



CONNECTED COMMUNITIES ENGAGEMENT REPORT

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CONNECTED COMMUNITIES ENGAGEMENT REPORT

city of
CINCINNATI
CITY PLANNING &
ENGAGEMENT

PURPOSE

Engagement from events held in 2022 identified the problems within our zoning code that needed addressing. The feedback from the 2023 events directly informed the strategy, scale, and direction of the policy proposals. The 2024 events were meant to hear feedback on the proposal and refine specific elements of the proposed policies.

OVERVIEW

34

events

49

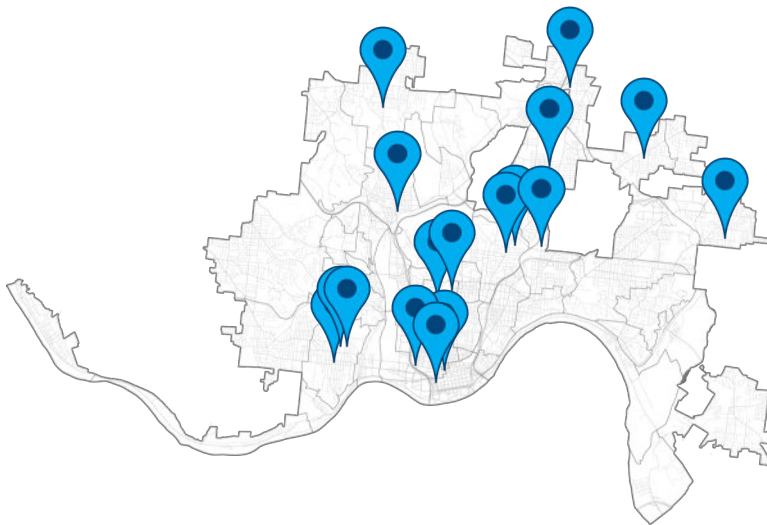
neighborhoods

2,256+

participants

10,500+

website hits



Location of all in-person public engagement opportunities related to Connected Communities.

ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

2022

JUNE 11

2022 Housing Summit

211 attendees.

AUGUST

Connected Communities Conversations

Five virtual sessions, 63 professional stakeholder participants. One in-person session, 18 public participants.

DECEMBER

Connected Communities Public Survey

1,273 respondents.

2023

JANUARY-APRIL

First Round Public Engagement

Six in-person events, one virtual event. 236 participants.

MARCH 11

2023 Neighborhood Summit

FEBRUARY

First Round Professional Stakeholders Engagement

Three virtual events. 50 participants.

OCTOBER

Second Round Professional Stakeholders Engagement

One webinar, 41 attendees. Two in-person events, 22 attendees.

OCTOBER

SORTA Engagement

OCTOBER

Internal Department Engagement

Review of proposals with 10+ City departments.

2024

FEBRUARY-APRIL

Online Engagement

10,500+ website views, 146 online responses.

FEBRUARY

Second Round Public Engagement

Two in-person and one virtual event. 152 attendees.

MARCH

2024 Housing Summit

103 attendees.

MARCH-APRIL

Pop-Up Engagement

Five in-person events in different neighborhoods.

APRIL

2024 Neighborhood Summit*

APRIL

Public Staff Conferences*

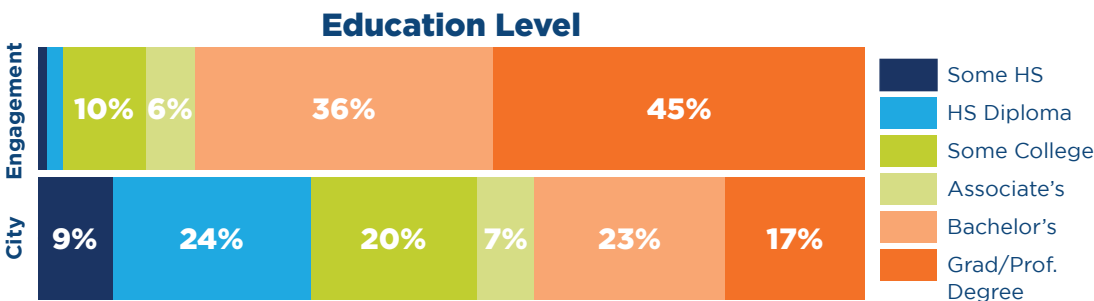
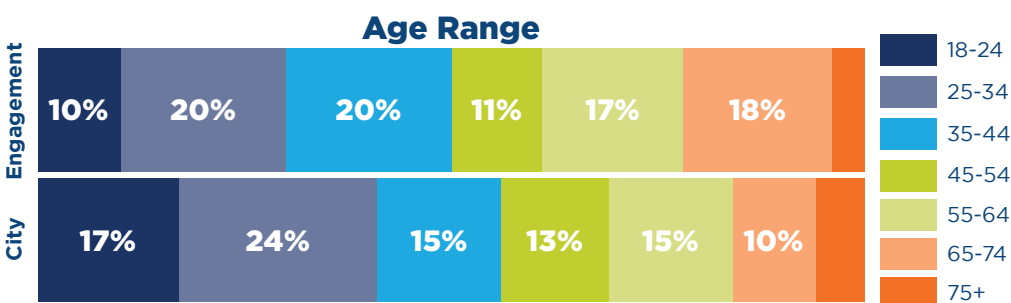
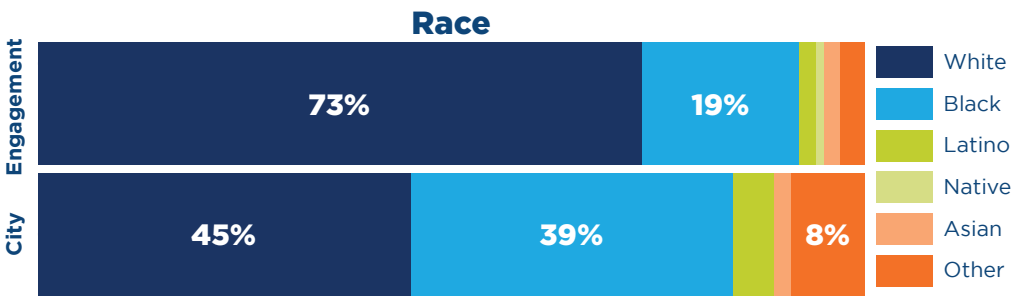
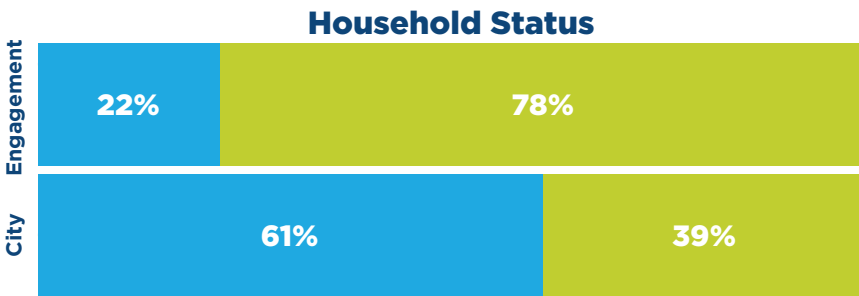
Two virtual events.

*Events have yet to be held as of this publishing.

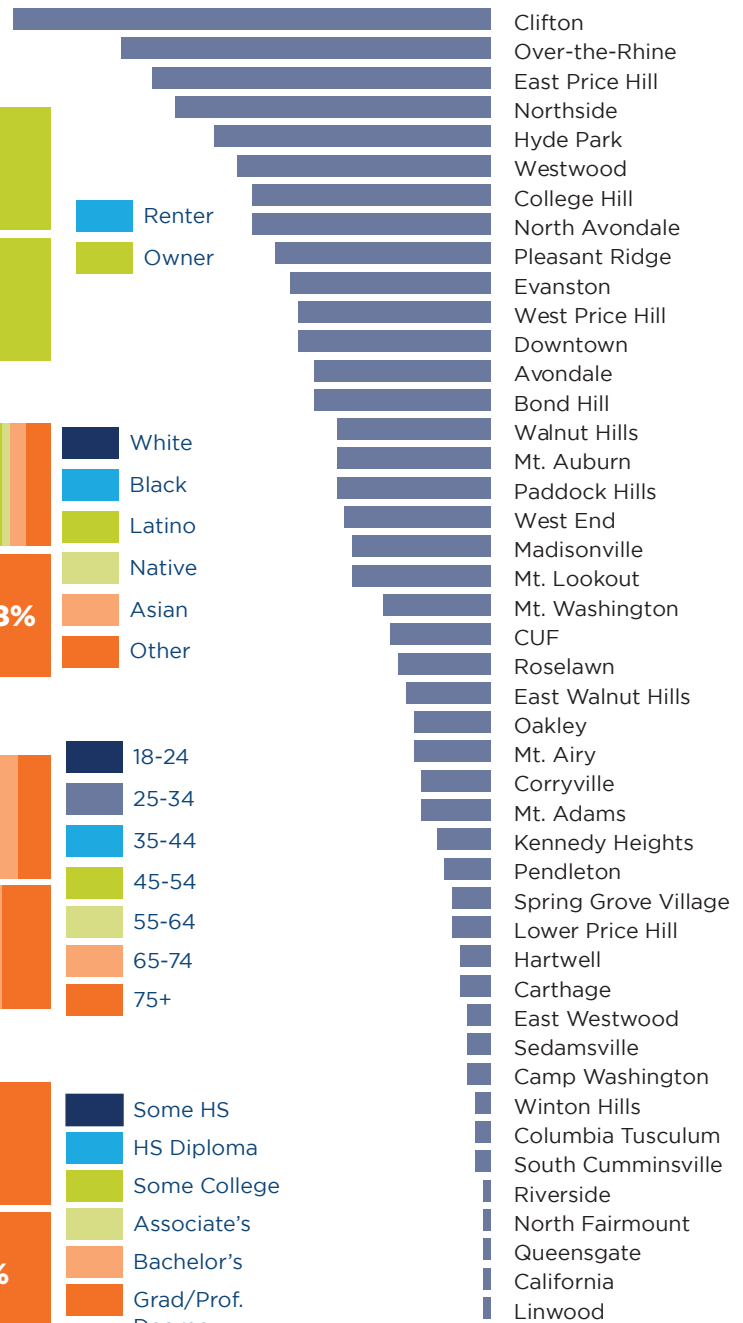
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DEMOGRAPHICS

Planning staff has been committed to equitable and representative engagement throughout this process, and demographic data was collected for the majority of the Connected Communities-related public engagement events. The data shows that participants in the engagement events tended to be more white, older, homeowners, and have a higher education level than the city's population overall. When looking at neighborhoods, Clifton, OTR, Northside, North Avondale, and Paddock Hills were the most represented areas compared to their population size in the city. Westwood, CUF, Mt. Washington, Madisonville, and West Price Hill were the most underrepresented areas compared to population size. It is important to note that this data does not include information about people engaged at the pop-up events, the Neighborhood Summits, website interactions, professional stakeholders, or additional, specific outreach undertaken by the Mayor and Councilmembers. The charts below show the demographic makeup of the Connected Communities events compared to the city overall.



Neighborhood Representation for all engagement events excluding the survey.



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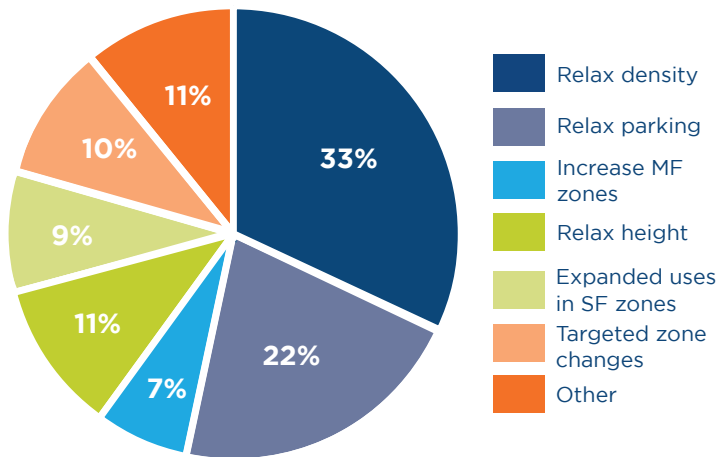
PROFESSIONAL STAKEHOLDERS FINDINGS

Several engagements were held with “professional stakeholders,” a group of roughly 60 individuals who work locally in Cincinnati in the following fields:

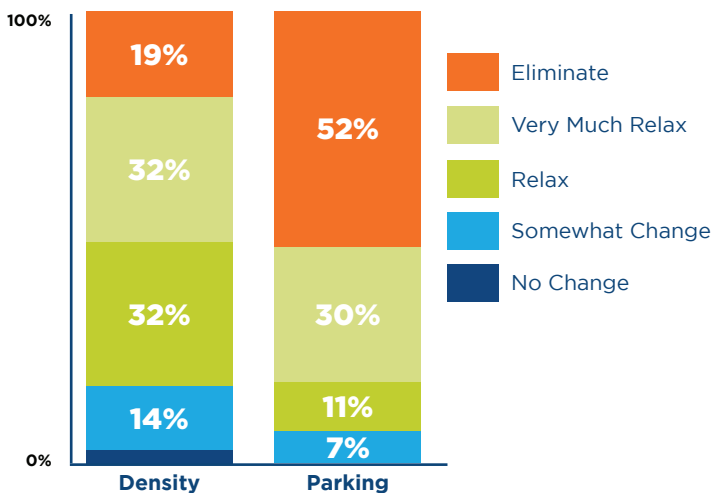
- market-rate and affordable housing development
- architecture and design
- transportation and pedestrian safety
- business district revitalization
- funding, advocacy, and at non-profits.

There were a total of five sessions held with this group, as well as two additional specific sessions with SORTA and internal city departments. This group was able to provide very specific insight into barriers and concerns within the zoning code.

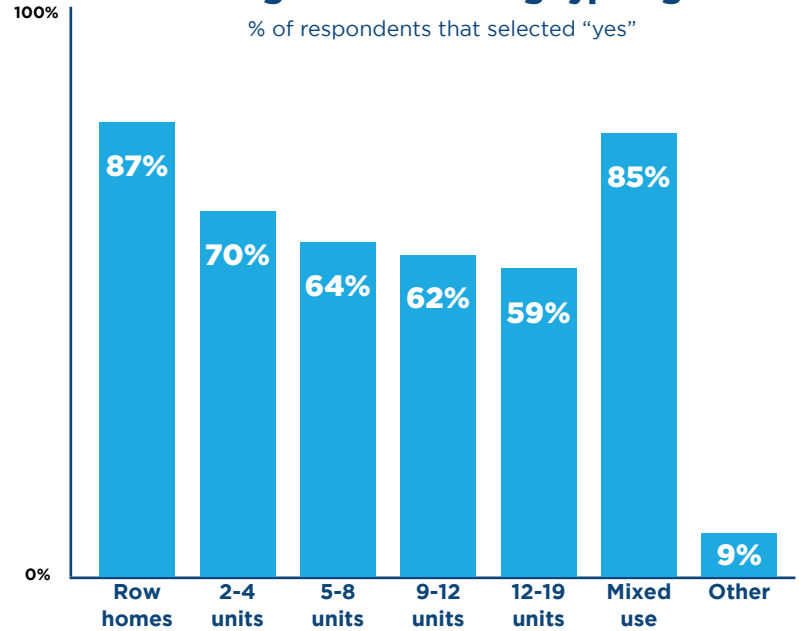
What is the most important zoning change to meet our Connected Communities goals?



What level of change to each regulation is appropriate for affordable developments?



Is there a market for each of the following Middle Housing typologies?



City Department Engagement

A specific session was designed to hear feedback on the proposals from all departments that review new development in the city. Their comments were as follows:

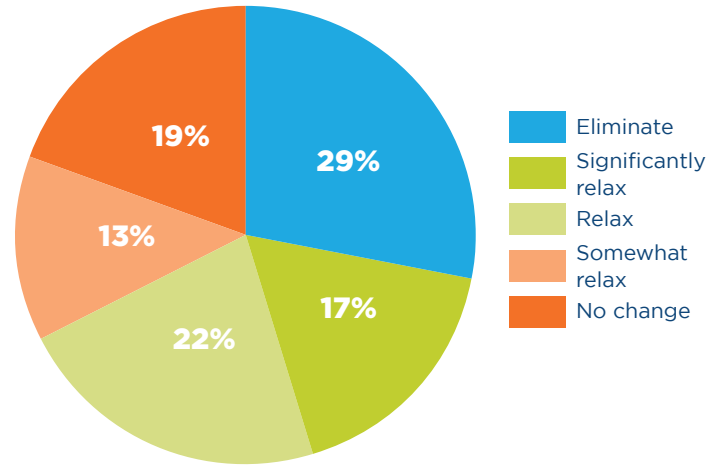
- Infrastructure capacity **will need to grow regardless** of these policies. New development will continue to be possible, but **complex projects** and sites **will continue to be expensive**.
- Infrastructure capacity concerns are currently addressed project-by-project through the **Coordinated Site Review** and **permit approval processes**.
- When utility capacity for a project is a problem, the City will ask the developers to either **pay to increase the capacity** or **scale down the project**.
- Utility capacity on **major thoroughfares is better** than on side streets.
- Connected Communities can provide a vehicle to **create better identification, prioritization, and coordination** for big-picture infrastructure needs.
- There should be **more strategic long-range infrastructure improvement planning** to better align utilities with where the city is increasing population, density, and development.

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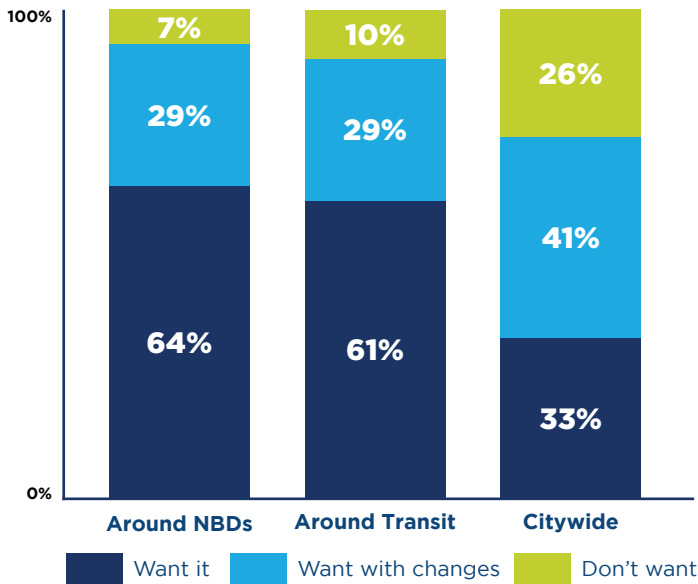
2023 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS

The feedback from the 2023 public engagement was collected from a series of six in-person and one virtual meeting open to all. The two-hour events were structured as an opening presentation on the “why” and a summary of zoning; an engagement game called Simcinnati; three rounds of brief, introductory presentations followed by interactive feedback posters and discussion for the Middle Housing, Reduced Regulatory Barriers, and Parking focus areas; and closing remarks. These sessions had a significant impact on the ultimate direction of the policy proposals. The proposals are in direct alignment with the community feedback received for each Focus Area.

How do you feel about Parking Minimums?



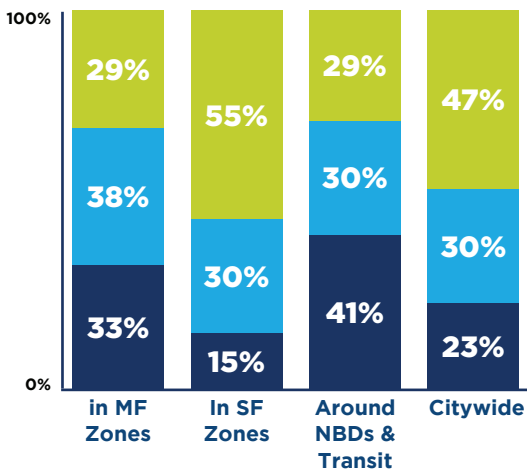
How do you feel about Middle Housing in each area?



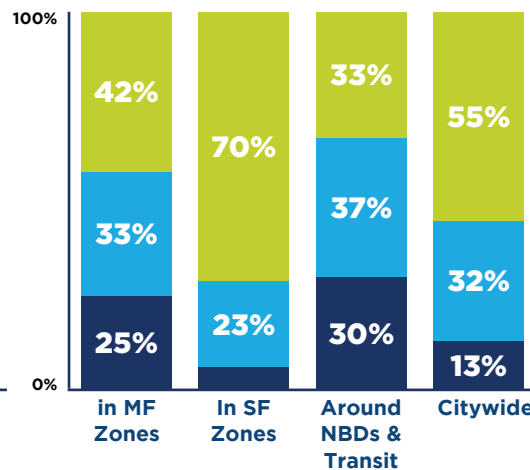
Simcinnati

A major element of this engagement was related to educating the general public about complex zoning topics quickly in order to gather informed feedback. This was accomplished through “Simcinnati,” a City Planning game invented by staff where participants were charged with selecting how to manage growth in a fictional neighborhood. Participants balanced real-world tradeoffs related to population size and amenities such as public transit, bike lanes, urban design improvements, amenities such as a grocery store, and local shops and restaurants, as well as parking requirements.

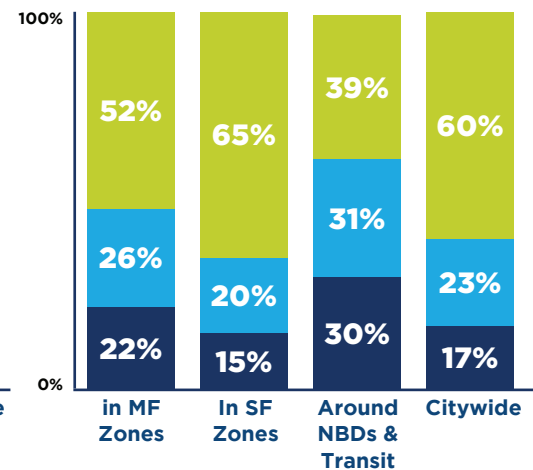
How do you feel about Density regulations in each area?



How do you feel about Height regulations in each area?



How do you feel about setback regulations in each area?



Eliminate Relax No Change

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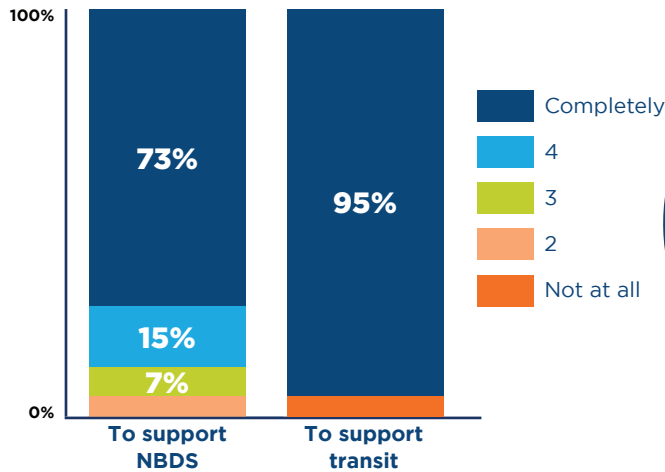
2024 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS

The feedback from the 2024 public engagement was collected from two open-house sessions, a virtual engagement session, online surveys, and the 2024 Housing Growth and Affordability Summit, all of which were free and open to the public. These sessions were meant to educate the public about the proposals, hear community concerns, and refine key aspects of the proposal. 2023 and 2024 events were promoted online via the City Planning website, social media, news outlets, and emailing lists. 2024 events were also advertised via physical post-cards.

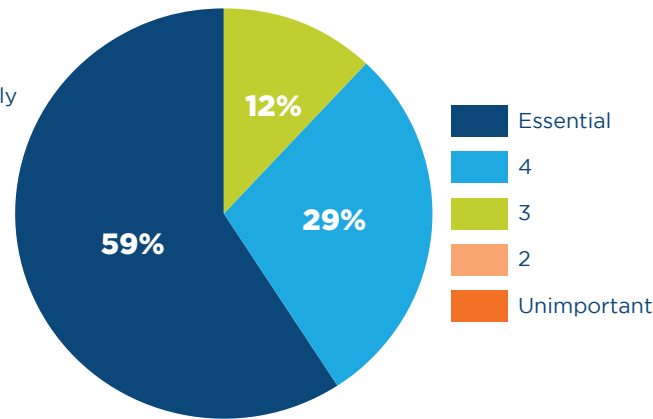
Human Scale Development Priorities

1. Landscaping
2. Building Design
3. Bus Shelters
4. Bike Parking
5. EV Charging

Is it worth it to increase density in Cincinnati to support our assets?



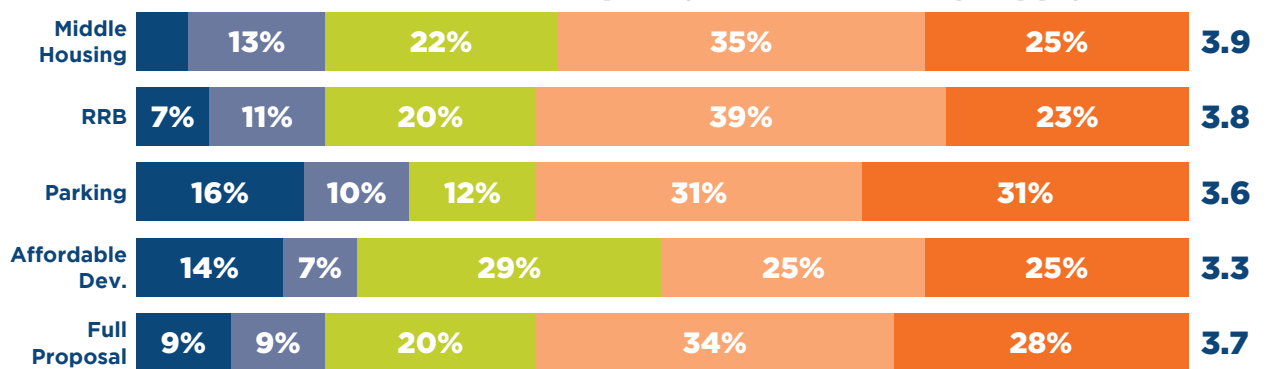
How important are the CC policies to reaching our climate goals?



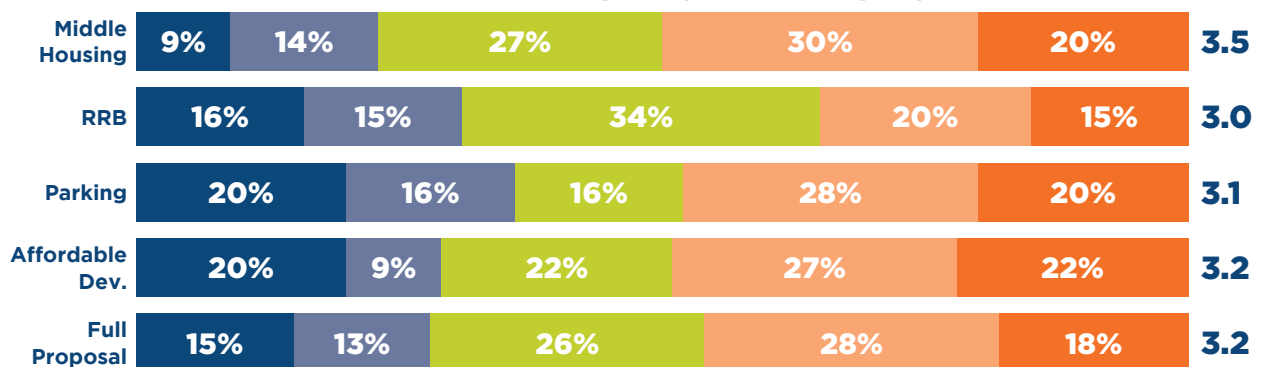
Main Concerns:

- Quality of life issues related to more people.
- Infrastructure maintenance and capacity.
- Hillside impacts.
- Generally more renters and multi-family development.
- Lack of quality design.
- Not enough parking.
- Lack of housing that is affordable to the lowest income groups.
- Policies do not go far enough, especially when compared to other cities.

How effective will each policy be at increasing supply?



How effective will each policy be at keeping costs low?



Not Effective 2 3 4 Very Effective

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ENGAGEMENT THEMES

Hundreds of comments recorded throughout engagement were sorted and distilled into a number of common “themes,” listed below. Themes do not necessarily represent the opinions of all members of the community, staff, or elected officials. Rather, they provide an overview of what was expressed during each round of public engagement.

Increasing density near NBDs and transit corridors with gradual transition would be the best of both worlds by **maintaining some SF neighborhoods** while **increasing the amenities**, density, and **pedestrian feel** that many people are looking for at **different stages of life**.

Residents want to live in **vibrant, denser neighborhoods that are walkable** to their everyday needs. Increased density could contribute to this.

People want to have **different housing options**, including homeownership, **at a reasonable price** without **fear of displacement**.

Current residents want to **proactively (not reactively) share in development** that will benefit them.

New buildings should complement existing buildings. It is essential that neighborhood character be maintained with new development, and **change should occur gradually**.

There is a **lack of trust in city government** to implement change city-wide because it will **fail to accommodate differing neighborhood needs**, especially **protecting historically marginalized groups** in development.

People want **well-maintained neighborhoods, and irresponsible landlords and developers are seen as a threat** to the quality of existing neighborhoods. Residents see increasing homeownership as a way to address this.

Residents value green space and nature and fear that density will compromise this.

Without **viable transit alternatives**, some people don't feel comfortable reducing parking minimums because they feel that **driving is their only way to get places**.

People want better integrated, smarter, **less impactful parking solutions**.

Cincinnati's **historic resources and preservation are important**, and people fear that new development jeopardizes this.

Reducing redundant zoning barriers isn't the only hurdle, but a good step to help **house people** and **support businesses**.

Mechanisms are needed to **ensure quality development**, otherwise people fear developers will get rich and won't build **high-quality, contextual multi-family buildings** that could have the potential to **stabilize** and **uplift long-term neighborhood vitality**.

There are **cost benefits** and increased lifestyle choices of allowing more housing types, but **intentional, ongoing efforts** are **still needed to house the most vulnerable** populations.

Relaxing parking requirements can allow for **effective use of limited land** and can **support and sustain transit alternatives**. However, **retaining some requirements, managing parking better**, and making it **easier to build multi-modal infrastructure** can help **bridge the gap** until viable transit systems take hold.

Increasing **high-quality, creative landscaping in targeted areas** - like neighborhood business districts, areas with lower tree canopy, and along streets and sidewalks - could **mitigate negative environmental impacts** and **bring new and old neighbors together** in spaces where everyone feels welcome, as long as they are maintained long-term.

“Sounds good in theory, but we do not like the idea of going through demolition and construction to have a less than desirable result with buildings that don't match our historic neighborhood.”

2024 Engagement Survey Response

“This project, if enacted, is allowing for the development of housing that I actually want to buy.”

2024 Engagement Survey Response

“If reducing parking minimums will be with increased public transit, I am in favor, but we don't need to make it harder to live here, we need to make it easier to live in a non-car centric Cincinnati.”

2023 Survey Response

“I like the emphasis on giving people the freedom to choose other modes of transit and live without a car.”

2024 Housing Growth & Affordability Summit

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ENGAGEMENT IMPACT ON THE PROPOSAL

We spent over two years engaging thousands of everyday residents, business owners, community leaders, and professionals to determine what Cincinnatians think about how to change our Zoning Code to make housing more attainable for all people, at all income levels, in all areas of the city. Below is a brief summary of exactly how engagement influenced policy.



Engagement Takeaways



How It Was Integrated

2022 Engagement Identify Problems

Changing density, parking, and height restrictions in the Zoning Code will help increase the supply of both market rate and affordable housing. There is a market and desire for Middle Housing typologies in Cincinnati.



Focus was placed on changing regulations in the Zoning Code that most impede new housing development, while also allowing housing types that are desired but lacking in the market.

2023 Engagement Inform Strategy

Desire for different types of housing at affordable prices, better transit, revitalized business districts, and smarter parking solutions. Openness to changing density, height, and parking regulations, but mainly in areas where more housing makes the most sense, such as where it's easy to walk, bike, and take transit to everyday needs. Concern about losing greenery and negative impacts to the form of buildings.



Instead of implementing changes to the Zoning Code citywide, changes were focused on neighborhood business districts and major transit lines, such as future Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and the 24/7 bus routes. To ensure neighborhoods maintain their aesthetic feel, no major changes were made to setback, and no changes were made to height in single-family zones.

2024 Engagement Hear Feedback and Refine

Proposed policies will be effective at increasing housing supply and keeping housing costs low. Policies will help the city reach climate goals and support public transit and business districts. Landscaping and building design were most important elements of Human Scale Development policies. Concern about quality-of-life issues, bad landlords, lack of parking, and fear of renters. Alternate concern that the policies were overdue and did not go far enough.



Given moderately positive reception and conflicting feedback, no major adjustments were made. Human Scale Development policies to increase landscaping and maintain good building design were created to mitigate effects of potential new development. Concerns not related to zoning were relayed to elected officials and the community at-large to be considered separately.