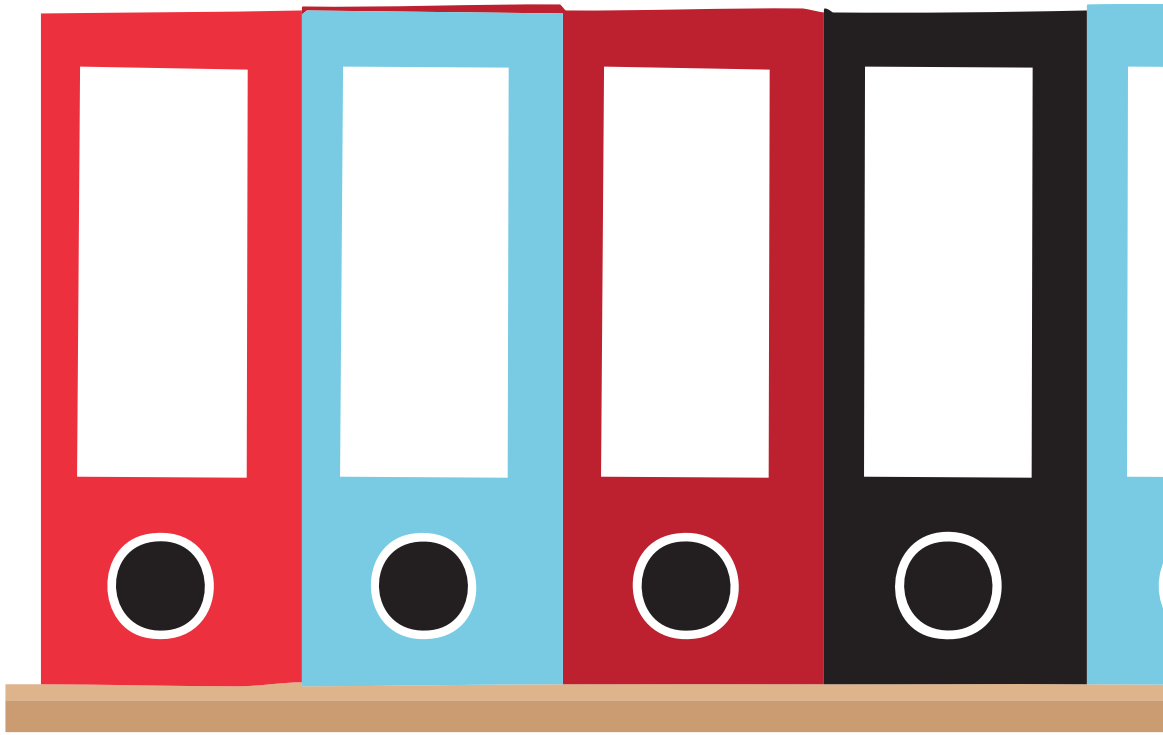
Are use permissions hyper-specific?

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Economic Development

Categorizing Novel Uses

- Creating danger to health and safety?
- What are the typical features—hours of operation, size of building, events?
- Creating offensive noise, vibration, heat, or odor?
- How much traffic—pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular—is associated?
- What are the anticipated effects on other allowed uses in the zoning district?



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Economic Development

Methods for Supporting Small Businesses

- Use sensitive flexibility for interpretations
- Incentivize adaptive reuse
- Remove car storage minimums
- Distinguish sizes of businesses
- Reduce sidewalk interruptions
- Legalize nonconformities and legacy investments
- Allow childcare in every safe location

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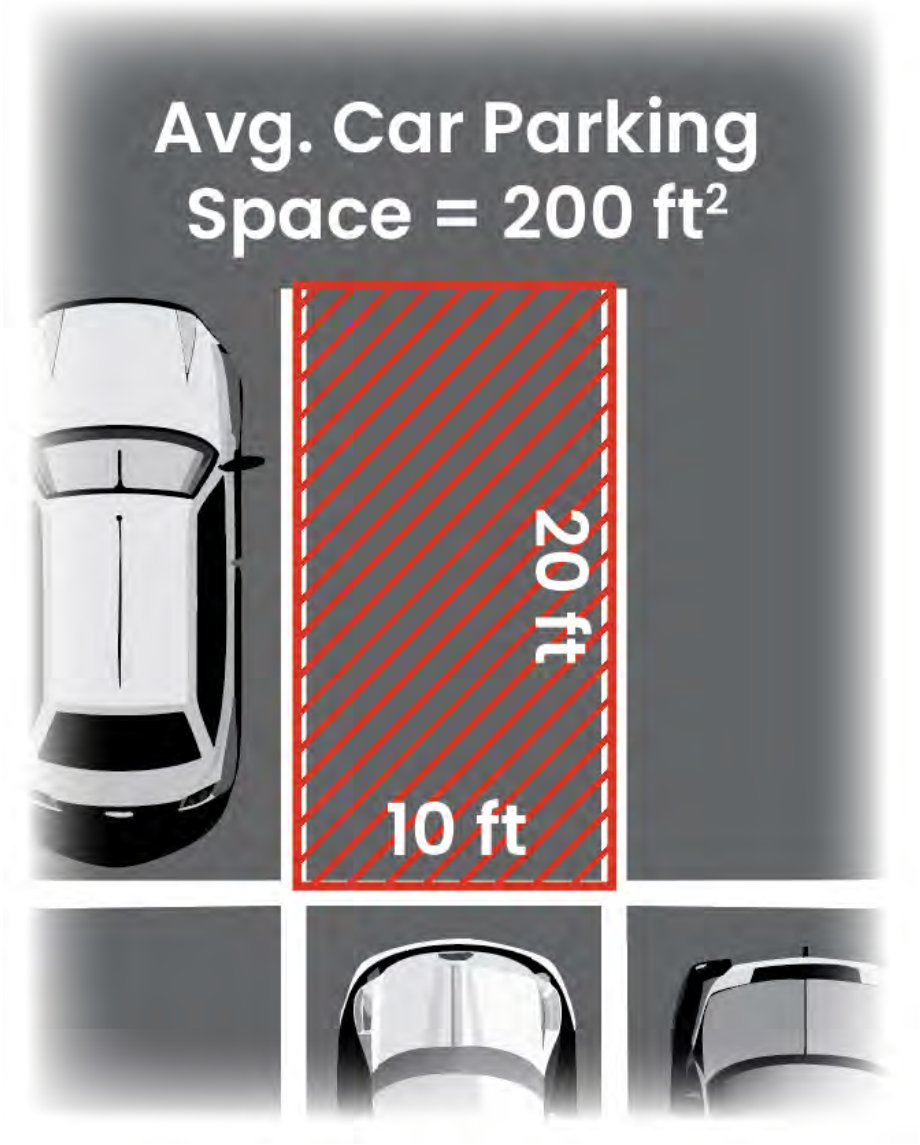
Economic Development

Remove or reduce parking minimums.



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Economic Development



How much land for temporary car storage is your code requiring?

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Economic Development

Requirement: **1 space per 500 ft.²** of gross floor area (GFA)



1,000 ft.² requires



2 parking spaces (400 ft.²) (40% of GFA)

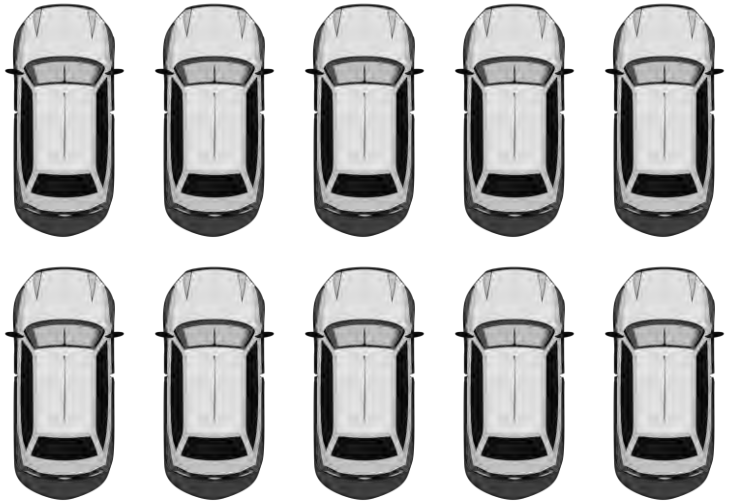
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Economic Development

Requirement: **1 space per 100 ft.^{2}** of gross floor area (GFA)



1,000 ft.^{2}
requires

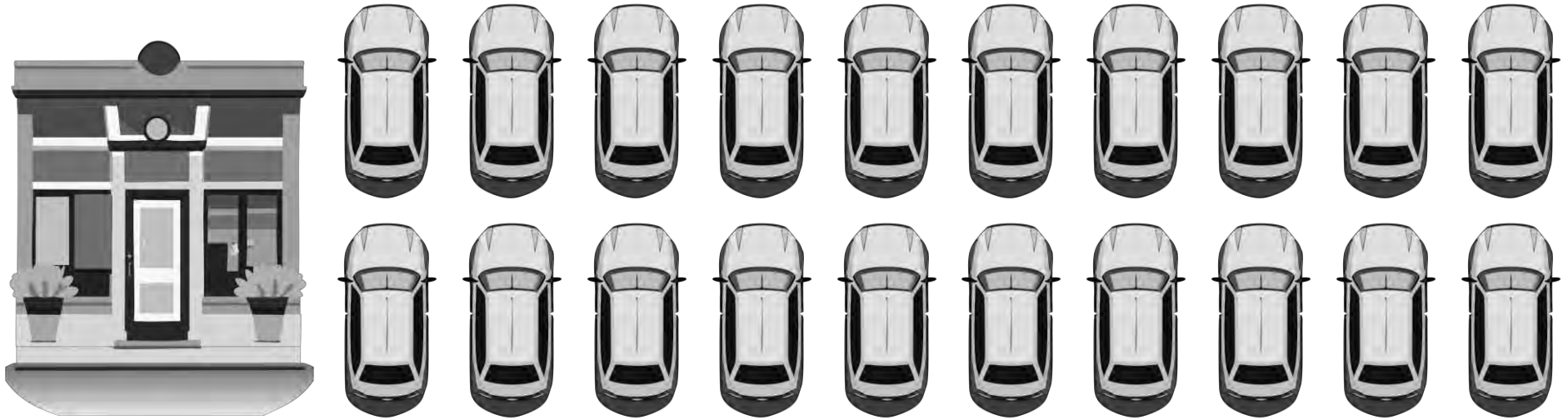


10 parking spaces (2,000 ft.^{2})
(200% of GFA)

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Economic Development

Requirement: **1 space per 50 ft.²** of gross floor area (GFA)

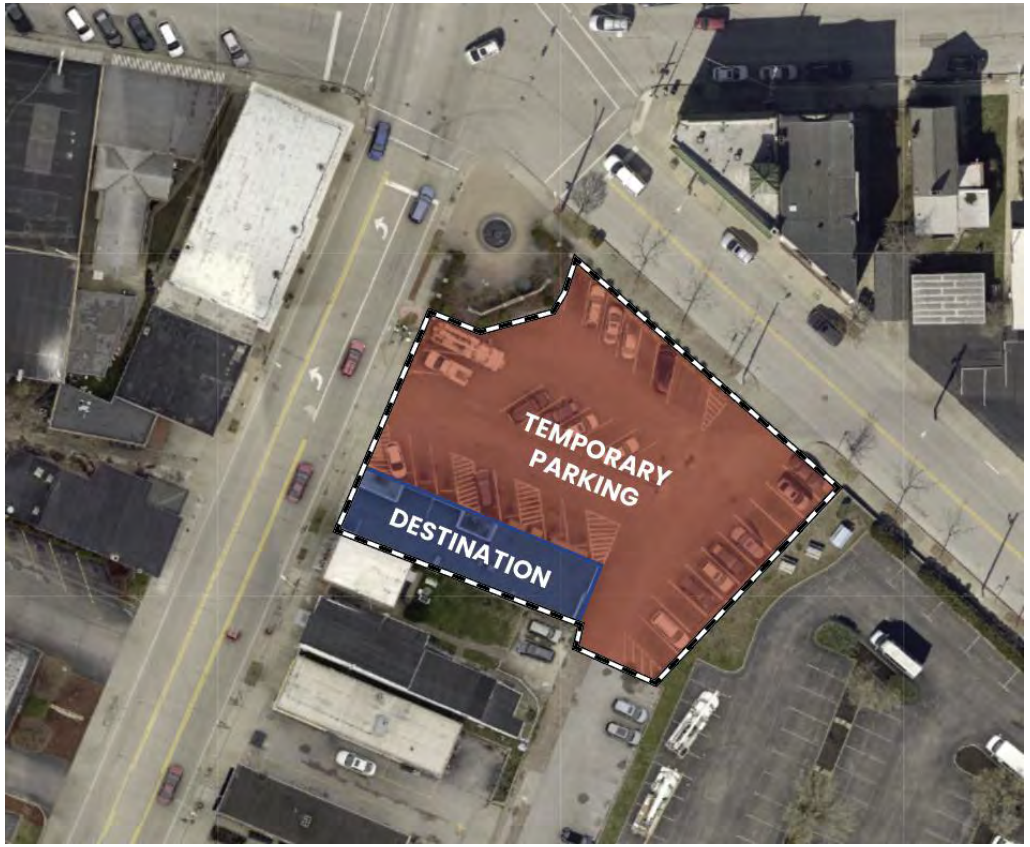


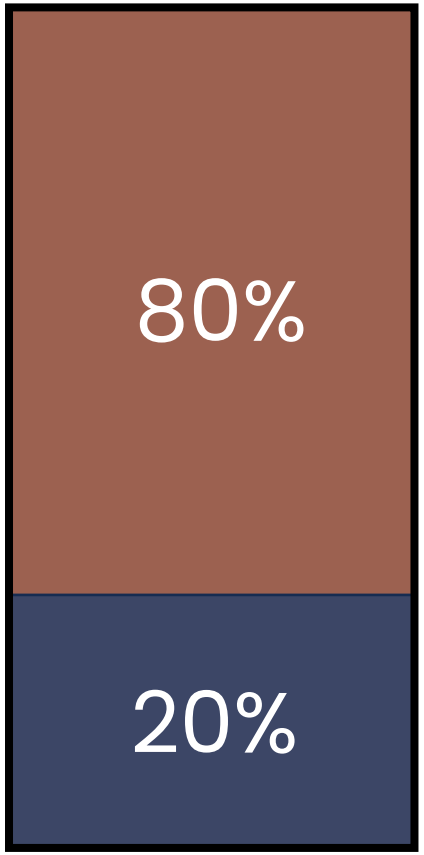
1,000 ft.² requires **20 parking spaces (4,000 ft.²)** (400% of GFA)

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Economic Development

Requirement: **1 space per 50 ft.²** of gross floor area (GFA)





Minimum for temporary (surface) car parking

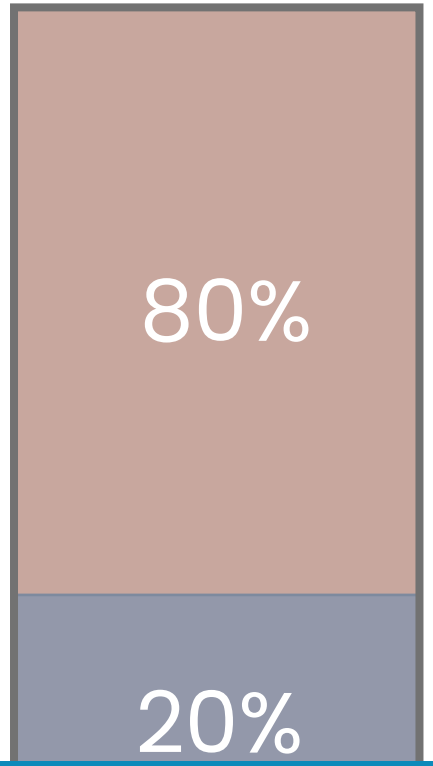
Maximum available for revenue production

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Economic Development

Requirement: **1 space per 50 ft.²** of gross floor area (GFA)





Minimum for temporary (surface) car parking

Maximum available for revenue production

Does your code prioritize cars over destinations?

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Economic Development

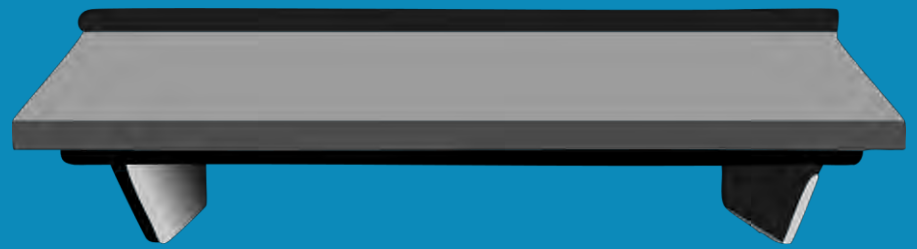
Methods for Reducing Parking Burdens

- **Don’t require parking**
- Allow shared and off-site parking
- Allow flexibility for legal nonconforming lots
- Allow flexibility for small lots (e.g., under 5,000 ft.^{2})
- Allow flexibility for adaptive reuse of older buildings
- Count on-street parking towards minimum requirements
- Reduce parking requirements near transit access

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Incentivize adaptive reuse.



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Does your code let buildings change uses?

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Does your code let buildings change uses?

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Does your code let buildings change uses?

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Assessment

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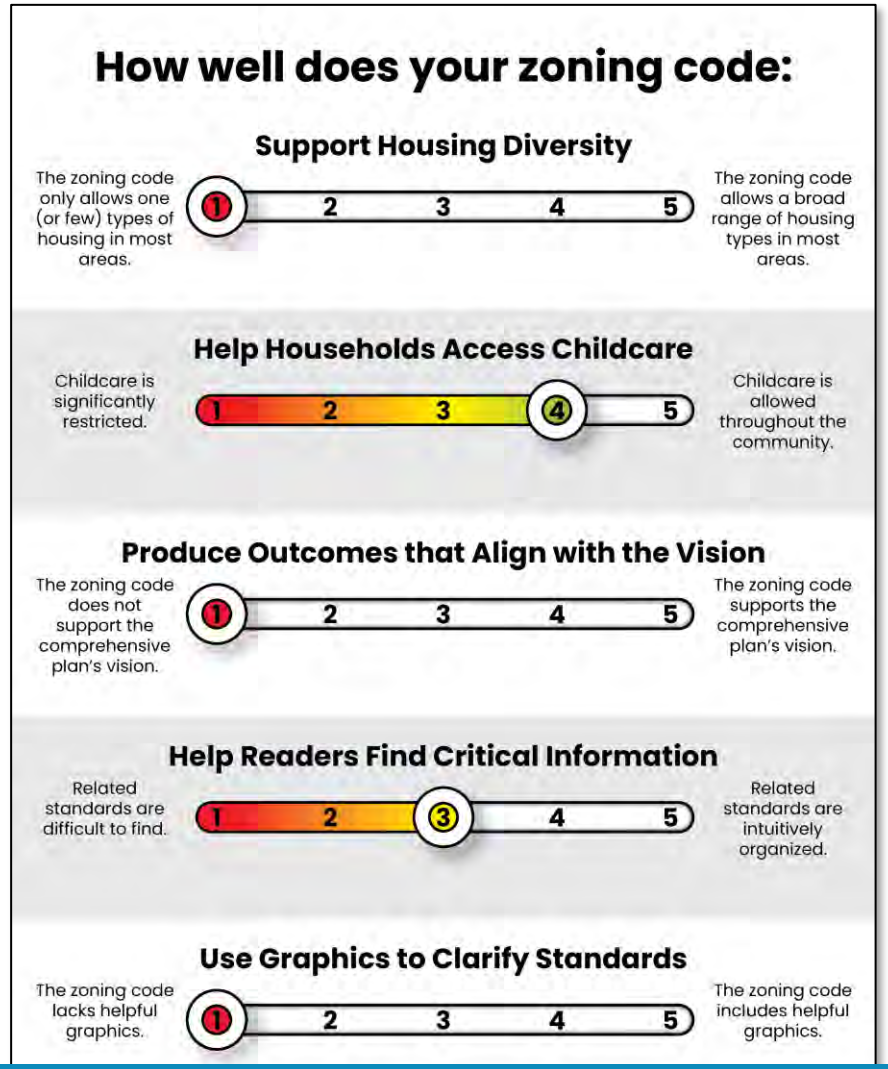
Assessment

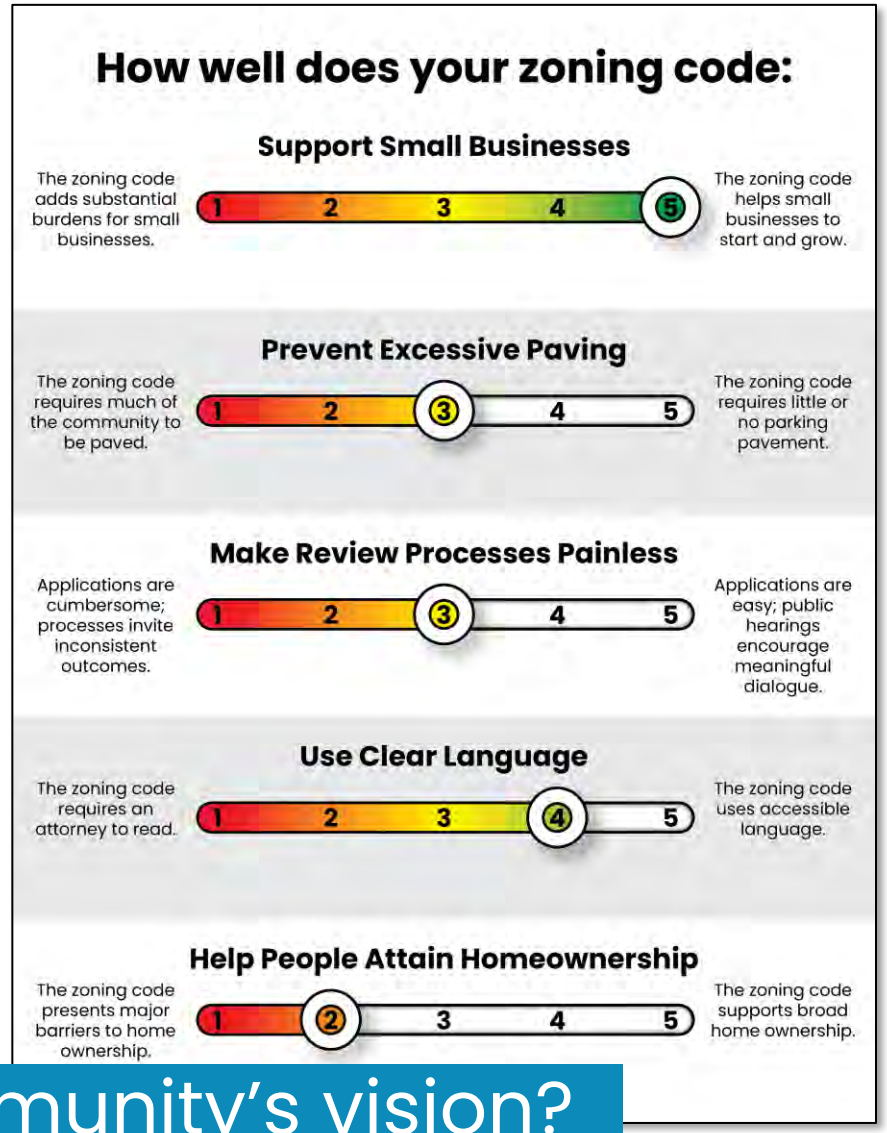


Does your code support your community's vision?

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Assessment





Does your code support your community's vision?

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Assessment



Are the standards easy to find and clear?

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Questions to Ask
of your zoning code

What is the point of this rule?

Questions to Ask
of your zoning code

Do I need an attorney to understand this?

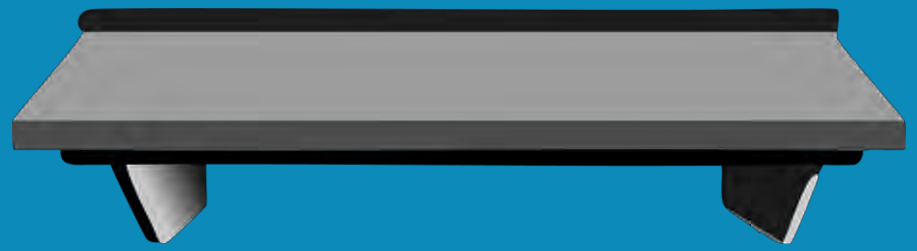
INDIANAPOLIS
METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT

Questions to Ask
of your zoning code

Is this rule easy to find?

INDIANAPOLIS
METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT

Zoning should support the vision of the community.



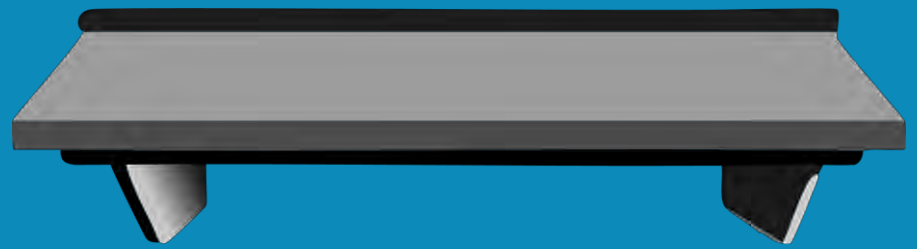
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- **Approach**
  – Build from **your** preservation plan.
- **Economic Development**
  – Support vibrancy.
- **Infill Housing**
  – Increase housing attainability.
- **Assessment**
  – Make zoning clear and easy to use.



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Your community needs a supportive zoning code.



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We’re here to help

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