

# GROWING MKE

Housing & Neighborhoods Element  
of the Citywide Policy Plan

Isaac Rowlett Photography

Isaac Rowlett Photography



**DRAFT**  
**April 30, 2024**



# Acknowledgments

## CITY OF MILWAUKEE

Mayor Cavalier Johnson  
Ald. José G. Pérez,  
*Council President*  
Ald. Andrea M. Pratt  
Ald. Mark Chambers, Jr.  
Ald. Jonathan Brostoff  
Ald. Robert J. Bauman  
Ald. Lamont Westmoreland  
Ald. Milele A. Coggs  
Ald. DiAndre Jackson  
Ald. JoCasta Zamarripa  
Ald. Larresa Taylor  
Ald. Sharlen Moore  
Ald. Peter Burgelis  
Ald. Scott Spiker  
Ald. Marina Dimitrijevic  
Ald. Russell W. Stamper, II

## CITY PLAN COMMISSION

Stephanie  
Bloomingdale, *Chair*  
Allyson Nemec, *Vice Chair*  
Catrina Crane  
Tarik Moody  
Brianna Sas-Pérez  
Willie Smith  
Ranell Washington

## FUNDERS

AARP Wisconsin  
Community Development  
Alliance

## SPECIAL THANKS

Reclaiming Our  
Neighborhoods  
(RON) Coalition  
NAIOP – Wisconsin  
Associates in Commercial  
Real Estate (ACRE) Program

## COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Anna Bailliekova  
Barbara Smith  
Brisa Van Galen  
Christopher Coleman  
Dana McClain-Kelly  
leésa Robinson  
Jarrett English  
Jennifer Nepper  
Kay Weisman  
Kim Michels  
LaVette Stanley  
Luis Delgadilo  
Marietta Luster  
Melony Pederson  
Meredith Perks  
Neva Hill  
Ruth Weill  
Stephanie Mercado  
Tammie Xiong

## TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Allyson Nemec  
Amber Miller  
Angie Tabrizi  
Ariam Kesete  
Bart Griepentrog  
Brian Peters  
Isaac Rowlett  
Kori Schneider Peragine  
Lindsey St. Arnold Bell  
Matt Melendes  
Montavius Jones  
Nicholas Hans Robinson  
Rafael Garcia  
Yaidi Cancel Martinez

## DEPARTMENT OF CITY DEVELOPMENT

Lafayette Crump,  
*Commissioner*  
Vanessa Koster,  
*Deputy Commissioner*  
Sam Leichtling,  
*City Planning Director*  
Tanya Fonseca,  
*Long Range Planning Manager*  
Amy Oeth, *Project Manager*  
Khari Bell,  
*Engagement Specialist*  
Kyle Gast  
Kate Madison  
Tayler Jones  
Ed Richardson  
Greg Patin  
Kristin Connelly  
Monica Wauck Smith  
Jonny Latsko  
Emily Goodman  
Amy Turim  
Tess Wynn

## CITY STAFF

Amanda Richman  
Anneka Mohr  
Claire Zautke  
Erick Shambarger  
India Gaar  
Jeff Zagar  
Jessica Ziegler  
Karleen Cortes  
Kate Pawasarat  
Mike Amsden  
Rob Seleen  
Zac Roder

## CONSULTANTS

PlaceMakers + DPZ CoDesign  
Walnut Way



DRAFT PLAN – APRIL 30, 2024

### Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge in Milwaukee that we are on traditional Potawatomi, Ho-Chunk and Menominee homeland along the southwest shores of Michigami, North America's largest system of freshwater lakes, where the Milwaukee, Menominee and Kinnickinnic rivers meet and the people of Wisconsin's sovereign Anishinaabe, Ho-Chunk, Menominee, Oneida and Mohican nations remain present.

For more information, please visit:  
[wisconsinfirstnations.org](https://www.wisconsinfirstnations.org)

**Placeholder for ordinance**



# Contents

<b>Summary</b>	<b>6</b>
What is Growing MKE?	6
Connections to City Goals	8
Planning Context	10
What is Zoning & Why Change It?	12
How Zoning Shaped Neighborhoods	14
Milwaukee's Development & Zoning History	16
Housing to Serve a Lifetime	18
Housing Types Defined	19
<b>Overview</b>	<b>20</b>
Existing Zoning in Milwaukee	20
Milwaukee Housing by the Numbers	23
Engagement Process	27
<b>Goals &amp; Policies</b>	<b>30</b>
Citywide Goals	30
Housing Choice & Access	31
Social Connections & Health	35
Walkable Neighborhoods & Transit-Oriented Development	36
Neighborhood Development & Urban Design	39
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Implementation</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Glossary</b>	<b>60</b>



# Summary

## What is Growing MKE?

Growing MKE is a citywide planning initiative to support Milwaukee's evolving housing needs.

The project includes two phases:

1. Update to the Housing and Neighborhoods chapter of the Citywide Policy Plan.
2. Future updates to the City's Zoning Code to encourage housing choice and growth in Milwaukee.

This document is the result of Growing MKE Phase 1, and it replaces the Citywide Policy Plan's Housing and Neighborhoods Chapter. **The goals, policies, and recommendations in this chapter set a collective vision for housing and neighborhoods in Milwaukee and provide a road map for the future.**

Growing MKE touches upon issues of citywide importance and complements the City's Area Plans. While Area Plans contain neighborhood and site specific recommendations that impact housing development, Growing MKE sets policy recommendations that are citywide in scale and should be consulted in addition to relevant Area Plans when reviewing development proposals or proposed zoning changes.

This Plan also includes recommendations for zoning code updates that will take place in Phase 2.

*The Growing MKE plan addresses the housing element of the City's Comprehensive Plan as called for in Wisc. Stat. 66.1001, and also contains recommendations that update the land use element.*

## Why did the City take on this project?

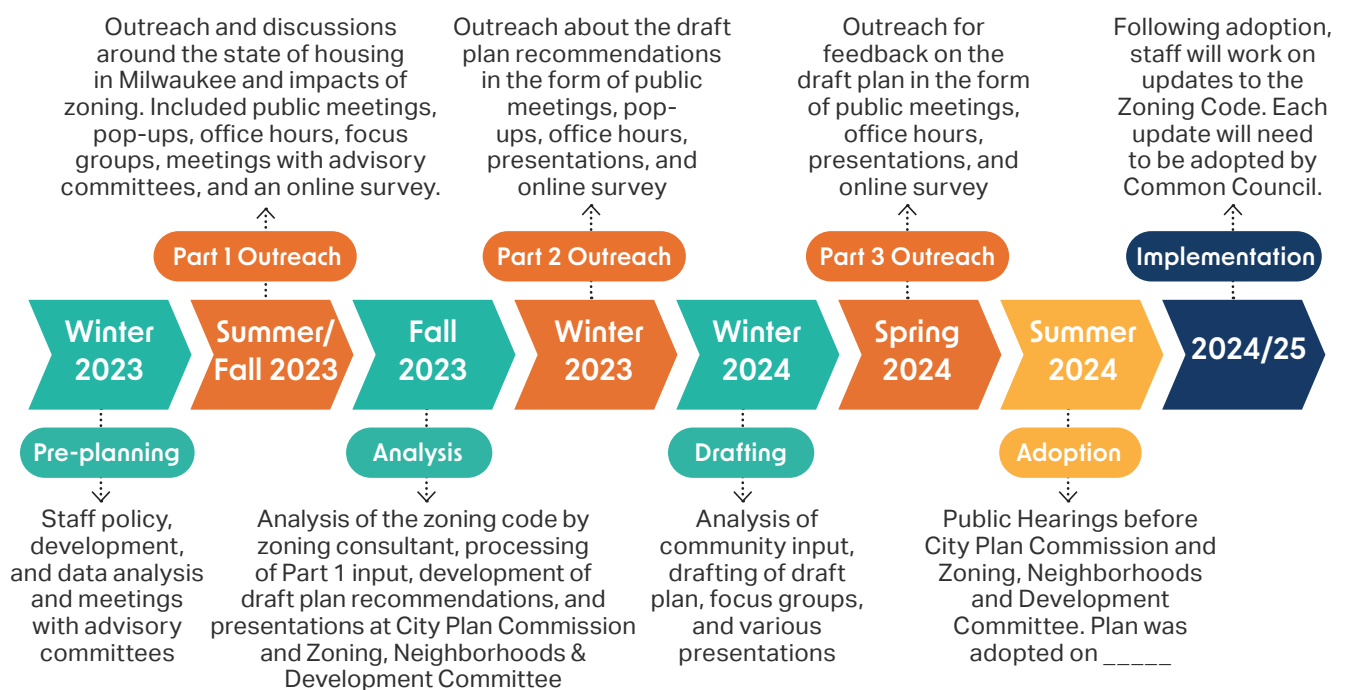
Milwaukee’s Zoning Code was re-written in 2002 and the Citywide Policy Plan was adopted in 2010. Since that time, Milwaukee has undergone significant changes, and the housing needs, challenges, and goals of the city have evolved. Growing MKE takes into account recent planning efforts, housing trends and needs, public feedback, and city-wide goals to set a framework for updates to Milwaukee’s zoning code and related development policies to support opportunity, prosperity, and equity for all Milwaukeeans.

Since the 2002 Zoning Code update, strategic updates have been made throughout the code. While many elements of the code are working, a detailed analysis showed that barriers to housing growth remain. Innovative zoning code updates are necessary to meet the City’s goals for housing choice, equity, affordability, economic development, and climate resiliency.

The project considered how changes to the Zoning Code:

- ▶ Can impact housing choice for all Milwaukeeans.
- ▶ Make it more feasible to build many desirable housing types such as townhomes and accessory dwelling units.
- ▶ Set clearer expectations for development and to allow for greater diversity in the development sector.
- ▶ Make more housing types feasible within neighborhoods so that people can age in place and not be forcibly displaced due to economic and zoning barriers.
- ▶ Allow for additional housing development on high frequency transit corridors.
- ▶ Help us meet our climate goals.

## Timeline



# Connections to City Goals

Encouraging housing growth and choice can help make Milwaukee a stronger and more resilient city. Growing MKE recommendations will advance citywide goals for economic development and fiscal sustainability, connectivity, housing choice & equity, and climate resilience.



## Growing MKE will increase housing choice & equity

Policies and regulations that restrict housing diversity increase the cost of building new housing and limit the types of housing available within individual neighborhoods. This can increase housing costs for everyone. Recent studies have found that housing growth can help slow rent within a region while not contributing to the displacement of existing residents.<sup>1</sup> When a housing market has limited supply, it is harder for everyone to find rental and homeownership opportunities.

The updates to Milwaukee's Zoning Code recommended by Growing MKE are designed to remove barriers that perpetuate racial and economic segregation and will allow for a wider mix of housing types in ALL city neighborhoods. The recommendations aim to improve equity by increasing the amount of affordable and attainable housing for all.

<sup>1</sup> Been, Vicki and Ellen, Ingrid Gould and O'Regan, Katherine M., Supply Skepticism Revisited (November 10, 2023). NYU Law and Economics Research Paper Forthcoming, Available at SSRN: [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=4629628](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4629628) or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4629628>



## Growing MKE supports fiscal sustainability & economic development

Housing development helps grow the tax base which provides needed resources to support public services, parks, transit, and schools. And, there is room to grow – Milwaukee used to have 150,000 more people than it does today. This means that the costs of maintaining the city's existing infrastructure are being spread across a smaller number of residents.

New growth and development where there is existing infrastructure will allow the City to invest in new neighborhood gathering spaces, safer streets, and other core services such as libraries. There is a direct correlation between housing density and tax base. The zoning districts that allow for more housing options generate significantly more tax base per acre. Additionally, the cost to build and maintain infrastructure (roads and utilities) and services (police and fire) are much more expensive when homes and businesses are spread apart.

Housing growth and development also lets more people live in neighborhoods with access to jobs, neighborhood shopping, and other amenities. Businesses thrive when they have access to employees and customers, and increasing housing diversity in neighborhoods can bring in those employees and customers.





## Growing MKE will foster walkable neighborhoods & connectivity

Encouraging more housing development near commercial districts and transit corridors creates vibrant walkable environments – increasing quality of life. Transit-oriented development has been shown to help lower household transportation costs, increase access to jobs, and allow neighborhood residents to meet more of their day-to-day needs such as shopping, worship, and recreation, without relying on an automobile.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, building design regulations can ensure new and renovated buildings support walkability, bikeability, and safety.



## Growing MKE supports a healthy & thriving community

A stable, affordable, attainable, and safe home is essential for health and well-being. Every Milwaukee resident should have the right to live in housing that is healthy, dry, clean, maintained, adequately ventilated, and free from pests, contaminants, and other hazards. By ensuring our neighborhoods are walkable and bikeable, and have easy access to public transportation, parks and recreation, quality schools, family-sustaining jobs, healthy foods, and medical care – we reduce chronic disease, injury, respiratory disease, mortality, and mental health challenges.

Creating dense, walkable, and affordable neighborhoods also presents the opportunity to reduce health inequities by addressing environmental injustice, promoting food security, increasing access to stable housing, and improving access to healthcare in historically disinvested communities in Milwaukee.



## Growing MKE will make Milwaukee a more sustainable & resilient city

As we face climate change, opportunities to make it easier for people to walk, use transit, and bike are critical to reduce the amount and impact of driving. Milwaukee's Climate & Equity Plan recognizes that land use and transportation planning are directly linked to climate resilience. There is increasing consensus that compact urban neighborhoods with a mix of uses and housing choices are the most effective at reducing carbon emissions.<sup>2,3</sup>

Milwaukee is home to many highly walkable and vibrant neighborhoods and the Growing MKE recommendations will provide more options for residents to live in neighborhoods that are well-served by transit and near walkable business corridors. Our environmental impact can also be reduced through housing materials, building design, and encouraging housing where there is existing infrastructure.

1 Austin, Mason, et al. "Performance-Based Transit-Oriented Development Typology Guidebook." The Center for Transit-Oriented Development, Dec. 2010, [https://cnt.org/sites/default/files/publications/CNT\\_TODTypologyGuidebook.pdf](https://cnt.org/sites/default/files/publications/CNT_TODTypologyGuidebook.pdf)

2 Popovich, Nadja, et al. "The Climate Impact of Your Neighborhood, Mapped." The New York Times, The New York Times, 13 Dec. 2022, [www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/12/13/climate/climate-footprint-map-neighborhood.html](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/12/13/climate/climate-footprint-map-neighborhood.html).

3 Pomponi, Francesco, et al. "Decoupling Density from Tallness in Analysing the Life Cycle Greenhouse Gas Emissions of Cities." Nature News, Nature Publishing Group, 5 July 2021, [www.nature.com/articles/s42949-021-00034-w](http://www.nature.com/articles/s42949-021-00034-w).

# Planning Context

## We didn't start from scratch...

Recent planning efforts like the Collective Affordable Housing Strategic Plan, Equitable Growth Through Transit-Oriented Development Plan, and the Climate & Equity Plan include recommendations to increase housing diversity in Milwaukee. The Citywide Policy Plan and the City's Area Plans have policies that are still relevant today.



“Reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled: less parking, more transit oriented development; update zoning code to increase density (e.g. allow accessory dwelling units), eliminate parking minimums on development.”

**Milwaukee’s Climate & Equity Plan, 2023**

“At the heart of this Plan is the goal of advancing racial equity by providing a quality affordable home for every Milwaukeean...Changes to local zoning codes should be pursued that allow additional types of housing options and choices in a wider range of neighborhoods.”

**Milwaukee’s Collective Affordable Housing Strategic Plan, 2021**

“Cities must plan proactively for how to make it easy for people to move around and embrace the growing demand for walkable urban neighborhoods... [Transit Oriented Development] can create a rich mix of walkable places that offer shopping, entertainment, jobs and public spaces, which can all be reached on foot, bike or transit. Density is an Economic Decision... Updates to the City of Milwaukee zoning code will help facilitate the type of transit-oriented development envisioned by this Plan... Increase density... allow taller buildings... [and] creative enterprises in some residential districts.”

**Equitable Growth Through Transit Oriented Development Plan, 2018**

**Before launching the public planning process,** City staff reviewed all of these planning efforts and performed a detailed analysis of housing development over the last 20 years. A zoning consultant was hired to gain a national perspective on best practices in zoning. The following strengths, barriers, and opportunities were identified during the planning process.

### Strengths

- ▶ Milwaukee is a city of duplexes – more than 1/2 of the residentially zoned parcels allow two or more housing units.
- ▶ Mixed use is already encouraged by the zoning code – multi-family housing is already allowed in commercial districts and downtown.
- ▶ Milwaukee has some of the lowest parking requirements in the country with bonuses near transit and shared parking.
- ▶ By-right development – Milwaukee allows for by-right development which means that proposals that meet the zoning and building code requirements do not require discretionary review.
- ▶ Existing City plans demonstrate support and the need for more housing diversity and Transit-Oriented Development.
- ▶ The City supports existing homeowners keep up their homes through programs such as the Target Investment Area Loan Programs, Strong Home Loans Program, Home Rehabilitation Loan Program, Neighborhood Improvement Project, Compliance Loan Program, and Me2 Energy Efficiency Program
- ▶ The City supports prospective home buyers through programs such as the Homebuyer Assistance Program, Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee (HACM) Homeownership Programs, Homes MKE, Milwaukee Home Down Payment Assistance Program, and Roots Landscaping Incentive.

### Barriers & Opportunities

- ▶ Most new housing construction in the last 20 years was in the form single-family homes and larger multi-family buildings showing a lack of diversity in housing types being developed, and there is continued need for all types of housing.
- ▶ Detached Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), also known as carriage houses, back houses, rear cottages, and in-law suites, currently require special use approval or variances in all residential districts, and they are prohibited in single family districts.
- ▶ “Missing Middle” housing like townhomes, triplexes, fourplexes are restricted in many residential districts. Allowing these can open opportunities for smaller-scale and emerging developers, increasing access to the development field.
- ▶ 40% of residentially zoned parcels allow for only one housing unit.
- ▶ Density is regulated through mathematical equations. This encourages land consolidation and impacts the number and size of units rather than the form of buildings.
- ▶ 40% of new multi-family housing units developed in the last 20 years occurred under Planned Development zoning. The process for a planned development is customized, requiring significant time and expense (higher risk), making development of larger-scale developments inaccessible to smaller and emerging developers.

# What is Zoning & Why Change It?

## What is Zoning?

Zoning is how local governments regulate the use of property and the physical development of land. Every property in the City of Milwaukee has a legal zoning designation that determines how it can be utilized. Zoning regulates many aspects of a property including land use, building height, setbacks and lot coverage.

Among other things, zoning regulations are intended to...

- ▶ Promote public health and safety by separating incompatible land uses,
- ▶ Provide for the orderly growth and development of the City while preserving the character of Milwaukee’s neighborhoods, and
- ▶ Implement many of the land use and urban design goals of the City’s Comprehensive Plan.

## How Does Zoning Work?

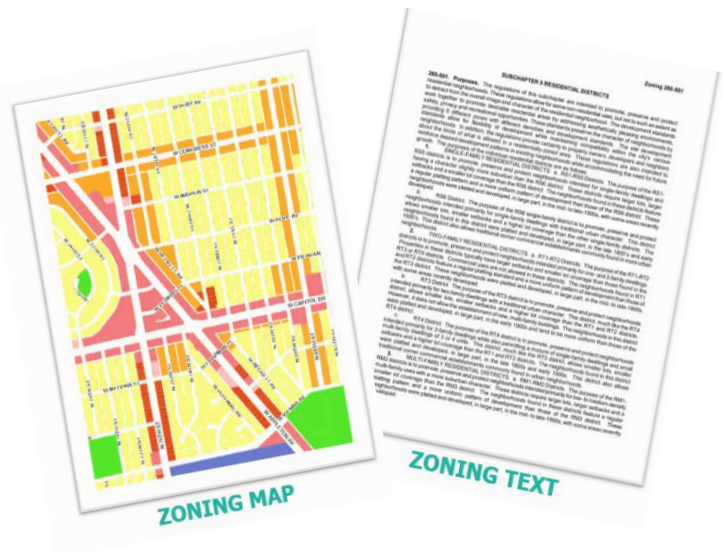
Zoning divides the city into different zones or districts, and each district has its own set of permitted land uses and design standards. Main categories include residential, commercial, and industrial; and these categories are further divided into many zoning districts like single-family residential and local business.

The City of Milwaukee’s Zoning Code includes both the zoning map and the zoning text. The zoning map establishes which district a particular property is in, while the zoning text establishes which activities are permitted in each district. The zoning text also includes standards for physical characteristics like building height and setbacks.

Sometimes a property owner will try to change their zoning designation, or seek relief from a particular rule. These actions require a public hearing and must be consistent with the City’s Comprehensive Plan.

## Zoning is NOT the Building Code

Zoning codes and building codes are two distinct sets of regulations. Building codes focus on the technical aspects of building construction to ensure buildings are safe and meet certain standards for fire safety, structural integrity, accessibility and more. The City has direct control of zoning codes but generally cannot modify building codes, which are regulated by the state and mostly consistent across the nation.





## How Can Zoning Limit Housing Choice & Growth?

While real estate markets are hyper local and there are many factors that influence the cost of housing, much of the variation in price can be explained by supply and demand. When more people want to live in an area than there are homes, or when the available homes do not meet their needs, developers can respond by creating more homes to meet demand.

When zoning prohibits many types of homes that may have lower cost, like multi-unit buildings, it can price many people out and result in less diverse neighborhoods. Zoning may also restrict the number of homes that can be built on a particular property, regardless of building size, meaning fewer and more expensive homes get built. These rules can put pressure on affordability by reducing the supply and diversity of new homes, and directly limit housing choice and growth.

## Equity in Zoning

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of zoning's impact on social and economic equity and the need for zoning reform that promotes access to housing and economic opportunities for all residents. Equitable zoning reform includes removing discriminatory practices and mitigating historical disparities, while furthering community goals for housing affordability, sustainability, and quality of life.

“While fairer, more inclusive zoning alone cannot end systemic racial and ethnic segregation, prevent the erosion of cultural communities that wish to remain intact, or dismantle long-established systems of privilege, it can be used as a tool to help achieve all those goals.”

-American Planning Association, Equity in Zoning Policy Guide (2022)

## Zoning is just one piece of the puzzle...

While changes to the zoning code are an important part of increasing housing diversity and affordability, zoning reform on its own will not create deeply affordable housing. Rather, changes to zoning rules should be viewed as complementary to the many collective efforts to promote housing affordability for all Milwaukeeans.



### Framework for Local Housing Reform

- 1 Create & preserve dedicated affordable housing units
- 2 Help households access & afford private market homes
- 3 Protect against displacement & unsafe housing conditions
- 4 Reduce barriers to supply



### Examples of Milwaukee Efforts

- ▶ City programs to create, rehab, & increase homeownership
- ▶ City Anti-Displacement Plan
- ▶ Community Development Grants Administration’s Consolidated Plan
- ▶ Community Development Alliance’s Collective Affordable Housing Strategic Plan
- ▶ Comprehensive Planning & Zoning Code Updates

Source: Through the Roof: What Communities Can Do About the High Cost of Rental Housing in America, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2021, available online: <https://tinyurl.com/4r9dk7yt>

# How Zoning Shaped Neighborhoods

## Before Zoning

Zoning is a **relatively new concept**. Prior to the 1920s and 1930s, cities, towns and villages were built **without it**. Patterns evolved organically to **meet basic needs**.



Different types of housing served **different budgets** and **stages of life** like students, singles, young families and aging adults.



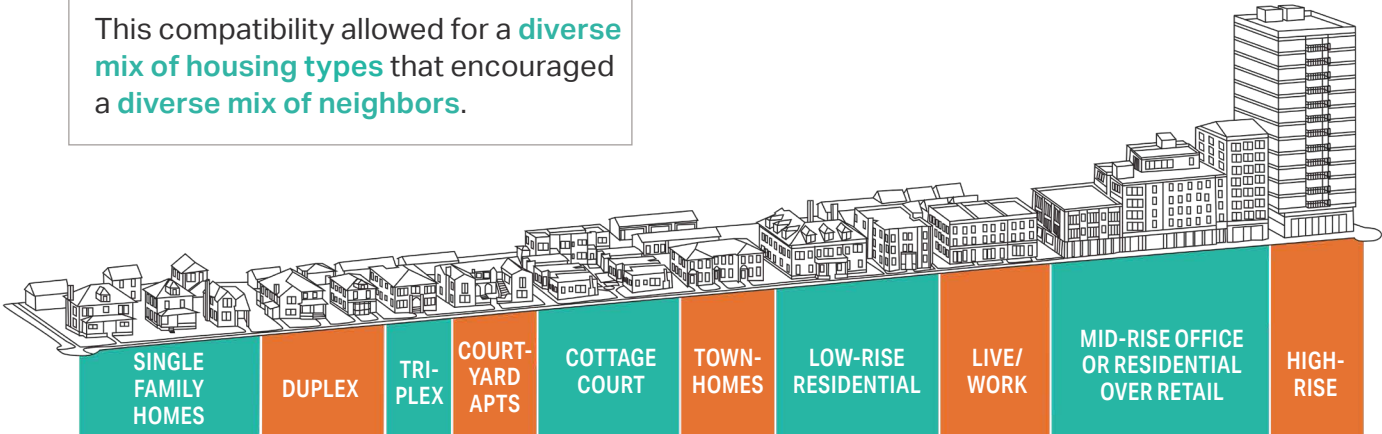
Shops, services, and other small businesses were located a **close, walkable distance** from homes.



It all worked because everything was built at a **compatible scale and intensity**.



This compatibility allowed for a **diverse mix of housing types** that encouraged a **diverse mix of neighbors**.

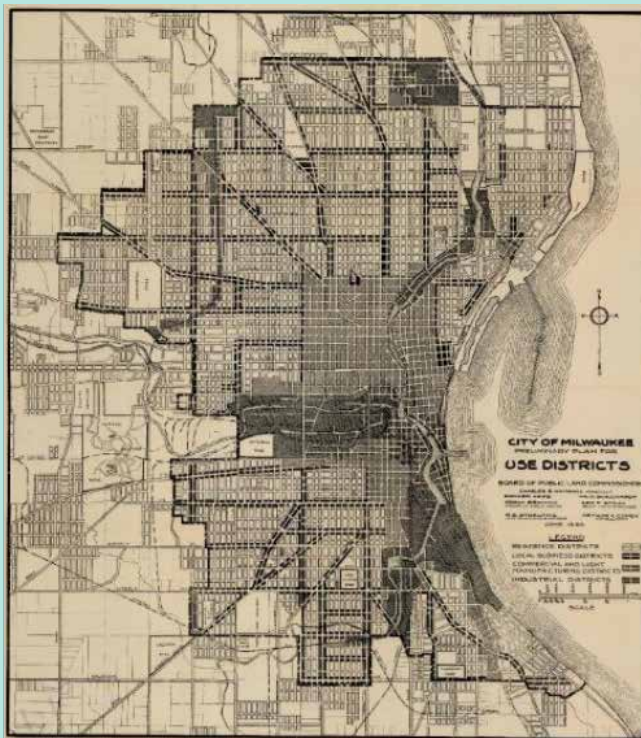


## After Zoning

But then the growth of industry brought **factories and other noxious uses** to the urban landscape. Suddenly we needed rules to **protect residents** from the negative impacts. Rules making sure that, moving forward, **incompatible uses were kept apart**.



The logical response was to create "zones" grouping **like uses together**.



▲ Milwaukee's first Zoning Map, 1920

This encouraged the development of **similar homes in similar sizes at similar prices**. Those with different budgets and needs were **no longer accommodated** in most neighborhoods. In addition to other factors, zoning contributed to racial and economic segregation.

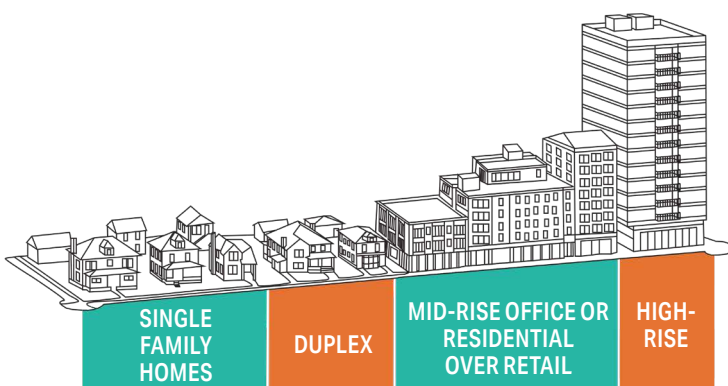


Shops, services and other amenities were **no longer within walking distance**. More people needed cars, **further reducing income available for housing**.

Those who want and can afford a single family home remain well served. **But others not so much.**

Historic housing types serving a diverse population are **no longer allowed** in most areas.

This makes our neighborhoods **increasingly similar** and our housing choices **increasingly limited**.





# Milwaukee's Zoning & Development History

The areas of the City of Milwaukee with the greatest housing type diversity developed organically before the City adopted its first zoning code in 1920. Different types of housing served different budgets and stages of life, neighborhoods were walkable, and resources were nearby. As Milwaukee continued to expand geographically, emphasis was placed on single-unit development and preventing the mix of uses.

## 1846

Milwaukee is incorporated as a City and begins to grow rapidly. The central area is repeatedly built and rebuilt over time as a compact area and diverse mix of uses.

## 1835

Land on the east and west sides of the Milwaukee River is divided into blocks and lots, allowing for the European settlement of Milwaukee. Native people had inhabited the area for over 11,000 years.

## 1890s

In 1890, Milwaukee's first streetcar system was introduced, making agricultural land outside the city center accessible for new development. Local shops, often with housing on upper floors, were built along the routes. The blocks in-between were developed with a diverse mix of single-family homes, duplexes, small apartment buildings, and neighborhood-serving businesses.

## 1920

**The first Zoning Code is introduced in Milwaukee and establishes limits on the number of homes that could be built on a lot, based on lot size.** It also set standards for height, setbacks, and lot coverage that were inconsistent with the city's historic development pattern.

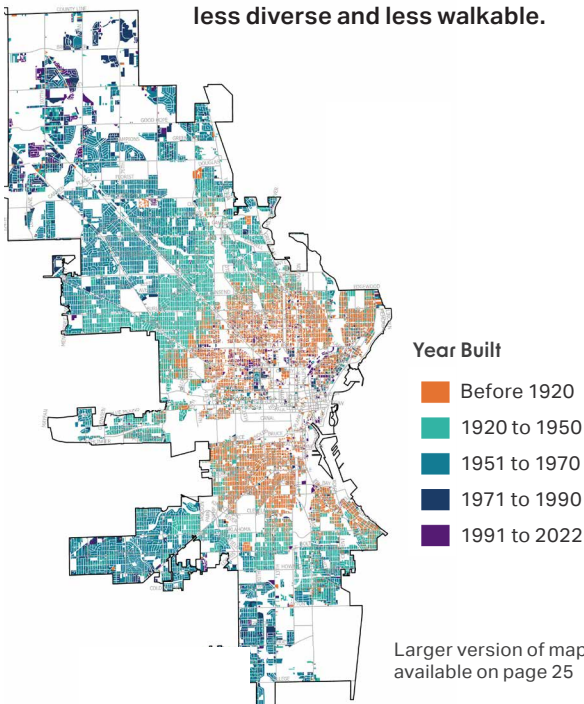
As a result, **existing neighborhoods became mostly non-conforming, while new residential areas became less diverse and less walkable.**

By 1920, much of the area bound by Capitol Drive, Oklahoma Avenue, Sherman Boulevard, and Lake Michigan had **developed organically without zoning regulations.**

## 1930s

Housing development ground to a halt during the Great Depression and didn't pick up again until after World War II. **Milwaukee's growing African American population faced intense housing discrimination, including restrictive covenants, which limited housing options for people of color.**

In 1938, the **Federal Homeowners Loan Corporation released a map** used in mortgage underwriting that rated older neighborhoods surrounding downtown as "hazardous", effectively "redlining" them from access to home loans. This lack of financing, combined with overly restrictive zoning rules, led to a sustained lack of investment in these neighborhoods, **perpetuating segregation and inequality that persists to this day.**





**1950s**

In 1951, the City adopted a new Zoning Code that expanded the number of zoning districts and added more regulations. Even though there was a housing shortage at the time, newly developing areas were zoned for very low densities which limited housing types and made walking to services or public transit impractical. In older neighborhoods closer to Downtown, the number of housing units that could be provided on a given lot was cut in half, **further limiting housing supply and diversity**. These artificial limits on housing supply remain mostly unchanged today.

**1960s**

In 1960, Milwaukee hit a peak population of 741,324, after which the population began to decline. The City's land area had doubled in just 15 years, and **newly annexed areas were developed at low densities based on new zoning rules**. Federal programs were introduced to increase homeownership and promote the construction of single-family homes, and this encouraged families to move to these newly developed areas or adjacent suburban communities. However, these **opportunities were not available to people of color**, who were left to compete for homes in older, non-conforming buildings in redlined neighborhoods.

**1985**

In 1985, the City's Zoning Code was updated to include new districts. Residential districts were further divided into single-family, two-family and multi-family districts, but **multi-family districts still covered the vast majority of the city**. Eight new zoning districts were established for the Downtown area. These districts specified the maximum size of new buildings through a complex formula which encouraged large amounts of passive open space. These rules are mostly unchanged today.

As Milwaukee's non-white population continued to grow, housing discrimination became a major focus of local civil rights leaders. This was also a **period of extensive and destructive change in the city's central area**; Freeways were constructed, arterial streets widened, and entire neighborhoods condemned and demolished in the name of urban renewal. Tens of thousands of Milwaukeeans were displaced, mostly people of color.

**2002**

In 2002 Milwaukee's Zoning Code was completely rewritten. Many areas of the city were rezoned from multi-family to single-family or two-family, prohibiting the construction of multi-family buildings in most of the city for the first time. This preserved the existing scale of neighborhood development, but also limited housing diversity. The new code also updated setback and lot coverage standards which brought most non-conforming buildings into compliance and allowed new traditional neighborhood development in more areas.

**2018**

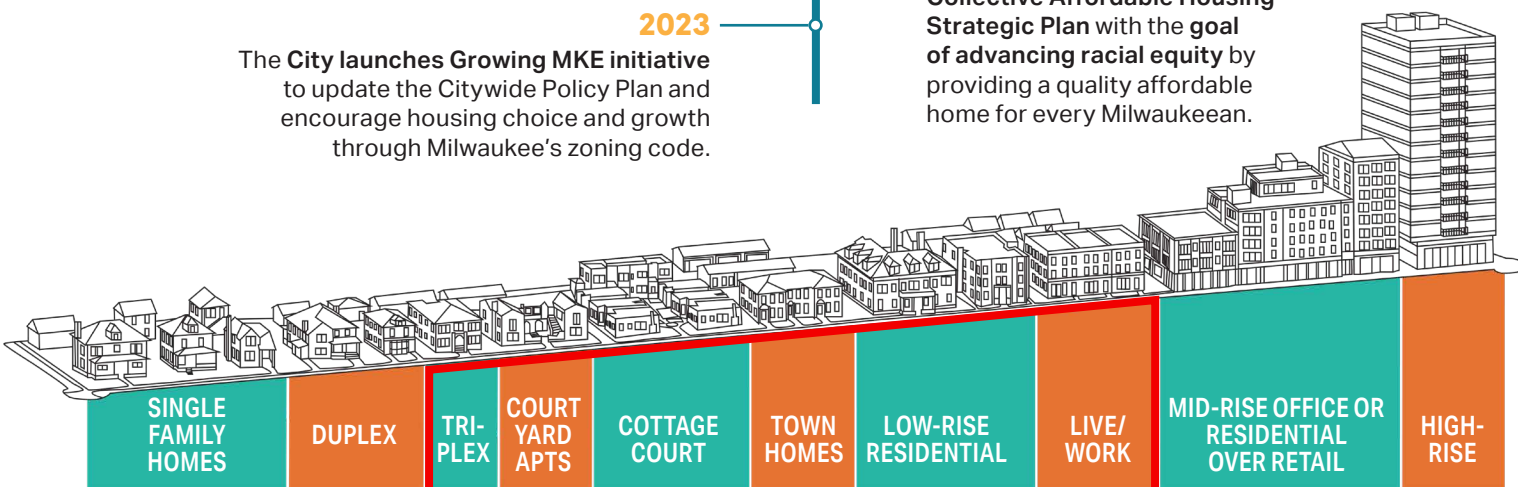
City releases an **Anti-Displacement Plan** with recommendations for **prioritizing choice and equity in neighborhood development**. A number of the Plan strategies have been implemented. Indicators are regularly monitored to track neighborhood change and identify neighborhoods at risk for displacement.

**2023**

The City launches **Growing MKE** initiative to update the Citywide Policy Plan and encourage housing choice and growth through Milwaukee's zoning code.

**2021**

Milwaukee's Community Development Alliance releases the **Collective Affordable Housing Strategic Plan** with the goal of **advancing racial equity** by providing a quality affordable home for every Milwaukeean.



NOT ALLOWED IN MOST RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

# Housing to Serve a Lifetime

The types of housing that work best for us change throughout our lives. Here are eight characters/households that have a variety of housing needs.

I'm in school and working part-time to cover expenses. All I really need is a place to study and sleep. Preferably somewhere where I can live without a car.



I'm trying to build a career and a life which means I'm at work or with friends most of the time. My budget is limited but I don't need a lot of space.



I don't have it all figured out just yet and need flexibility. I'm trying to save some money and keep my options open. I need something affordable and shorter term.



We don't want a big single-family home, but we do want to put down roots with a home that fits our needs.



These two are a handful that I'm raising myself. I need something family-friendly that is easy to keep up with.



Grandma is moving in, and we need more space, preferably in a place with a lot of neighbors and kids.



Living alone and loving it! Now in my 50s and newly single, I need a smaller, affordable place.



Our kids are all grown and on their own, leaving us with a lot of unused space to keep up. We'd love to downsize and stay in our neighborhood in an accessible space.



# Housing Types Defined

## Single-Family

A 1-unit detached residential building, typically with a private yard space.



## Accessory Dwelling Unit

A small, 1-unit home that may be detached or attached to a primary residence on the same property (also known as an in-law suite or carriage house).



## Cottage Court

Single-unit houses that are oriented around a shared courtyard space.



## Duplex

A two-unit residential building with units stacked or side-by-side.



## Triplex

A three-unit residential building of similar size and scale to a single-family or duplex residential building.



## Fourplex

A four-unit residential building, often with side-by-side units or stacked with two units on the ground floor and two units above.



## Townhouse

A 1-unit home connected to other 1-unit homes by shared wall(s). Depending on the number of units, a set of townhouses could be considered a duplex, triplex, fourplex, or multi-family building.



## Small Multi-Family Building

A small residential building with a similar height to nearby homes and approximately 5-8 dwelling units.



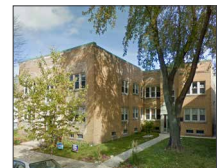
## Live/Work Unit

A building with commercial or office space on the ground-floor and a conventional residential unit behind or upstairs.



## Low-Rise Multi-Family

A medium-sized residential building with multiple side-by-side or stacked residential units that is two to four stories tall.



## Courtyard Multi-Family

A medium-sized residential building with side-by-side or stacked residential units around a shared courtyard.



## Mid-Rise Multi-Family

A medium-sized structure with multiple residential units that is five to eight stories tall.



## Mixed-Use Multi-Family

A structure with multiple residential units, as well as commercial or office space that is usually on the ground floor. Heights vary between low-rise to high-rise.



## High-Rise Multi-Family

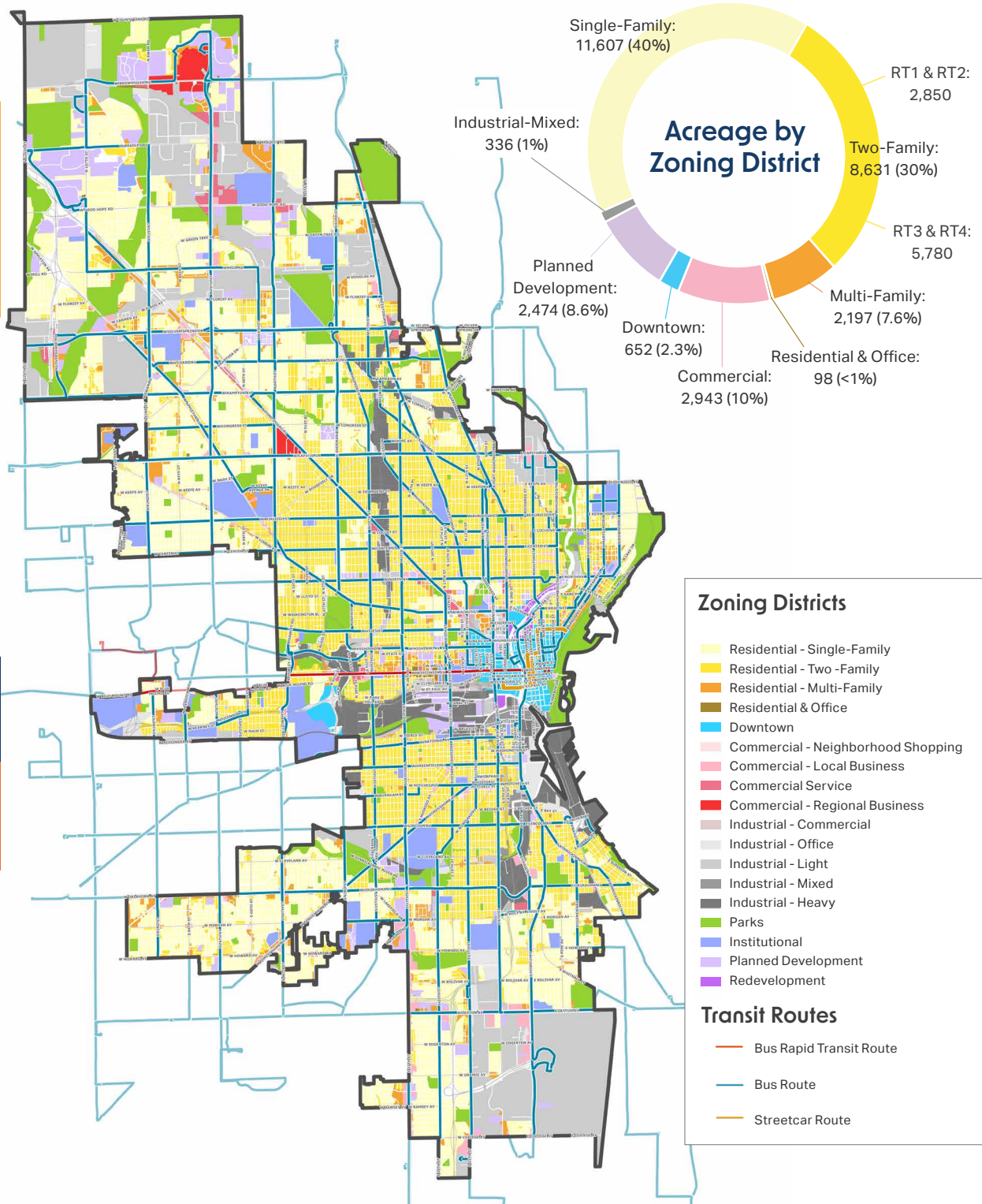
A large structure with multiple residential units that is at least nine stories tall.





# Overview

## Existing Zoning in Milwaukee

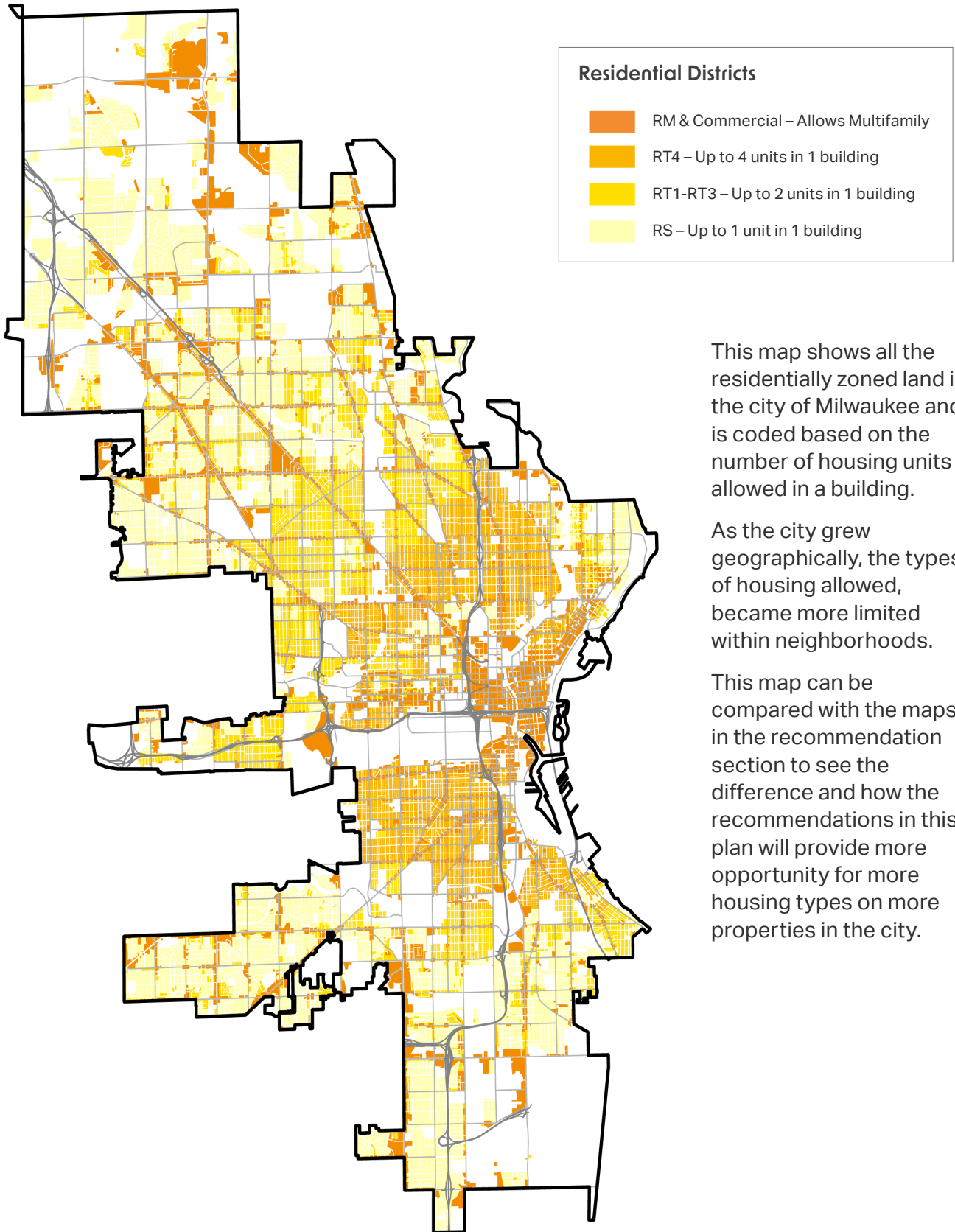




## Milwaukee Zoning Districts That Allow Housing

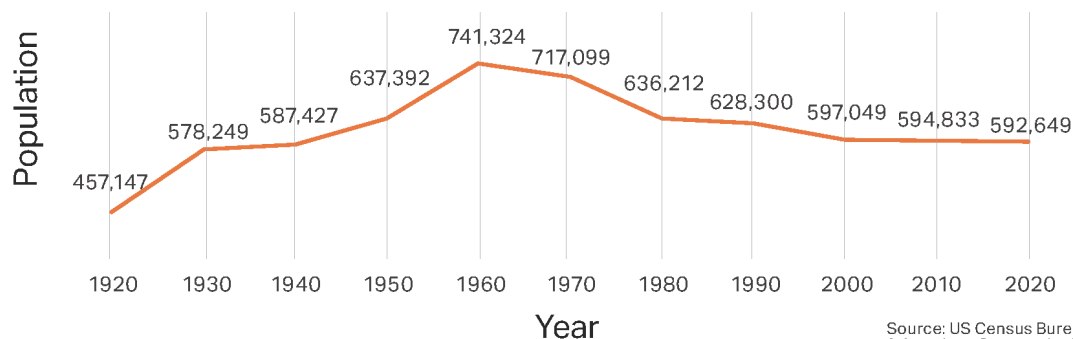
Districts		Description	
RS1-RS6	Single-Family Residential Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 housing unit per dwelling</li> <li>Large lots, setbacks &amp; small lot coverage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed mid- to late-1900s as well as recent</li> <li>Traditional &amp; suburban character</li> </ul>
RT1-RT4	Two-Family Residential Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1-2 housing units per dwelling</li> <li>RT-RT2 developed in mid- to late-1900s</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT3-RT4 developed in the late 1800s/early 1900s</li> <li>RT4 allows up to 4 housing units &amp; corner commercial uses</li> </ul>
RM1-RM2	Multi-Family Residential Districts Low to Medium Density	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low- to medium-density multi-family</li> <li>Suburban character</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed mid- to late-1900s as well as recent</li> </ul>
RM3	Multi-Family Residential District Medium Density	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medium density multi-family</li> <li>Urban character</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed in the early 1900s</li> <li>Allows corner commercial uses</li> </ul>
RM4-RM7	Multi-Family Residential Districts High Density	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High density multi-family</li> <li>Allows commercial uses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Urban character</li> <li>Range of lot sizes, small setbacks, high % of lot coverage</li> </ul>
RO1-RO2	Residential & Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allows both office &amp; residential uses</li> <li>Residential character</li> <li>RO2 developed in late 1800s &amp; early 1900s</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Permits the conversion of residential buildings into offices</li> <li>RO1 developed in mid- to late- 1900s</li> </ul>
NS1-NS2	Neighborhood Shopping Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residential &amp; neighborhood serving commercial uses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NS1 is suburban in character, larger lots &amp; setbacks</li> <li>NS2 is urban in character, smaller lots &amp; setbacks</li> </ul>
LB1-LB3	Local Business Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary commercial districts</li> <li>Provide a wide range of goods and services, including residential units.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LB1 is more suburban</li> <li>LB2-LB3 are urban, with LB3 allowing taller buildings</li> </ul>
CS	Commercial Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Areas where business and person service uses can be accommodated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lower density multi-family residential</li> </ul>
RB1-RB2	Regional Business Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional or citywide shopping, employment, or high-density residential uses</li> <li>Allows large-scale &amp; tall buildings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RB1 has a suburban development pattern</li> <li>RB2 is more urban with smaller lots &amp; setbacks</li> </ul>
C9A-C9H	Downtown Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>C9A is high density residential, in highly urban environments</li> <li>C9B-C9H allows for a greater range of mix of uses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Districts allow for the greatest density in the city</li> <li>C9H is intended for manufacturing &amp; can include live-work residential units with extra review</li> </ul>
IM	Industrial-Mixed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conversion of certain older industrial multi-story buildings to residential, commercial or office uses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Urban in character</li> <li>Minimal setbacks, yards, and minimal off-street parking</li> </ul>
PD: GPD, DPD	Planned Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Custom zoning for complex developments</li> <li>Intended to allow flexibility</li> <li>Promote creativity, variety &amp; environmental sensitivity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage development compatible with its surroundings &amp; consistent with Comprehensive Plan</li> </ul>

## Existing Residential Zoning by Units Allowed



# Milwaukee Housing by the Numbers

## Population Change in the City of Milwaukee, 1920 to 2020

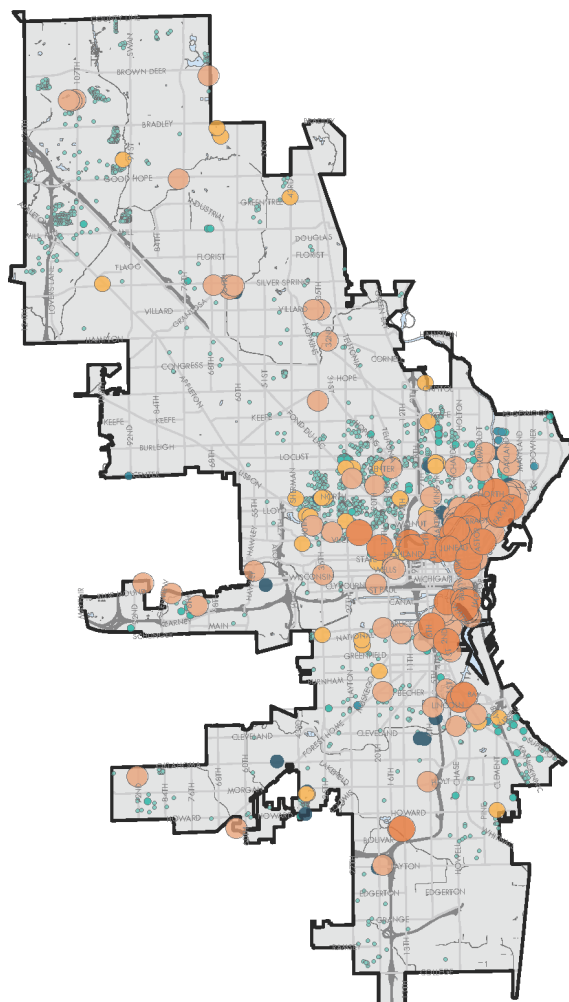


Milwaukee's population reached its peak of 741,000 residents in 1960. Since then, the city's population has declined to approximately 590,000 residents.

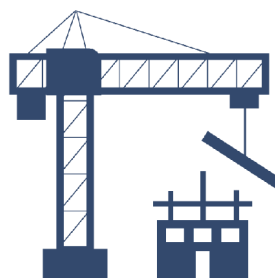
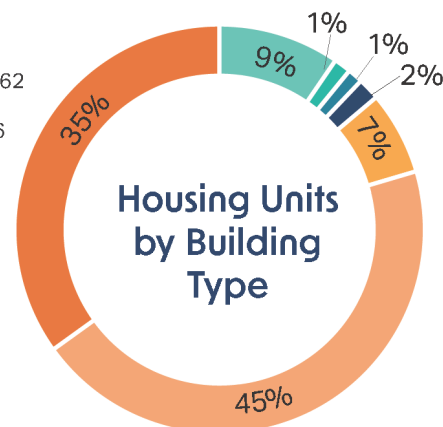
Source: US Census Bureau Decennial Census (1920 to 2010) & American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, 2020

## Housing Built in Milwaukee, 2002-2022

### New Housing Units By Building Type



- 1 Unit (Single Family), 2,162
- 2 Units (Two Family), 306
- 3 to 4 Units, 271
- 5 to 8 Units, 394
- 9 to 24 Units, 1,493
- 25 to 99 Units, 10,112
- 100+ Units, 7,913

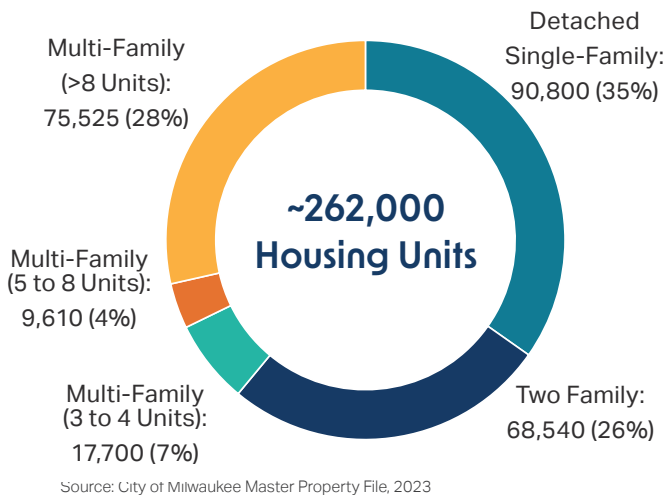


**+22,000 new housing units gained**



**-9,800 housing units lost**

# Housing Today in Milwaukee



## Households

In 2022, there were about 233,850 households in Milwaukee.

- ▶ About 59% were renters and 41% are owners; homeownership has declined by about 9 percent since 2010.
- ▶ 19% of households (43,800) are senior households (age 65+).
- ▶ Milwaukee has a growing number of single-persons households, including many seniors.
- ▶ Household sizes are projected to continue shrinking, while the number of 1-person households will continue to grow, indicating a need for more smaller units.\*

Sources: American Community Survey & City of Milwaukee Housing Affordability Report; \*John Johnson, Marquette University, <https://tinyurl.com/w6j26j4b>

## Renting in Milwaukee

In 2022, there were about 140,560 households that rent their homes in Milwaukee.



- ▶ Median gross rent was \$982/month and continues to rise, outpacing household incomes, leaving renters feeling financially squeezed.
- ▶ A “healthy” vacancy rate for rental housing is about 8%. Milwaukee’s rental vacancy rate is about 6.2%, indicating a fewer available housing units, resulting in higher demand and rent prices.
- ▶ An estimated 33,975 renter households do not have a personal vehicle, indicating a need and strong desire for walkable neighborhoods with access to transit and other transportation modes.

Sources: American Community Survey & City of Milwaukee Housing Affordability Report

## Housing Cost Burden

Households that spend more than 30% of their annual income on their housing are considered housing cost burdened.



- ▶ In 2022, about 98,750 households in Milwaukee were housing cost burdened. 71,900 of these households rent their housing – 51% of renters are housing cost burdened.
- ▶ About 33,800 households are considered severely housing cost burdened, spending more than 50% of their income on housing.
- ▶ There are 63,100 renter households that earn less than \$33,500 per year and are considered very low income.
- ▶ There are only about 43,600 housing units that could be affordable to those households, a deficit of about 19,500 units.

Sources: American Community Survey & City of Milwaukee Housing Affordability Report



### Housing + Transportation Costs



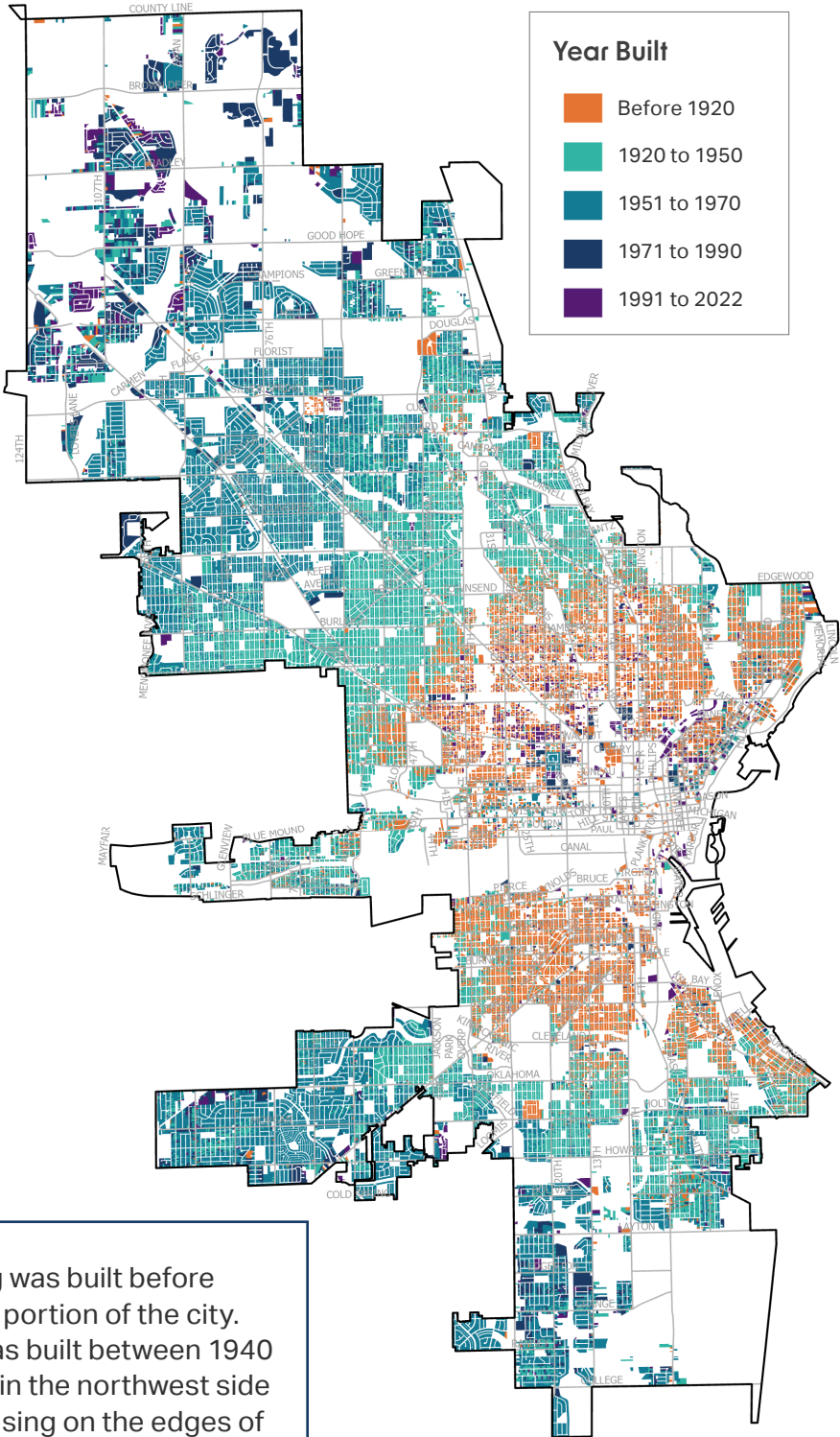
\$10,700+

#### Annual Spending on Operation & Maintenance of a Car

The average cost of owning, operating and maintaining a car adds up to about \$10,700 per year.\* When housing is located farther from jobs, the need for access to a car increases and this adds to household expenses. In 2022, about 38,500 households (17%) in Milwaukee had no vehicle access. This indicates that there is a great need to create walkable neighborhoods and transit-oriented development.

\*Source: MoneyGeek.com

### Housing Built by Year in Milwaukee



Over 42% of Milwaukee’s housing was built before 1940 and is located in the central portion of the city. Another 32% of housing stock was built between 1940 and 1959; much of this is located in the northwest side and far south side of the city. Housing on the edges of the city were developed later - in the 1960s to 1980s.

# Housing in the Next 20 Years



## Projected Population Growth

**627,400 People by 2040**

Source: UW Madison Applied Population Laboratory for the Wisconsin Department of Administration



## Declining Household Size

**2.35 People Per Household**

Since 1990, there has been a 10% decline in average household size. This decline is projected to continue, dropping from today's household size of 2.5 to 2.35.



## Projected Housing Need

**35,000 More Housing Units Needed by 2040**

Assuming a 10% vacancy rate, declining household size, and projected population of 627,400 in 2040.

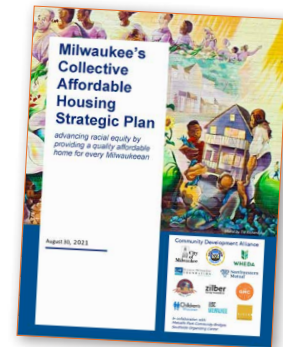
**Milwaukee's Collective Affordable Housing Strategic Plan** reflects the aspirations and the commitment of a broad range of stakeholders to improve housing stability for Milwaukeeans.

Included in the strategies to create new production models for housing, the plan recommends changes "to local zoning codes should be pursued that allow additional types of housing options and choices in a wider range of neighborhoods."

**Milwaukee's Collective Affordable Housing Strategic Plan, 2021, p. 9**  
Community Development Alliance

The four priority Strategy Areas identified through this collective work are:

- ▶ Systems to Increase Black & Latino Homeownership
- ▶ Systems to Preserve Black & Latino Homeownership
- ▶ Systems to Increase Affordability of Housing for Families Making \$7.25 - \$15 per Hour
- ▶ Systems to Preserve Affordable Housing for Families Making \$7.25 - \$15 per Hour



## City of Milwaukee's Annual Housing Affordability Report

The Growing MKE Plan incorporates analysis of existing housing conditions, needs, and future support and demand, which is documented in the City's Housing Affordability Report, pursuant to Wisc. Stat. 66.10013. The City's Housing Affordability Report is updated every year and will be utilized to refine and prioritize implementation of the Growing MKE recommendations. The report projections do not consider expanding efforts to further accelerate population growth, which would create an even greater need for housing diversity, choice and growth.

For more information about the state of housing in the city of Milwaukee, please visit the City's Plans & Studies website: [milwaukee.gov/DCD/Planning/PlansStudies](https://milwaukee.gov/DCD/Planning/PlansStudies)

# Engagement Process

Growing MKE sought out and received an abundance of feedback from neighborhood organizations, developers, property owners, residents and community members. It was exciting to hear a range of thoughts and visions for the future of housing choice and growth and Milwaukee. The feedback received from community members through surveys, at open house meetings, focus groups, and advisory committees, has helped shaped the formation of this plan and the goals, policies, and recommendations in the following sections.

A citywide plan update requires engaging the community in many different ways. The Growing MKE team focused on meeting people where they are and put equitable outreach at the forefront. Over 80% of all in-person engagement activities were located in or adjacent to Qualified Census Tracts (QCTs) and/or Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas (NRSAs).



## Engagement Highlights

- ▶ **5 Open House** Public Meetings
- ▶ **22 "Office Hour"** Events at Libraries
- ▶ **13 Focus Groups / community meetings** with neighborhood groups & with local developers
- ▶ **16+ Pop-up Engagement Tables** at Senior Centers, Farmers Markets, & other community events
- ▶ **3 TAC** and **3 CAC Meetings**
- ▶ **2 Surveys**
- ▶ **800+ views** of meeting recordings & the "What is Zoning?" Video
- ▶ **3,500+** community members engaging on [engage.milwaukee.gov/GrowingMKE](https://engage.milwaukee.gov/GrowingMKE)
- ▶ **Outreach materials** + meetings in English, Spanish, & Hmong



### Trying something new: "Office Hours" & Displays at Libraries

The Growing MKE team was able to provide more in-person access to the project by setting up pop-up office hours at each library. There were also interactive displays set up at every library where people could leave comments throughout the fall of 2023.



# Partnerships, Supporters & Advisors

## Partnership with Community Development Alliance (CDA)

In partnership with CDA, staff held focus groups with residents to discuss the types of housing they would like to see in their neighborhoods. The focus groups were held in neighborhoods that have seen disinvestment and sought to reach people not usually engaged in planning discussions.

## Support from AARP

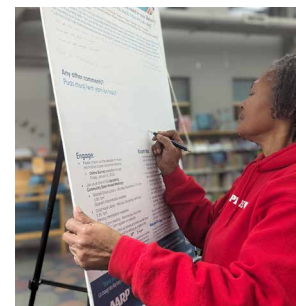
The City of Milwaukee was awarded an AARP Community Challenge grant to support engagement for the Growing MKE project. The grant helped fund bringing on a local non-profit, Walnut Way, to extend the Growing MKE outreach efforts - allowing the team to better meet people where they are. This included pop-ups at community events and at Senior Centers, where we heard important input about the needs of Milwaukee's aging population.

## Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

The CAC was a diverse group of members from community organizations and neighborhoods throughout Milwaukee. They helped inform the process and outreach materials and provided input on housing regulations through their leadership and commitment to the community. They also helped get the word out and inform their neighbors, stakeholders, and community partners about the Growing MKE planning process and how to engage. The CAC met three times throughout the planning process.

## Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

The TAC included architects, developers, planners, housing advocates, and researchers who provided on-the-ground knowledge of how the zoning code and policies can impact developing and accessing housing in Milwaukee. The TAC met three times during the course of planning process and provided input on housing zoning code policies and regulations.





# Themes from Public Comments

## Growth

### **Revitalization & Economic Development:**

Population growth and economic growth go hand in hand. Growth means reinvestment in under-invested neighborhoods.

### **Equity & Resilience:**

Economic growth and development should be distributed equitably throughout the city and contributes to a healthy planet.

### **Density:**

Population density supports public transportation and shopping, encourages housing diversity, and creates walkable neighborhoods.

### **Livability:**

Population growth will show that Milwaukee is an attractive place to live and work for people of all ages.

## Affordability

### **Ownership:**

First-time and low-income home buyers should have more affordable housing options.

### **Neighborhood Choice:**

Every neighborhood needs affordable housing options.

## Neighborhoods & Quality of Life

### **Quality Neighborhoods:**

Vibrant, walkable cities make it easier to walk to bus stops, grocery stores, restaurants, shopping, and health care.

### **Neighborhood Revitalization:**

New and restored housing can make neighborhoods safer and more enjoyable places to live.

## Housing Diversity

### **Housing Variety:**

New housing types such as tiny homes and container homes should be encouraged. Development of townhomes, accessory dwelling units, and mixed-use multi-family developments were greatly supported.

### **Equity & Resilience:**

There is a need for more affordable, senior, multi-generational, accessible, and mixed-income housing.

## Building Design

### **Quality Design:**

New construction should be quality design that fits in with the community character.

## Sustainability & Resilience

### **Healthy Environments:**

New housing should be energy efficient and eco-friendly.

### **Parks:**

New housing should not sacrifice existing parks and trees.

## Transportation

### **Transportation Options:**

Be considerate of how walking, transportation options and parking policy impact neighborhoods and housing choice.

### **Safe Streets:**

Milwaukee has the opportunity to make its streets safer places to walk, bike, and drive.

## Additional

### **Fair & Quality Housing Conditions:**

Officials must hold bad landlords accountable to provide fair and quality housing for all residents.

# Goals & Policies

The Growing MKE policies and recommendations within this plan support citywide goals in economic development, connectivity, housing choice & equity, climate resilience, and health.

## Citywide Goals



### **Housing Choice & Equity:**

Everyone, regardless of age or ability, has healthy, stable housing they can afford.



### **Economic Development:**

Milwaukee is economically resilient with family-supporting jobs and a strong tax base to support City services, and thriving businesses



### **Walkable & Connected:**

Milwaukee is a city of vibrant neighborhoods where amenities can be reached by foot, bike or transit.



### **Healthy and Thriving:**

Housing stock is healthy and neighborhoods will be safe with jobs and resources within a close distance.



### **Sustainable and Resilient:**

New development helps reduce Milwaukee's carbon footprint through building design, and housing stock is resilient

## Policy Sections

- I. **Housing Choice & Access** page 31
- II. **Social Connections & Health** page 35
- III. **Walkable Neighborhoods & Transit-Oriented Development** page 36
- IV. **Neighborhood Development & Urban Design** page 39

# I. Housing Choice & Access

Neighborhoods with a diversity of housing types and a variety of price points are more likely to provide housing choices that meet the needs of all households across the income spectrum. All neighborhoods should allow for a variety of housing choices, and increasing housing diversity and supply will help create a more equitable city for all Milwaukeeans. Policies and programs should be designed to remove barriers that perpetuate racial and socioeconomic segregation and should expand homeownership as a tool for building wealth, while welcoming rental housing in all neighborhoods.

---

## A. Diversify housing types and increase the amount of housing available for people of all incomes, ages, abilities, and household types throughout the city.

---

1. Update the zoning code to permit a variety of housing types throughout city neighborhoods including single-family homes, accessory dwelling units, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, townhomes, cottage courts, and small multi-family dwellings. *Details on specific proposed code updates can be found beginning on page 44.*
2. Update the zoning code to reduce barriers for live-work and home-based businesses.
3. Permit accessory dwelling units (ADUs) throughout the city, as well as other housing types that can facilitate intergenerational households, aging in place, or rental income for homeowners.
4. Encourage housing that accommodates diverse types of living arrangements and needs, including multi-generational housing, intentional communities, group housing, and supportive housing.
5. Encourage the development of accessible housing for individuals with disabilities. This includes promoting universal design principles and accessibility standards in new construction.
6. Continue to monitor market trends and ensure that the mix of available housing includes options that appeal to a diverse population including students, young professionals, single adults, couples, households with children, seniors, people with disabilities, and people in need of supportive services.
7. Support programs and standards that allow residents to age in place and remain in homes through different life stages.
8. Support the location of transitional housing and group residential uses – including adult family homes, foster homes, shelter care facilities, and community living arrangements in neighborhoods throughout the city, especially neighborhoods that currently lack these options. When reviewing proposals for these uses, ensure that proposed plans of operation and building and site design will not generate negative neighborhood impacts. If a proposal may cause a concentration of similar uses within a neighborhood, analyze whether the additional concentration will have an adverse impact on neighborhood health and safety.
9. Advocate for changes to applicable building codes that could safely allow for more affordable residential design, more affordable construction types, and universal design standards.

---

**B. Increase access to housing development by making improvements to zoning processes.**

---

1. Improve the usability of the zoning document by adding visuals and creating user-friendly supporting materials to ensure that all applicants have equitable access.
2. Update ordinances to streamline processes for minor modifications to Detailed Planned Developments and proposals in overlay zones that are compliant with applicable standards.
3. Explore process changes that may increase efficiencies during the development review process to reduce time and costs associated with development review such as setting up a dedicated Zoning Section in the Department of Neighborhood Services.

---

**C. Provide housing choices for all income levels throughout the city of Milwaukee and increase housing stability.**

---

1. Provide safe, healthy, and quality rental options for a variety of income levels and household types in keeping with the equity goals of this Plan.
2. Increase the supply of supportive housing with features and services for people with disabilities and other special needs.
3. Promote the preservation of existing affordable housing, both subsidized and naturally occurring, throughout the city, particularly in areas at risk for displacement.
4. Promote the creation of publicly subsidized affordable and mixed-income housing throughout the city and prioritize affordable housing in areas with a current lack of affordable units.
5. Advocate for Local Authority to enact Inclusionary Zoning Ordinances.
6. Expand housing options and supports for people vulnerable to housing insecurity such as formerly incarcerated people.
7. Implement recommendations in the Anti-Displacement Plan, such as pursuing preference programs in newly created affordable housing units for existing residents at risk of displacement, and the Department of City Development encouraging affordable and/or mixed-income developments as it solicits and evaluates development proposals for City-owned properties in areas where displacement may be occurring or is at risk of occurring.



## D. Assist existing homeowners to retain their homes and help foster homeownership opportunities.

1. Proactively change and create systems to close the racial equity gap in homeownership, including supporting policies and programs outlined in Milwaukee's Collective Affordable Housing Strategic Plan.
2. Continue to deploy and adapt programs to assist low- and moderate-income homeowners in making needed home repairs.
3. Assist homeowners in making needed accessibility improvements for individuals with disabilities and to allow for aging in place.
4. Support efforts that prevent mortgage foreclosures for existing homeowners.
5. Identify barriers and develop strategies to increase the supply of owner-occupied multi-family units throughout the city and ensure that these unit types are eligible for programs designed to promote homeownership.
6. Support cooperative housing, community land trusts, and other innovative ownership models that can reduce cost and/or ensure long-term affordability for homeowners.
7. Preserve naturally occurring affordable housing options and encourage the development of lower-cost housing types that make market-rate homeownership more attainable, such as manufactured housing, cottages, and tiny homes.
8. Continue to support the work of community-based organizations engaged in the acquisition, rehabilitation, and resale of homes for affordable homeownership.
9. Grow homebuyer counseling and down payment assistance and invest resources in ensuring that every income-eligible resident has access to these services to become a homeowner.

"As Milwaukee continues to grow and evolve, it is crucial to review and refine the processes guiding the city's development to ensure they are efficient, fair, and responsive to current needs and goals for housing growth, choice, and predictability... changes can lead to a more streamlined, equitable, and user-friendly zoning process, driving growth while maintaining the quality and integrity of our city's developments."

**Code Assessment & Recommendations for the City of Milwaukee, pg. 41**

Prepared by PlaceMakers & DPZ CoDesign

### What is "affordable" housing?

Affordable housing is a term used to describe housing in which the resident pays no more than 30 percent of their household income on housing costs. The term is used to apply to both subsidized and naturally occurring affordable housing. Even when housing is not subsidized, housing may be considered affordable when compared to average market rents or home prices.

---

## E. Reduce homelessness and provide assistance to those who may become homeless.

---

1. Support efforts to eliminate homelessness and expand funding for homeless prevention and outreach.
2. Preserve, improve and expand public housing that serves the lowest income residents.
3. Continue to convene regular communication between government agencies, nonprofits, and business leaders to identify and implement strategies to reduce homelessness and support the unhoused population.

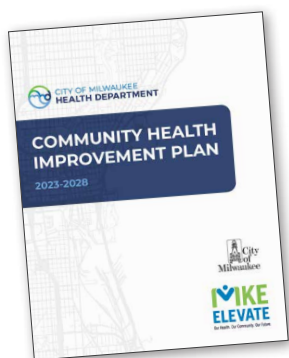
---

## F. Provide and maintain high-quality public housing and community service programs.

---

1. Continue to integrate a variety of housing types and price points with public housing and the surrounding community.
2. Adapt public housing for a broad range of uses and needs, such as assisted living for seniors and provide services for aging in place.
3. Help public housing residents and Housing Choice Voucher Program participants acquire the skills needed to increase income and self-sufficiency by integrating critical services within public housing.

**MKE Elevate** supports a Milwaukee where all people are thriving in safe, healthy, and equitable neighborhoods free from oppression by aligning strategies and building power, partnerships, access to resources, and opportunities for collective advocacy in community-identified priority areas.



“[T]he home environment and buildings in which people spend time can be sources of exposure to stressors and environmental contaminants like lead, asbestos, indoor air pollution, and other toxins.

By 2028, we will increase homeownership in Milwaukee and improve housing conditions.”

MKE Elevate: A Community Health Improvement Plan, p. 31-32  
Milwaukee Health Department

## II. Social Connections & Health

Safe, clean, and socially supportive neighborhoods are stronger and more attractive to residents and businesses. The quality of housing and neighborhoods plays a pivotal role as a social determinant of health and can have profound effects on individuals' physical and mental well-being. Gradual or incremental improvements can significantly enhance the quality and stability of neighborhoods, and reinvestment and development can catalyze large-scale neighborhood transformation. Attractive and well-maintained neighborhoods also foster a sense of pride and ownership among residents, business owners, and neighborhood organizations.

---

### A. Coordinate resources to support and enhance neighborhood development, reinvestment, and stabilization efforts.

---

1. Facilitate equitable access to capital and credit for development activities that promote the long-term economic and social viability of the community.
2. Focus on high-impact residential, commercial, civic, and infrastructure projects that represent a significant and visible investment in the neighborhood and have the potential to leverage additional investment.
3. Continue and expand current programs to improve existing housing stock, with a focus on removing health hazards.
4. Geographically cluster investments in housing renovations, infill, and redevelopment to encourage additional neighborhood development and investment.
5. Work within neighborhoods to build capacity and strengthen the ability of Community Development Corporations and nonprofit organizations to perform effectively as vehicles for neighborhood renewal stability and quality of life improvements.
6. Continue to encourage formation of community organizations, neighborhood associations, block clubs, etc., and continue to support neighborhood and business improvement programs.
7. Support neighborhood placemaking efforts, such as the development of signage and art and community gardens, to facilitate the development of unique neighborhood identities.
8. Continue to expand resources available for landlords and tenants, such training, eviction prevention services, referral services and a single point of contact to assist tenants access programs and services.
9. Continue to monitor the impact of short-term rentals ("tourist rooming houses") on local neighborhoods and housing markets and explore potential regulations to address negative impacts.

### III. Walkable Neighborhoods & Transit-Oriented Development

Neighborhoods that foster walkability and connectivity can promote healthier, more sustainable and more equitable communities. Central to walkability is housing density in close proximity to a range of amenities, enabling residents to conveniently meet their daily needs. This development pattern benefits a broad spectrum of individuals, including seniors, children, individuals with disabilities, and non-drivers. Furthermore, walkable neighborhoods are increasingly sought after, bolstering market appeal and property values.

A connected neighborhood is well served by public transit, and efforts to grow the housing supply should be coordinated with existing and planned transit service. Transit Oriented Development (TOD) is an approach that promotes compact, mixed-use development within walking distance of public transit. TOD provides more homes in places where residents can have easy access to jobs, services, and amenities without needing a car, supporting walkability and climate goals.

---

#### A. Foster walkable, accessible, and healthy neighborhoods by encouraging a range of uses.

---

1. Identify and promote opportunities to integrate new housing, mixed use, and a variety of housing options into existing neighborhoods.
2. Encourage smaller neighborhood-serving businesses with compatible hours of service such as cafes, small retail, personal services, and personal instruction schools at the corners of neighborhoods and blocks to provide amenities near residential neighborhoods.
3. Increase the housing diversity and residential density of neighborhoods citywide, and prioritize higher density mixed-use and multi-family development along commercial and transit corridors.
4. Support the rezoning of properties at commercial nodes to districts that allow for the development of higher density residential and mixed-use destinations, especially in locations where the current zoning is based on a previous use, there is transit access, adjoining or nearby parcels are zoned for commercial or higher-density residential, and/or the Area Plan recommends another type of development.
5. Support housing development that provides access to green space and recreational opportunities.
6. Explore zoning code updates for lower-density commercial districts to encourage walkable environments and more housing and mixed-use development.
7. Encourage development where there is existing transportation and utility infrastructure and ensure that new development plans support the City's goals for walkable neighborhoods and reduced greenhouse emissions.
8. Increase the amount of land zoned for mixed-use residential and commercial development along transit corridors to encourage the development of walkable neighborhoods.



## B. Foster walkable, accessible, and healthy neighborhoods through urban design.

1. Encourage residential building and site design that improves the pedestrian experience at the street level with landscaping, connecting sidewalks, front porches, rear garages, windows facing the street, and courtyards.
2. Encourage commercial and mixed-use building design that activates the street with minimal setbacks and traditional storefront windows where appropriate.
3. Reduce or eliminate minimum parking requirements to reduce housing costs and promote walkable neighborhoods, particularly in areas well served by transit.
4. Along auto-oriented corridors, changes to the street and built environment should encourage the transition from an auto-oriented corridor to an accessible and pedestrian-safe urban environment.
5. With changes to the built environment utilize an approach such as Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) to increase the sense of security and safety in neighborhoods, particularly in and near commercial and industrial areas.
6. Development should engage with public streets, plazas, sidewalks and paths. Buildings and landscaped areas should present a well-designed face to the public realm, with active uses on the ground floor, with frequent windows and doors. As new development occurs, seek opportunities to make safety and multi-modal mobility improvements to adjacent sidewalks and streets to implement the Complete Streets Policy.

### What is a commercial node?

Commercial nodes clusters of businesses that are generally located near intersections with one or more arterial roads. These areas of local business provide the goods and services for residents in the surrounding neighborhoods.

### The City of Milwaukee Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan & Gathering Space Feasibility Study

envision a city in which every resident has access to a recreational space that enhances their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual well-being.

“The ability for persons or families to access a high quality park is considered an important factor related to equity. Having a high quality park within a 10-minute walk is particularly critical for households that lack access to a private vehicle.”

**City of Milwaukee Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, p. 62**

Department of City Development & MKE Parks



**C. Increase the number of housing units in close proximity to transit routes.**

1. Continue to encourage upper floor residential uses above ground floor commercial, office, and other compatible uses.
2. Encourage mixed-use and multi-family development along business and transit corridors and support higher density at commercial nodes.
3. Permit ground floor residential uses in commercial zoning districts between commercial nodes and transit hubs where ground floor commercial is not viable.
4. Eliminate lot area per dwelling unit and floor area ratio standards for multi-family developments that limit the number of dwelling units allowed in areas well served by transit.
5. Explore allowing increased height for new development in areas well served by transit.
6. Create an unbundled parking ordinance, to separate parking spaces from the base cost of rental housing.
7. Along transit-oriented development (TOD) corridors, limit surface parking and encourage the development of a mix of uses on underutilized properties and large surface parking lots.
8. Focus TOD within one-half mile of the rapid transit and commuter rail stations as recommended under the VISION 2050 transportation component.
9. Consider zoning incentives for transit-oriented development and to help achieve other housing choice and equity goals, where feasible.
10. Encourage a mix of affordability levels within transit-oriented developments to provide equitable access to transit and other TOD amenities.
11. Encourage a range of housing types and opportunities in proximity to employment centers to achieve a balance between housing and job opportunities and to ease commuter travel.
12. Implement recommendations included in adopted plans for zoning map changes that support transit-oriented development goals.

**Vision 2050: Regional Land Use & Transportation Plan**

“Residential development within TODs should occur largely in multifamily buildings or buildings with a mix of uses such as commercial-retail space on the ground floor and dwellings on upper floors. Some buildings may have a mix of commercial retail space on the ground floor with office space on upper floors. Public plazas, parks, and other governmental and institutional uses may also be incorporated into TOD. Streets and sidewalks within TODs should provide convenient and safe access for walking and bicycling to the transit station.”

Vision 2050 Volume III: Recommended Regional Land Use & Transportation Plan, p. 13  
Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission



## IV. Neighborhood Development & Urban Design

Milwaukee's distinct neighborhoods are cherished places that foster a strong sense of community pride and identity among residents. Promoting new housing development that advances housing choice and growth must also honor the historic fabric of these places in ways that preserve Milwaukee's unique charm. In some cases, existing zoning regulations that seek to preserve neighborhood character have had the unintended consequence of reducing housing supply, diversity, and affordability. These rules must be carefully assessed and amended to promote housing diversity while maintaining high quality design, encouraging walkability, and fostering climate resilience.

### A. Encourage the rehabilitation of existing housing stock and adaptive reuse.

1. Encourage the rehabilitation or preservation of existing residential structures along with infill housing.
2. Support the adaptive reuse of former institutional sites, such as former schools and hospitals, within neighborhoods into multi-family housing and limited neighborhood services.
3. Continue to encourage the conversion of commercial and office buildings no longer utilized for the original purpose to residential and mixed uses.
4. Support the adaptive reuse and residential conversions of former warehouse and industrial buildings that are no longer viable other than those in areas that have been identified in Area Plans or the City's Industrial Land Analysis for preservation of industrial and job-creating uses. Ensure uses in the surrounding area and the building's prior uses do not pose health or environmental risks for future tenants.

#### Former Institutional Buildings Provide Opportunity

Institutional uses, such as schools and places of worship, are woven into many residential neighborhoods and have provided key neighborhood services to nearby residents. When these uses leave a neighborhood, the non-residential buildings are often left vacant. These sites have the potential to provide new services and/or more diverse housing opportunities with minimal impact on existing uses.

**B. Amend existing zoning rules that restrict the **number of housing units based on lot size** and remove or reduce these limits as appropriate to promote housing growth and choice in conjunction with review and revision of bulk and form standards to ensure desired building forms.**

- 1.** Eliminate minimum lot area per dwelling unit restrictions in commercial and multi-family zoning districts to promote housing growth and diversity. Consider replacing the lot area per dwelling unit restrictions in other residential districts with a limitation on the number of dwelling units as described on pages 45-50.
- 2.** Eliminate the maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) requirements in Downtown zoning districts, as called for in the Connecting MKE: Downtown Plan 2040.

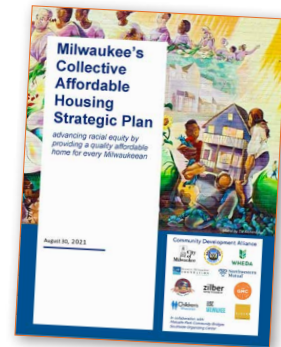
**Milwaukee's Collective Affordable Housing Strategic Plan** reflects the aspirations and the commitment of a broad range of stakeholders to improve housing stability for Milwaukeeans.

Included in the strategies to create new production models for housing, the plan recommends changes to "to local zoning codes should be pursued that allow additional types of housing options and choices in a wider range of neighborhoods."

**Milwaukee's Collective Affordable Housing Strategic Plan, 2021, p. 9**  
Community Development Alliance

The four priority Strategy Areas identified through this collective work are:

- ▶ Systems to Increase Black & Latino Homeownership
- ▶ Systems to Preserve Black & Latino Homeownership
- ▶ Systems to Increase Affordability of Housing for Families Making \$7.25 - \$15 per Hour
- ▶ Systems to Preserve Affordable Housing for Families Making \$7.25 - \$15 per Hour





---

### C. Review and revise existing **building height, bulk and form standards** to support the desired building forms in each district.

---

1. Assess lot size, lot coverage, lot configuration, floor area, and setback standards in residential districts and revise as appropriate to promote more housing and diversity.
2. Consider new rules for limiting maximum lot width in some residential districts to respond to and preserve the historic scale of traditional neighborhoods.
3. Consider increasing allowed building height while requiring front street step-backs for upper floors in local business districts to maintain historic scales.
4. Assess existing requirements for additional side setbacks at buildings with excessive height or depth. Consider replacing these standards with appropriate side step-back requirements for upper floors intended to promote desired urban form and mitigate height differences between adjacent districts.
5. Implement additional design standards for buildings with large widths to reduce the scale of large buildings in areas with distinct historical or neighborhood patterns and create a more pedestrian friendly environment along the sidewalk.
6. Increase maximum building height limits in those zoning districts in the code that are designed for higher density multi-family housing and in locations where the surrounding context would support taller buildings. Additionally, consider a shift from defining height limitations in feet to stories in order to promote proportionate building designs, enhanced daylight penetration, and improved air circulation.
7. Encourage new housing development to provide usable outdoor spaces for residents, such as terraces, courtyards or balconies, particularly in subsidized affordable housing and in locations that are not within walking distance to a public park.

"In the context of fostering pedestrian-friendly environments, introducing maximum lot widths in the zoning code, likely focused on RS and RT districts, can be pivotal in promoting human scaled buildings. With the potential elimination of the lot area per dwelling unit requirement, regulating maximum lot width will prevent a change in the rhythm and scale of historic neighborhoods. Simultaneously, reassessing and potentially lowering the minimum lot widths in lower-density districts can facilitate the development of smaller housing units. Such revisions would not only align with current market demand but also contribute to enhanced housing affordability."

**Growing MKE Code Assessment  
& Recommendations for the  
City of Milwaukee, pg. 35**

Prepared by PlaceMakers & DPZ CoDesign

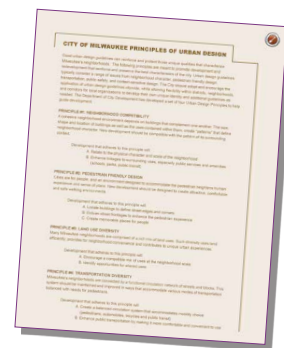
**D. Ensure that **building façades** enhance the pedestrian experience, offer engaging streetscapes, and promote interaction between the building and the street.**

1. Ensure that buildings are oriented to streets with windows facing the street, and a clearly defined entrance connected to the public sidewalk. Encourage design elements like porches, stoops, or storefronts that actively engage with the sidewalk.
2. Assess existing glazing and activation standards and revise as needed to promote housing diversity, and quality urban form, natural surveillance, and daylighting.
3. Consider strategies to further encourage quality storefront design within key retail areas as well as increased flexibility to better accommodate ground floor residential uses outside of key retail areas.
4. Ensure buildings façades are typically composed of a base, middle, and cap to help improve the scale and proportions of building façades.
5. Promote high-quality, durable, sustainable building materials that add long-term value to neighborhoods and fit the character of urban locations, and consider requiring a minimum window depth to add texture and detail to the façade, enhancing the building’s aesthetic appeal.
6. Assess design standards for street facing façades of parking structures. Consider additional regulations to ensure that parking lots, garages, and structures do not detract from the pedestrian environment. Curb cuts should be minimized to the greatest extent possible to protect pedestrians and bicyclists.

**City of Milwaukee's Principles of Urban Design**

Milwaukee’s strong urban form is part of its history and reflects the ongoing development of housing, commerce, and transportation systems that underscore its urban heritage. The city celebrates its unique urban assets and continues to build upon its strengths as the core of a major metropolitan area by creating places with lasting value and civic pride. The City maintains high expectations for excellent, context-sensitive urban design that will instill a sense of pride and belonging among all its residents, businesses, and visitors. To help preserve and expand good urban form, Milwaukee’s City Plan Commission has adopted four Principles of Urban Design:

- ▶ Neighborhood compatibility which considers physical character and scale, linkages, patterns, and context sensitive development.
- ▶ Pedestrian friendly design which helps to define street edges, enhance the pedestrian experience and create a memorable place.
- ▶ Land use diversity to encourage a mix of uses at the neighborhood scale.
- ▶ Transportation diversity to accommodate pedestrians, bicycles, automobiles, and public transit.



For more information about the Principles, visit: [milwaukee.gov/Designguidelines/Citywide.htm](https://milwaukee.gov/Designguidelines/Citywide.htm)

---

E. Encourage **sustainable best practices** in neighborhood development to reduce environmental impact and advance climate resiliency.

---

1. Promote sustainable best practices in new housing developments and when existing homes are being rehabilitated.
2. Encourage building design to include climate and sustainability best practices to improve and maximize high energy efficiency – inclusion of solar, environmentally friendly and recycled materials, conserving water, weatherization, green stormwater management, electric vehicle charging capabilities, and natural heating and cooling systems.
3. Continue to expand the use of sustainable practices in publicly funded housing such as green roofs, community gardens, solar power, geothermal heating and cooling, etc.
4. Continue to provide financial incentives to encourage new and rehabilitated housing to implement sustainability and energy reduction measures.

# Recommendations: Zoning Code Updates

Updates to the City's Zoning Code will be required to implement the policies of Growing MKE. These four main recommendations will help achieve citywide goals in housing choice and equity, economic development, connectivity, and climate resilience.

## Recommendation 1:

Update the Zoning Code to allow more types of neighborhood-scale housing in more neighborhoods.

See pages 45-50 for more detail.

## Recommendation 2:

Update the zoning code to encourage more housing opportunities in multi-family & commercial zoning districts.

See page 51 for more detail.

## Recommendation 3:

Update the Zoning Code to ensure that building design standards support walkable urban neighborhoods and quality design.

See page 52 for more detail.

## Recommendation 4:

Continue to evaluate parking requirements to align with development goals & discourage excess parking.

See page 53 for more detail.



# Encouraging Housing Diversity Recommendation 1:

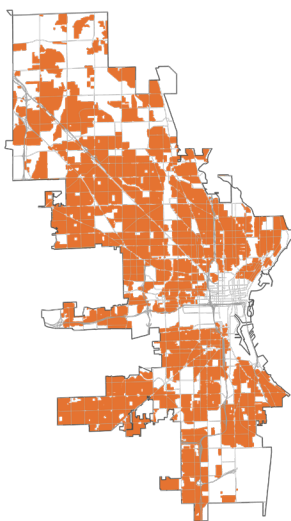
Update the Zoning Code to allow more types of neighborhood-scale housing in more neighborhoods.

In summary, this means:



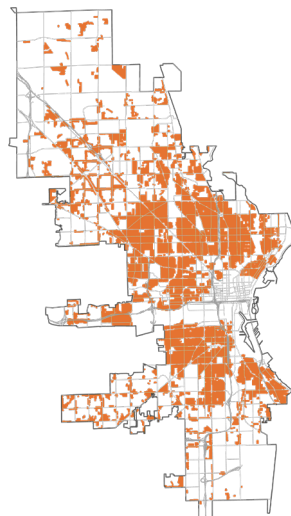
**In all residentially zoned areas, allow:**

- ▶ Single Family Home
- ▶ Accessory Dwelling Unit
- ▶ Townhouse
- ▶ Duplex
- ▶ Triplex
- ▶ Cottage Court



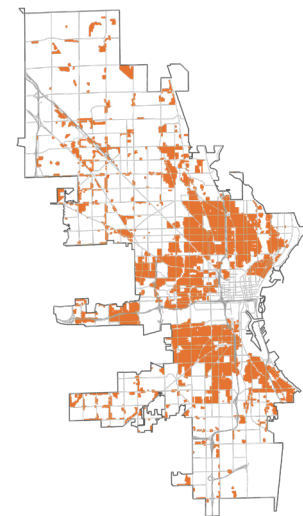
**In residential areas where duplex or other multi-unit housing was permitted historically, allow:**

- ▶ Single Family Home
- ▶ Accessory Dwelling Unit
- ▶ Townhouse
- ▶ Duplex
- ▶ Triplex
- ▶ Cottage Court
- ▶ Fourplex



**In denser residential areas where a wider mix of styles already exists and near transit, allow:**

- ▶ Single Family Home
- ▶ Accessory Dwelling Unit
- ▶ Townhouse
- ▶ Duplex
- ▶ Triplex
- ▶ Cottage Court
- ▶ Fourplex
- ▶ Small Multi-Family Building



# Recommendation 1-A:

In all residentially zoned areas, allow:

- ▶ Single Family Homes
- ▶ Accessory Dwelling Units
- ▶ Townhouses
- ▶ Duplexes
- ▶ Triplexes
- ▶ Cottage Courts



Single-Family



Accessory Dwelling Unit



Townhouse



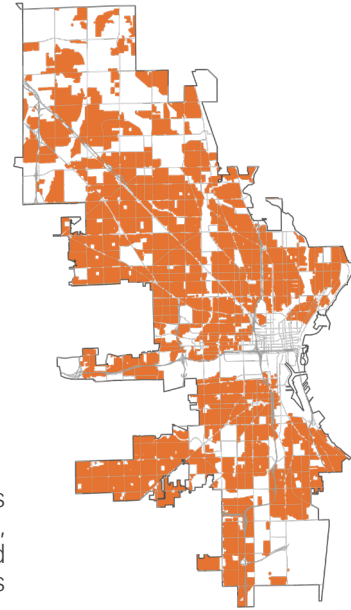
Duplex



Triplex



Cottage Court

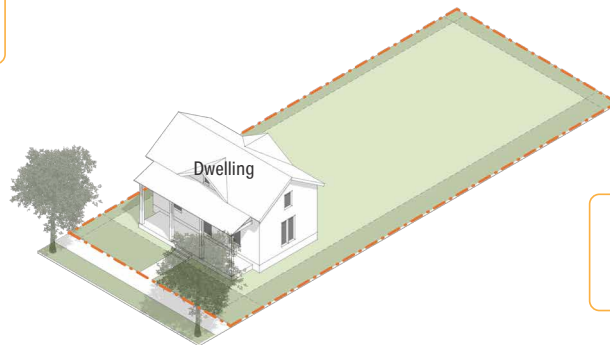


- ▶ This map includes the RS1-6, RT1-4, RM1-6, and RO1-2 zoning districts

## Single Family Homes

**Single Family Homes are the traditional housing type when we think of homeownership in Milwaukee.** These homes can work for just about everyone! Room for families, including extended family.

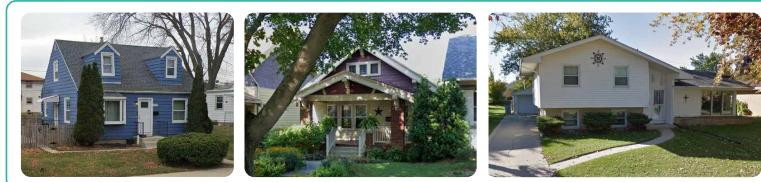
I'm excited to be a new homeowner with room for the kids to play and grow.



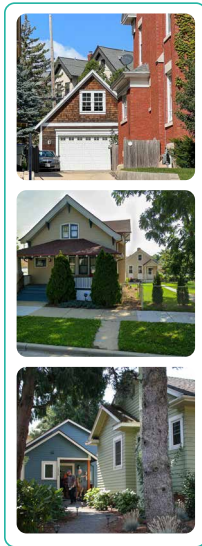
We love our yard and having a garden.



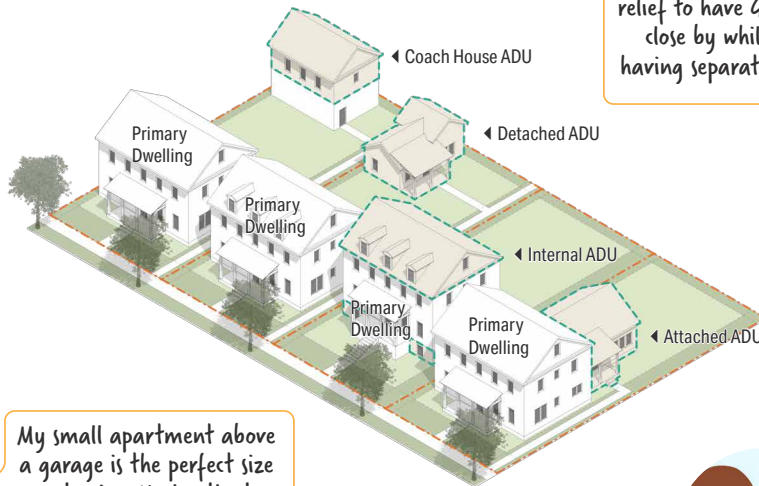
We've lived in our home for 35 years — and have raised our children, and have room to entertain the whole family when they visit.



## Accessory Dwelling Units – “ADUs”



**Accessory Dwelling Units** can work for just about everyone! Upsizing, downsizing, just starting out, single, divorced, or widowed. Families, adult children, aging parents, and extended family. ADUs can also provide additional income for homeowners.



We added an attached ADU, and it is such a relief to have Grandma close by while also having separate spaces.



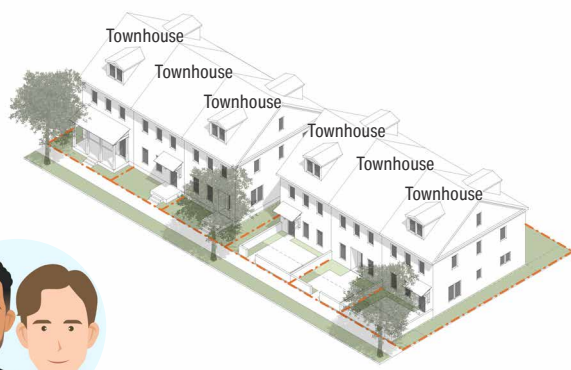
My small apartment above a garage is the perfect size and price. My landlords are long-time Milwaukee residents and have welcomed me to the city.



We are so happy to stay in our neighborhood! We were able to downsize into an accessible ADU in and rent the main house to a family.

## Townhouses

**Townhouses work for most types of households.** They can be owned or rented. They are more affordable due to reduced land, utility, and maintenance costs.



We thought this townhouse would be our starter home, but it's turned into our forever home. We love being close to transit and spending time in our front garden.

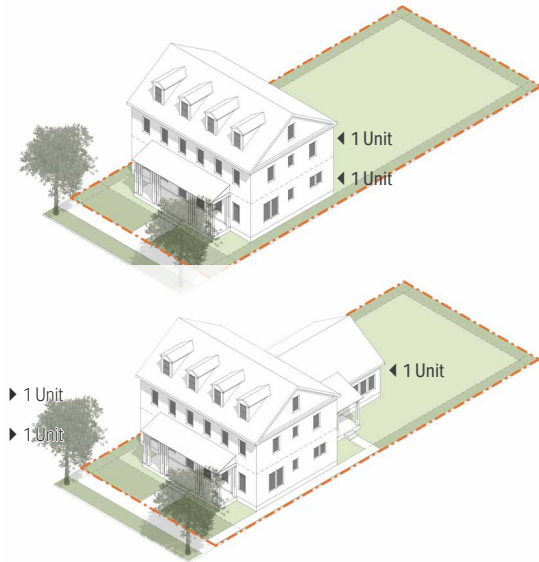


I love my townhouse! I have more time to spend with my kids on weekends instead of maintaining a huge yard





## Duplexes & Triplexes



Duplexes and triplexes work for many household types, including first-time homeowners, 1-person households, families, extended families, and those with aging parents. There is also potential to support a mortgage with rental income.

our duplex was more affordable than a single-family home because the rental income helped us afford the mortgage. Later on, we could also use the other unit for extended family.

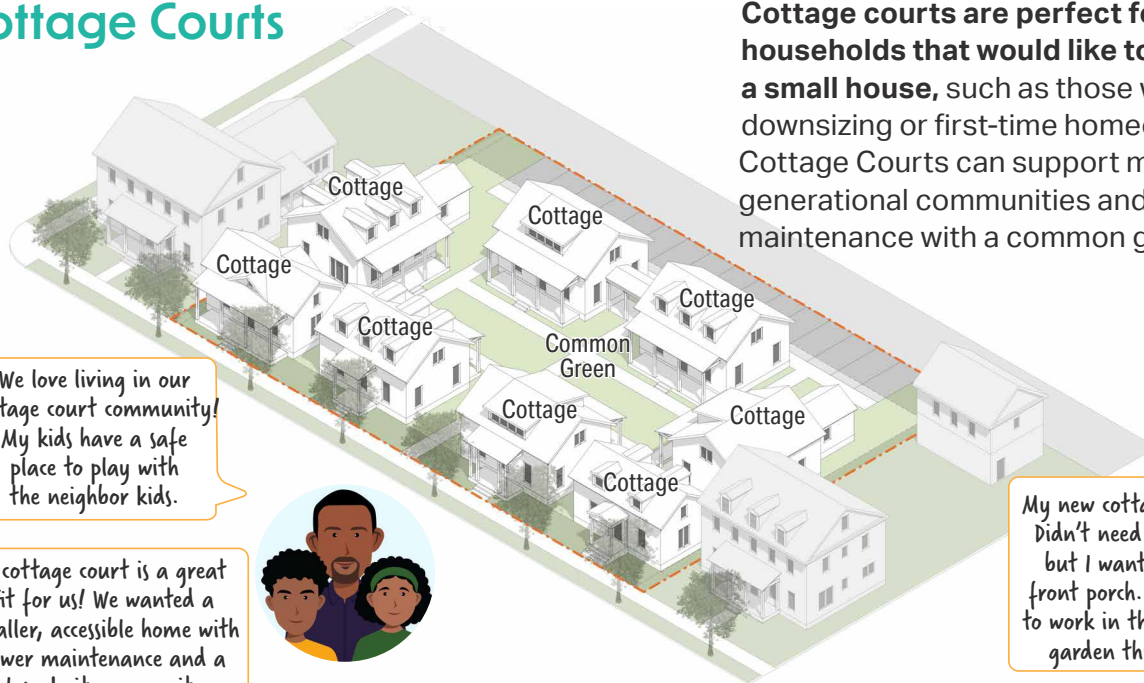
When we retired, we made our duplex rental property our primary home. We've reduced our housing expenses by renting out the upstairs unit for a little extra income.



I still needed a place to stay, 3 weeks before school started. I'm glad I found the perfect room in a triplex near campus, for a price I could afford.



## Cottage Courts



Cottage courts are perfect for households that would like to live in a small house, such as those who are downsizing or first-time homeowners. Cottage Courts can support multi-generational communities and reduce maintenance with a common green.

We love living in our cottage court community! My kids have a safe place to play with the neighbor kids.

A cottage court is a great fit for us! We wanted a smaller, accessible home with lower maintenance and a close-knit community.



My new cottage is perfect! Didn't need much space, but I wanted my own front porch. I am excited to work in the community garden this summer!





# Recommendation 1-B:

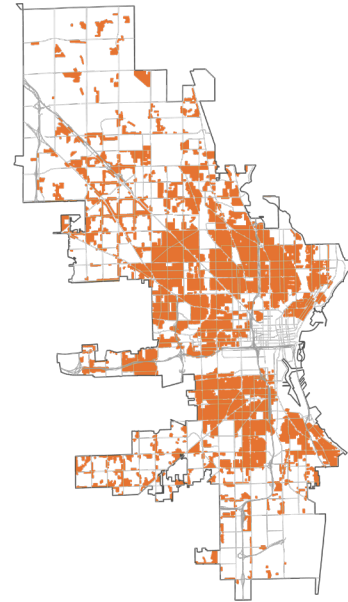
## Fourplexes



**Fourplexes fit within the scale of a neighborhood and provide affordability through a variety of unit sizes.** They are usually close to amenities that are only a short walk or transit ride away – reducing transportation costs.



**In residential areas where duplex or other multi-unit housing was permitted historically, allow fourplexes.**



▲ This map includes the RT1-4, RM1-6, and RO1-2 zoning districts.

This fourplex is perfect! It's a good affordable size as I start my career, and it's easy to take the bus to work.

I love living by myself, and my unit is the perfect size for me. Plus, my church and workplace are just a quick walk away.

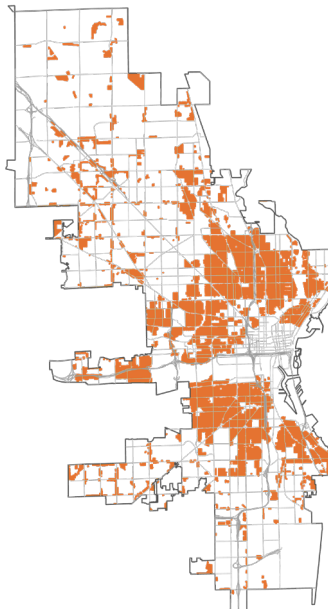


We love living in a smaller, more affordable unit that is just a short walk to our favorite coffee shop, park, and grocery store.



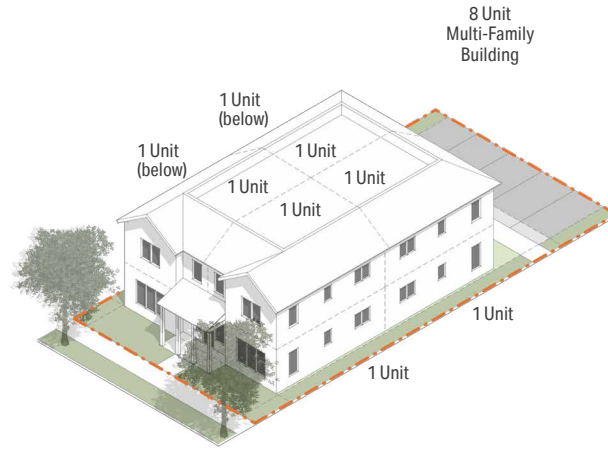
# Recommendation I-C:

In denser residential areas where a wider mix of housing styles already exists and near transit, allow Small Multi-Family Buildings.



▲ This map includes the RT3, RT4, RM1-6, and RO1-2 districts

## Small Multi-Family Buildings



Small multi-family buildings provide affordability in a variety of unit sizes and fit in many neighborhoods. They are usually close to amenities which reduces transportation costs.



I enjoy that it is just me and my dog, so a smaller, affordable unit close to the Oak Leaf Trail is perfect for me!



We have a first-floor accessible unit in small multi-family building near a park. It's a great fit for us!

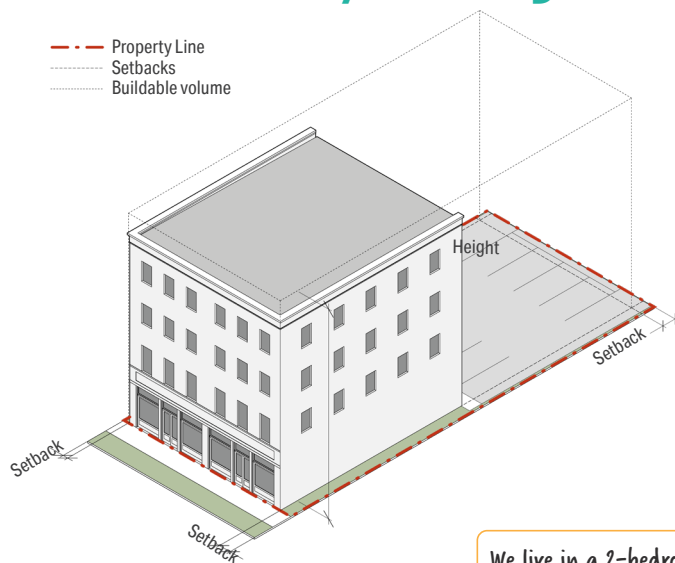


# Encouraging Housing Diversity Recommendation 2:

Encourage more housing opportunities in multi-family & commercial zoning districts.

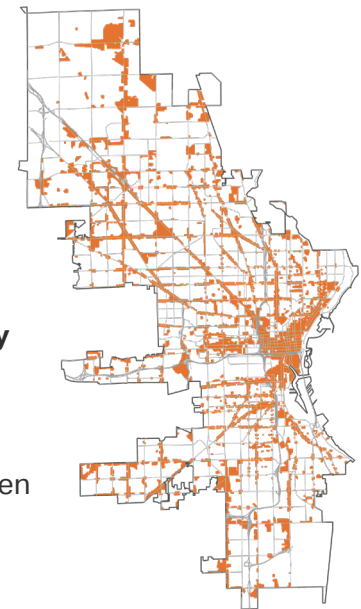
How? Adjust the zoning code to remove barriers to new housing on business corridors and multi-family zoning districts. Rely on height limits, setback requirements, and design standards instead of mathematical equations to control the number of housing units.

## Multi-Family Buildings



**Multi-family buildings can provide affordability in a variety of unit sizes.** They are usually close to amenities which reduces transportation costs. When multi-family buildings are near businesses there are more customers to support those businesses.

**Setbacks, height limits, and design standards, provides predictability** for how a building will look.



▲ This map includes the zoning districts that currently allow multi-family buildings - RM, RO, Commercial Districts, Downtown, & IM

We live in a three-bedroom unit that is close to our kids' school and only a bus ride away to our jobs.



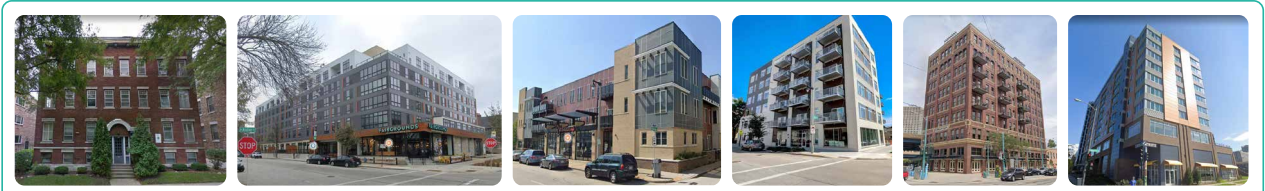
We live in a 2-bedroom unit building with an elevator, where we can easily get to the park & grocery store. We love entertaining our family and friends here.



I moved here for my first job. I was happy to find a smaller unit that I can afford on my own, is close to my friends, and is only a short walk to my office!



I live in a studio unit on my own - I love the neighborhood, building amenities, and the ability to travel without worry.

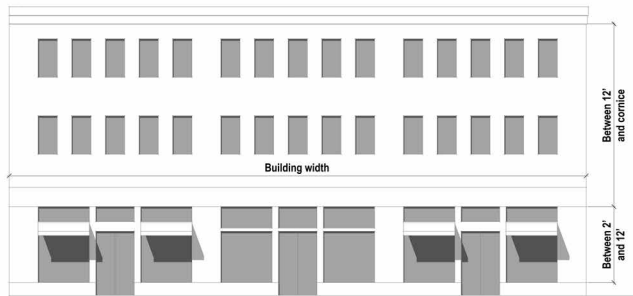
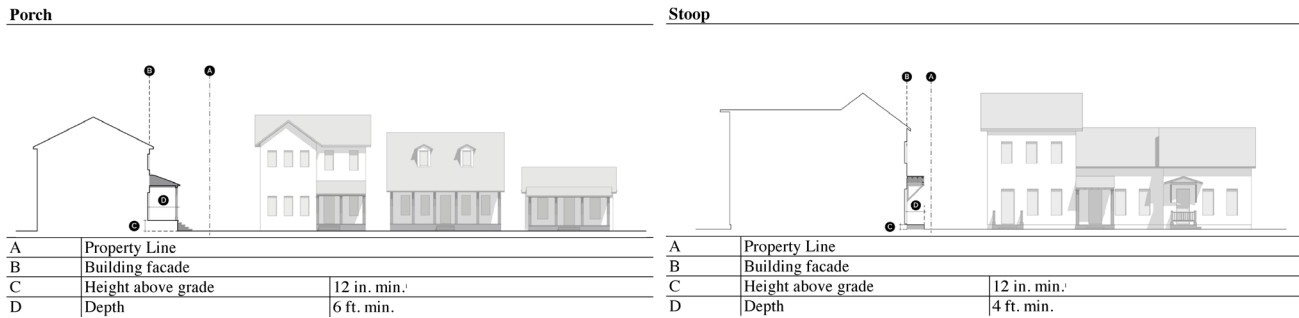


# Recommendation 3 – Building Design:

Update the Zoning Code to ensure that building design standards support walkable urban neighborhoods and design.

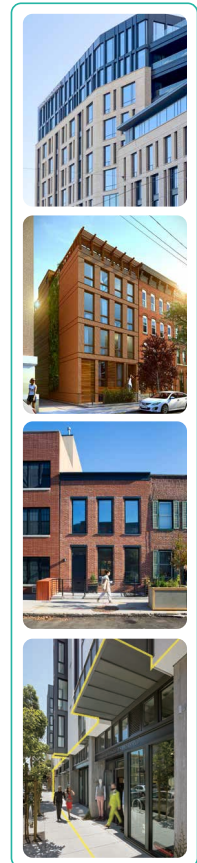
## Building Façades

**Enhance walkability:** Make sure buildings face the sidewalks in a way that encourages pedestrian activity.



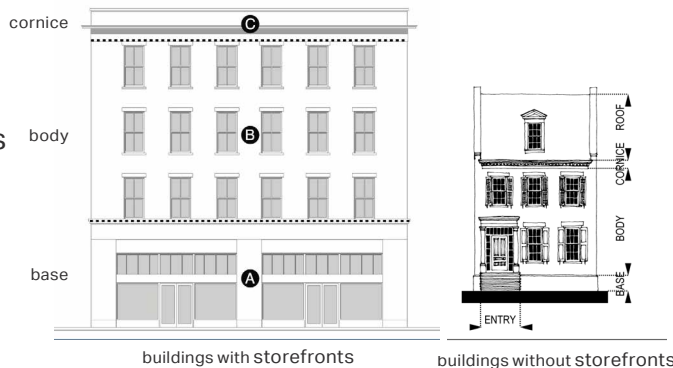
## Windows

**Enhance walkability & environmental benefits:** Update existing design standards to clarify measurements and add standards for upper level windows.

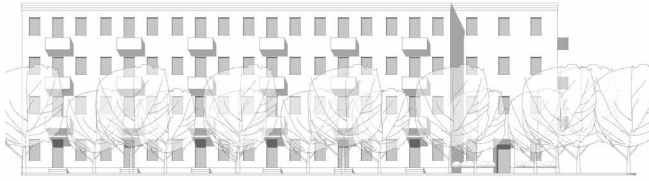


## Composition

**Improve pedestrian scale:** Make sure buildings facades are composed of base, middle, and cap to help improve the pedestrian environment.

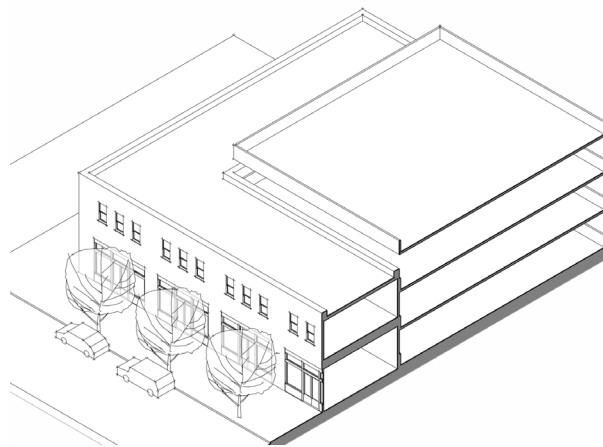
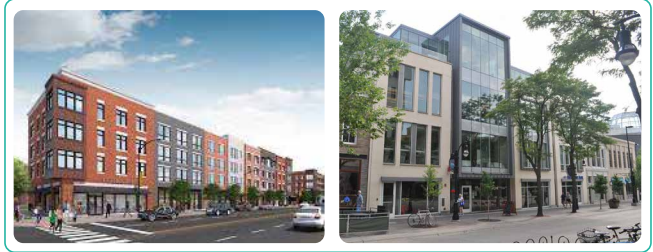






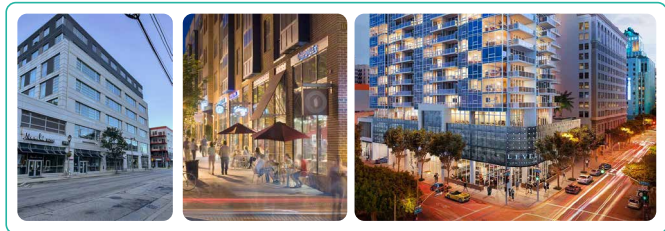
## Building Widths

**Reduce scale:** Very large buildings need regulations to reduce the scale and to create a walkable environment along the street front. Examples: varying heights, courtyards, and corner plazas.



## Parking Structures

**Assure walkability:** Update regulations for parking structures to improve design and hide parking on upper levels.



# Recommendation 4 – Parking:

**Continue to evaluate parking requirements to align with development goals & discourage excess parking.**

## Current Requirements

Milwaukee’s zoning code requires parking for multi-family developments outside of Downtown. Requirements are among the lowest in the nation, and include a reduction for locations near transit and providing shared parking. Developers generally provide more parking than is required by code.

## Potential Future Updates

The City should explore further reducing or eliminating parking minimums for housing development.

## How does this support Housing Choice?

Requiring more parking than is needed for a residents within a development increases housing costs and does not align with Climate and Equity Plan goals. Future adjustments to parking requirements can support greater flexibility in urban design and housing types, allows for more green spaces, and encourages walkable neighborhoods and alternative transportation methods.

# Implementation

Updates to Milwaukee’s Zoning Code will be required to implement the Growing MKE policies and land use recommendations. This section summarizes the Zoning Code updates that should be carried out or explored further to support housing growth and choice.

Each of these actions is informed by the policies on **pages 30-43** and by the community feedback received during the process of developing the Growing MKE Plan.

The recommendations outlined on pages 44-53 will be prioritized.

The proposed actions are organized into the following sections:

- ▶ Housing Type Definitions & Standards
- ▶ Lot Standards
- ▶ Bulk & Form Standards
- ▶ Façade Standards
- ▶ Site Standards
- ▶ Related Updates
- ▶ Other
- ▶ Process Improvements

Housing Type Definitions & Standards		
Topic	Action	Policies
<b>Housing Type Definitions &amp; Standards</b> Include more housing types and associated definitions and standards in the Zoning Code.	<b>1 Accessory Dwelling Units</b> Create a new use definition and standards for Accessory Dwelling Units. Allow Accessory Dwelling Units in all residential districts.	I.A.1. I.A.3.
	<b>2 Cottage Courts</b> Create a new use definition and standards for Cottage Courts. Allow Cottage Courts in all residential districts.	I.A.1.
	<b>3 Three-Household Dwelling (Triplex)</b> Create a new use definition and standards for Three-Household Dwelling and allow in all residential districts.	I.A.1.
	<b>4 Four-Household Dwelling (Fourplex)</b> Create a new use definition and standards for Four-household dwellings and allow in all RT districts.	I.A.1.
	<b>5 Small Multi-Family Dwelling</b> Create a new use definition and standards for a Small Multi-Family Dwellings (5-8 units). Allow Small Multi-Family Dwellings in RT3 and RT4 districts.	I.A.1.

Lot Standards		
Topic	Action	Policies
<b>Lot Size Requirements</b> Assess lot size requirements in the Zoning Code and revise as appropriate to promote a diversity of housing options in all areas.	<b>6 Minimum Lot Area &amp; Width</b> Consider adjustments to minimum lot area and minimum lot width in residential districts.	IV.C.1.
	<b>7 Maximum Lot Width</b> Consider new rules for maximum lot width in some residential districts to respond to and preserve the historic scale of traditional neighborhoods.	IV.C.2.
	<b>8 Flag Lots</b> Consider changes or added flexibility to lot standards that would better accommodate the creation of new buildable lots with limited street frontage, also known as "Flag Lots." These lots, typically connected to a public street by a narrow extension or an easement, are allowed by the City's subdivision ordinance but face barriers from lot standards in the Zoning Code.	IV.C.1.
<b>Lot Coverage</b> Allow for flexibility in lot coverage while ensuring that the size and scale of new development complements the existing conditions of the area.	<b>9 Maximum Lot Coverage</b> Evaluate maximum lot coverage standards and revise where appropriate.	IV.C.1.
	<b>10 Minimum Lot Coverage &amp; Minimum Facade Width</b> Assess Minimum Lot Coverage regulations, including the Minimum Façade Width rules used in lieu of minimum lot coverage in some residential districts, and revise as needed to reduce barriers to new housing development.	IV.C.1.
<b>Density Ratios</b> Amend existing zoning rules that restrict the number of housing units based on lot size and remove or reduce these limits as appropriate to promote housing growth and choice.	<b>11 Permitted Floor Area Ratio</b> Eliminate the maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) requirements in downtown zoning districts, consistent with Recommendation 40 from the Connecting MKE: Downtown Plan 2040.	IV.B.2.
	<b>12 Minimum Lot Area Per Dwelling Unit</b> Remove Minimum Lot Area Per Dwelling Unit restrictions in commercial and multi-family zoning districts in favor of bulk standards to better predict form. Consider removing Minimum Lot Area Per Dwelling Unit restrictions in all residential districts, while keeping a maximum number of units per building in RT and RS districts. Where Lot Area Per Dwelling Unit restrictions remain in the code, ensure that standards allow for a diversity of housing consistent with desired building forms.	IV.B.1.

Bulk & Form Standards		
Topic	Action	Policies
<b>Building Size</b> Review and analyze bulk standards to ensure consistency with the goals of this plan.	<b>13</b> <b>Maximum Building Height</b> Maintain district heights that align with form objectives and promote environmental benefits. Review building height restrictions for RM4-RM7 and LB1-LB3 to determine consistency with current structural system types to advance affordability. Review building height restrictions along transit corridors to determine consistency with current structural system types to advance affordability. Consider a shift from defining height limitations in feet to stories in order to promote proportionate building designs, enhanced daylight penetration, and improved air circulation.	IV.C.6.
	<b>14</b> <b>Maximum Building Width</b> Reduce the scale of large buildings in areas with distinct historical or neighborhood patterns to create a more pedestrian friendly environment along the sidewalk. Create additional design standards for wider buildings to provide some relief to the street with considerations like courtyards, corner plazas, and/or pedestrian passages; however, avoid excessive segmentation of building facades, ensuring that the design aligns with the historical continuity and established patterns of the neighborhood.	IV.C.5.
	<b>15</b> <b>Minimum Floor Area</b> Remove minimum floor area requirements from code to allow for a greater variety of home sizes.	IV.C.1.
<b>Setbacks &amp; Step-Backs</b> Allow for flexibility in front, side and rear setbacks while ensuring that the placement and form of new buildings complements the historic neighborhood fabric.	<b>16</b> <b>Minimum &amp; Maximum Front Street Setbacks</b> Consider code revisions to add flexibility and simplify plan review related to front setbacks.	IV.C.1.
	<b>17</b> <b>Minimum Side Street Setbacks</b> Revise minimum side street setback standards to remove the unrelated factor of lot width.	IV.C.1.
	<b>18</b> <b>Upper Floor Front Step-Backs</b> Consider requiring front street step-backs for upper floors in local business districts to maintain historic scales in areas where height increases may be proposed.	IV.C.3.
	<b>19</b> <b>Upper Floor Side &amp; Back Step-Backs</b> Evaluate existing requirements for additional side setbacks at buildings with excessive height or depth. Consider replacing these standards with updated step-back requirements for upper floors intended to promote desired urban form and mitigate height differences when adjacent to RS and RT residential districts.	IV.C.4
	<b>20</b> <b>Lots Without Street Frontage</b> Consider provisions for alternate street setback standards at atypical properties with limited or no street frontage.	IV.C.1.



Façade Standards		
Topic	Action	Policies
<b>Façade Design</b> Ensure that building facades enhance the pedestrian experience, offer engaging streetscapes, and promote interaction between the building and the street.	<b>21 Façade Composition</b> Explore updated design standards related to building composition - façades including a base, middle, and cap - help improve the scale and proportions of building facades. Consider requiring recessed windows with a minimum depth needed to provide a substantial sense of wall thickness and create shadow lines which can add texture and detail to the façade, enhancing the building's aesthetic appeal.	<b>IV.D.4.</b> <b>IV.D.5.</b>
	<b>22 Orientation</b> Review and revise standards as needed to ensure that buildings are oriented to streets.	<b>IV.D.1.</b>
	<b>23 Design Elements</b> Explore requiring new development to include elements such as porches, stoops, or storefronts that actively engage with the sidewalk, and providing minimum standards such as the depth of a porch or stoop. These elements would vary depending on the zoning district and the use of the building.	<b>IV.D.1.</b>
	<b>24 Commercial Nodes</b> Consider strategies to further encourage quality urban form within key commercial areas and other walkable nodes of pedestrian activity. This may include the creation of a new zoning district, or changes to existing standards that promote quality storefront design.	<b>IV.D.2.</b> <b>IV.D.3.</b>
<b>Windows</b> Ensure that buildings have appropriate windows on street facing facades to activate streets, promote safety through natural surveillance, and allow for daylighting and cross ventilation.	<b>25 Street Level Flexibility</b> Consider strategies to allow for reduced ground floor window standards outside of key retail areas that could better accommodate ground floor residential uses. This may include the creation of a new zoning district or changes to existing standards that allow for increased flexibility in certain situations.	<b>IV.D.3.</b>
	<b>26 Upper Floor Transparency</b> Consider requiring a minimum amount of windows on upper floors of street facing façades to promote daylighting and cross ventilation that assist with the City's climate goals. Upper story windows are not currently required in any zoning district.	<b>IV.D.2.</b>
	<b>27 Transparency in Residential Districts</b> Consider requiring a minimum amount of windows for street-facing façades in residential districts to activate streets and promote safety through natural surveillance. Street facing windows are currently not required in residential zoning districts.	<b>IV.D.2.</b>
	<b>28 Administration</b> Augment existing and future window standards to clarify measurements and simplify plan review.	<b>IV.D.2</b>

Site Standards		
	Action	Policies
29	<p><b>Outdoor Amenity Space</b> Explore Zoning Code updates that will encourage new housing development to provide usable outdoor spaces for residents, such as terraces, courtyards or balconies, particularly in multi-family developments with large units designed for households with children and in locations that are not within walking distance to a public park.</p>	IV.C.7.
30	<p><b>Parking Façades</b> Assess design standards for street facing façades of parking structures to retain a pedestrian-friendly and human-scale quality.</p>	IV.D.6.
31	<p><b>Parking Access</b> Mitigate pedestrian and vehicle conflicts through Zoning Code updates to set restrictions to ensure that parking lots, street-facing garage doors, and curb cuts do not detract from the pedestrian environment. Standards should consider a range of lot sizes and proximity to transit.</p>	IV.D.6.
32	<p><b>Off-Street Parking Space Requirements</b> Explore further reducing or eliminating parking minimums for housing development.</p>	III.B.3.

Related Updates		
	Action	Policies
33	<p><b>Family / Household Definition</b> Update the Zoning Code and Chapter 200 to provide a more inclusive and consistent definition of household/family. This should reflect the diverse needs of different types of households, allow people to age in place, and live affordably.</p>	I.A.2.
34	<p><b>Group Living Uses</b> Explore updates to the Zoning Code to modernize the group living uses and expand on the ability to create affordable housing types.</p>	I.A.2.
35	<p><b>Home-Based Businesses / Live-Work</b> Update the Zoning Code and explore seeking changes to the Wisconsin building code to reduce barriers for live-work and home-based businesses.</p>	I.A.2.
36	<p><b>Walkable Neighborhoods</b> Explore updates to encourage neighborhood-serving businesses at the corners and edges of neighborhoods.</p>	III.A.2

Other	
Action	Policies
<b>37 Unbundled Parking</b> Create an unbundled parking ordinance, to separate parking spaces from the base cost of rental housing.	III.C.6.
<b>38 Zoning Incentives</b> Consider zoning incentives for transit-oriented development.	III.C.9.
<b>39 Implement Parcel-Based Zoning Changes</b> Implement recommendations included in adopted plans for zoning map changes that support transit-oriented development goals.	III.C.12.

Process Improvements	
Action	Policies
<b>40 Visual Materials</b> Improve the usability of the zoning document through visuals and the development of user-friendly supporting materials to ensure that all applicants have equitable access.	I.B.1
<b>41 Minor Modifications &amp; Overlays</b> Update ordinances to streamline processes for minor modifications to Detailed Planned Developments and proposals in overlay zones that are compliant with applicable standards.	I.B.2.
<b>42 Efficiency</b> Explore process changes that may increase efficiencies during the development review process such as setting up a dedicated Zoning Section in the Department of Neighborhood Services.	I.B.3.

**Note:** The Zoning Code is a detailed document with cross-references across various sections. Changes in one section impact changes in another. This list of identified Code updates and actions is intended to be thorough as possible, but as work begins to draft Code updates, the need for additional related updates will likely arise. Many of the updates are related, and the intent is to look at these changes comprehensively and bundle and phase updates as appropriate.

# Glossary

- ▶ **Accessory dwelling unit (ADU):** A residential dwelling unit, but not a mobile home, located on the same lot as a single-family house, either within the same building as the single-family house or in a detached building. ADUs are also called carriage houses, in-law suites, and granny flats. – Source: A Planner’s Dictionary
- ▶ **Affordability:** Term used to describe housing in which the resident pays no more than 30% of their household income on housing costs. This applies to both subsidized and naturally occurring housing. – *For more information, see page 33*
- ▶ **Attainable housing:** Households at various income levels can find and secure housing that suits the type, size, and cost that they are looking for. – Source: Belleville, California
- ▶ **Anti-displacement:** An anti-displacement approach to community and economic development seeks to directly address and mitigate the causes of displacement while enabling continued growth. *See City’s Anti-Displacement Plan for more information.*
- ▶ **Attached housing:** A building which has at least part of a wall in common with another building, or which is connected to another building by a roof. – Source: A Planner’s Dictionary
- ▶ **Building code:** The various codes of the city that regulate construction and require building permits, electrical permits, mechanical permits, plumbing permits, and other permits to do work regulated by city code pertaining to building and building regulation. – Source: A Planner’s Dictionary
- ▶ **By-right development:** A construction project that follows all zoning and building codes, so it qualifies for building permits without discretionary approval. – Source: Planetizen
- ▶ **Comprehensive Plan:** The adopted official statement of the city council that includes goals, policies, and guidelines intended to direct the present and future physical, social, and economic development that occurs within the city. – Source: A Planner’s Dictionary
- ▶ **Connectivity:** A well-connected transportation network that reduces the distances traveled and time needed to reach a destination by walking, biking, scooting, riding public transit, or driving. – Source: U.S. Department of Transportation
- ▶ **Consolidated Plan:** Designed to help states and cities assess their affordable housing and community development needs and market conditions. – Source: U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development
- ▶ **Density:** The permitted ratio of residential units to land area or the permitted ratio of building size to land area. – Source: A Planner’s Dictionary
- ▶ **Detached housing:** Any structure that does not have a wall or roof in common with another structure. – Source: A Planner’s Dictionary.com
- ▶ **Detailed Planned Development:** A site-specific type of zoning district that allows more flexibility for unique projects, laying out the development specifics, including building design and site plan. – Source: City of Milwaukee’s Department of City Development Planning Division
- ▶ **Discretionary review:** Discretionary review requires an appointed or elected body of officials to decide whether or not to proceed with a development. Discretionary review and approval is usually reserved for development proposals that don’t conform to zoning or building codes, but other regulatory triggers can also create the need for a discretionary approval process. – Source: Planetizen Planopedia
- ▶ **Dwelling/housing unit:** A house, an apartment, a mobile home, a group of rooms, or a single room that is occupied (or if vacant, is intended for occupancy) as separate living quarters. Separate living quarters are those in which the occupants live and eat separately from any other persons in the building and which have direct access from the outside of the building or through a common hall. – Source: U.S. Census Bureau
- ▶ **Economic development:** Any change in a community that enables greater production, increased employment, and/or a better distribution of goods and services. – Source: A Planner’s Dictionary
- ▶ **Equity:** Equity means that individuals and groups receive treatment or resources based on their individual needs or assets, or because they have been treated differently historically. The goal of achieving equity is for everyone to reach their fullest potential, without barriers. – Source: City of Milwaukee Complete Streets Health and Equity Report, 2019



▶ **Health:** a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. – Source: World Health Organization

▶ **Housing types:** *see page 19 for detailed descriptions.*

▶ **Intentional community:** A community designed and planned around a social ideal or collective values and interests, often involving shared resources and responsibilities. – Source: Dictionary

▶ **Land use:** A description of how land is occupied or utilized. – Source: A Planner's Dictionary

▶ **Missing middle housing:** Multi-unit housing, similar in scale to a single-family house, that provides diverse options along the spectrum of affordability. Examples of this type of housing include duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, townhomes, and cottage courts. – Source: National League of Cities

▶ **Mixed-use:** This type of development places multiple uses within a site, such as street-level retail with residential units above, or locates different uses within the same area, such as neighborhoods that offer residential, commercial, and civic spaces within walking distance. – Source: American Planning Association

**Redlining:** The practice of denying people access to credit because of where they live, even if they are personally qualified for loans. Historically, mortgage lenders once widely redlined core urban neighborhoods and Black-populated neighborhoods in particular. – Source: Federal Reserve History

▶ **Regulations:** A rule or order prescribed for managing government. – Source: A Planner's Dictionary

▶ **Restrictive covenants:** a restriction on the use of land in a formal binding agreement. Restrictive covenants run with the land and are binding to subsequent owners of the property – Source: A Planner's Dictionary

▶ **Segregation:** Separating groups of people with differing characteristics, such as race or class. Source - Britannica

▶ **Sustainability & resilience:** The pursuit of human health and happiness, environmental quality, and economic well-being for current and future generations – Source: Penn State University Sustainability Institute

▶ **Transit Oriented Development (TOD):** Moderate- or high-density housing concentrated in mixed-use developments that encourage the use of public transportation. – Source: A Planner's Dictionary

▶ **Unbundled parking:** Separates the cost of parking from monthly rent or the cost of purchasing a housing unit with the option to not use the parking space or pay extra for the parking space. – Source: Oregon Department of Land Conservation & Development

▶ **Urban design:** The attempt to give form, in terms of both beauty and function, to selected urban areas or to whole cities. Urban design is concerned with the location, mass, and design of various urban components and combines elements of urban planning, architecture, and landscape architecture. – Source: A Planner's Dictionary

▶ **Urban renewal:** The generic term given to the redevelopment of land in urban areas. In the United States, it is largely associated with post-WWII urban renewal programs that established, perpetuated, or extended geographical racial segregation in neighborhoods. – Source: Central Arkansas Library System

▶ **Zoning:** The division of the city by legislative regulations into districts, which specify allowable uses, size restrictions for buildings, and other development standards within these areas. – Source: A Planner's Dictionary

▶ **Zoning code:** An ordinance enacted by the local unit of government that sets forth regulations and standards relating to the nature and extent of uses of land and structures. – Source: A Planner's Dictionary

▶ **Zoning district:** A section of the city in which zoning regulations and standards are the same. *For more information about Milwaukee's zoning districts, see page 21.* – Source: A Planner's Dictionary

