



Department of City Development
City Plan Commission
Redevelopment Authority of the City of Milwaukee
Neighborhood Improvement Development Corporation

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Housing Zoning Code Update: Advancing Housing Growth, Choice and Climate Action

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Summary: DCD is proposing to update the housing element of the Citywide Policy Plan and to make updates to the City of Milwaukee’s zoning code with a focus on encouraging and enabling housing development that advances the City’s housing growth, affordability, racial equity, and climate action goals.

Why is this Project Needed: The City of Milwaukee recently completed developing a Collective Affordable Housing Plan in conjunction with the Community Development Alliance. ECO is developing a Climate and Equity Plan to improve environmental sustainability and reduce greenhouse gases. Both of these planning efforts, as well as past City plans such as the Equitable Growth through Transit Oriented Development Plan have made recommendations to increase the supply of housing within the City of Milwaukee and to facilitate new housing development that reinforces walkable urban neighborhoods, transit and job access, and provides a range of affordability and housing choices for all Milwaukeeans. These recommendations are directly aligned with Mayor Johnson’s Economic Prosperity Vision, which includes a commitment to update the City’s zoning code to support new development and growth.

Housing costs are rising rapidly for both homeowners and renters. The City of Milwaukee’s zoning code was last updated in 2002. While the existing code supports mixed-use development, multi-family housing on commercial corridors, and other strong smart growth principals, there are areas of the code that need to be updated to align with evolving national best practices, recommendations included within the City’s more recent planning efforts, and to accommodate future population growth and evolving housing needs.

Project Elements: DCD will carry out an update to Housing element of the Citywide Policy Plan and the portions of the City’s zoning code regulating housing development. This project would propose zoning code updates to advance the recommendations of multiple city planning efforts to:

- Support transit oriented development and walkable urban neighborhoods.
- Increase housing choice, diverse housing styles, and affordability.
- Advance recommendations of the Collective Affordable Housing Plan to permit housing styles that may result in lower housing costs for residents.
- Propose updated parking requirements that align with housing affordability and climate action goals.
- Better enable home-based businesses, accessory dwelling units, and a wide-range of neighborhood scale infill development.



Project Approach: DCD is proposing a two phased approach to this effort:

- **Phase I:** The first phase of the project will involve significant community engagement exploring issues of housing diversity, housing opportunity, and community goals for housing growth. This phase will incorporate community capacity building opportunities to better enable communities to understand and navigate the various city codes and processes that impact housing development. At the conclusion of Phase I, a set of policy recommendations focused on zoning will be presented to the Common Council for approval as an amendment to the Citywide Policy Plan.
- **Phase II:** During the second phase of the project, DCD will utilize the results of Phase I to draft updated code language for presentation to the Common Council for adoption as part of the City's Zoning Code.

Racial equity goals and meaningful community engagement would be built directly into the project process, and would also be directly tied to the anticipated outcomes.

Budget and Funding Uses: DCD is requesting to allocate \$100,000 from the DCD 2022 Advanced Planning account to carry out Phase I of this project. This would allow DCD to engage a consultant team to assist with this effort and also carry out a robust public engagement effort at part of the process.

While DCD staff would lead this project, DCD has identified the need for funding to support two specific elements of this effort that would require contracted services. For the community engagement elements of large scale planning projects such as this one, DCD Planning has committed to partner with community based organizations with leadership and staff reflective of the racial makeup of the neighborhood during engagement efforts on planning projects. Funding would be utilized to carry out this engagement effort, including partnerships with community based organizations. Funding would also be used to engage a planning consultant with specialized knowledge in housing codes and visualizations. This would allow for the creation of high quality massing models and graphical visualizations to present complex technical details to the public and policy makers in an accessible way that allows for meaningful engagement and feedback that would not be possible using solely internal DCD staff resources.

Timing: DCD anticipates developing a detailed project scope and carrying out an RFP process for a consultant team during the second half of 2022, allowing the project to launch publicly in late 2022/early 2023. Phase I is anticipated to take roughly one year, with the final recommendations presented to the Common Council for review prior to proceeding to Phase II.