

Inclusive Zoning Expansion

Understanding our Form Based Code

High quality, stable housing for all income levels is central to the health and wellbeing of our city.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Inclusive Zoning?

Inclusive zoning allows for more housing options. People of all income levels have more opportunity to live in the neighborhood they choose and stay in that neighborhood for a lifetime if they so desire. This type of zoning is meant to include options for home ownership and homes for rent, and it allows greater opportunity to build generational wealth.

Why are more housing choices needed?

The city is committed to providing a wide range of options for people with different income levels and family sizes. The city has a goal of building equity everywhere in the city by providing housing at all price points in all neighborhoods. We understand that there are a variety of household needs and desires in our community and that too few options are being provided at this time. People should have the ability to stay in the neighborhood of their choosing for their entire lifetime, and they need different housing options to support them through life's changes.

What is housing affordability?

Housing is affordable when it costs 30% or less of a household's gross income. This includes mortgage, rent, taxes, insurance, etc.

- Monthly maximum housing cost for an individual or family earning \$18,000 per year needs to be \$450.
- For an individual or family earning \$30,000 per year, it needs to be \$625 per month.
- For an individual or family who earns \$54,000 per year, it needs to be \$1,350 per month.
- For an individual or family who earns \$90,000 per year, it needs to be \$2,250 per month.

What is Form Based Code?

Form Based Codes are a different way to govern land use by focusing on the form and character of a place rather than on the use of a particular site. The conditions and character of the area create the framework for the code, and the use of the site is a secondary consideration. The idea is to encourage predictable results with high quality public spaces.

What is the connection between Inclusive Zoning and Form Based Code?

The city adopted a Form Based Code in 2015 which includes a classification called Urban Residential. This classification allows different housing types to be located in the same area as long as certain requirements are met. It makes a place for everyone in the neighborhood which is why it is considered Inclusive Zoning.

How will this zoning change the look of my neighborhood?

The goal is for neighborhoods to receive investment that provides housing options designed to fit into the existing character of the neighborhood. All multi-unit housing types are designed and scaled to be consistent with neighboring single-family homes so that additional density is produced without it being noticeable. A blend of housing types are combined into the neighborhood and built on a human scale. The new housing options honor the existing make up of neighborhoods that currently contain a mix of rentals and single family homes. Our goal is to provide a density level that supports local, walkable commercial districts and the use of public transit. This zoning type contributes to our ability to create great places where people want to be.

How will the rezoning affect my property?

The new zoning would have no impact until you sell your home or there is a need to rebuild it. Your home can continue to exist as is. There is also the chance that the change in zoning will increase development in neighborhoods where it is adopted. New development is likely to increase your property value and/or marketability due to the broader range of uses allowed. This may be especially true for vacant lots if demand for housing remains high. Existing duplexes could again become conforming land uses.

Will the new zoning allow existing single family homes to be converted into multiple units?

It is very unlikely that an existing single family home could be converted to a multi-unit home because of the more strict requirements in the Form Based Code, Urban Residential.

How would the expansion of this zoning help my neighborhood?

The Form Based Code, Urban Residential would do the following.

- Support more diverse housing choices that fit the city's neighborhoods
- Ensure a mix of housing options for all family sizes and those with disabilities
- Create well-designed streets that are safe and secure for pedestrians and bicycles while moving traffic efficiently
- Enable neighborhood main streets to remain or become vibrant social and commercial centers serving the needs of the neighborhood

Should I be concerned about overcrowding?

In 1950, the city's population was 48,000 people, and our land mass was smaller than it is today. Our current population is less than 38,000 people, and our city is littered with vacant lots. We have space to build new homes, and we have utility services to support them.

Will the change in zoning lower my property value?

The new zoning will not have an impact on your property value. The presence of blighted and vacant property is likely to lower your property value.

Will the new zoning cause my property taxes to increase?

The new zoning will not have an impact on your property taxes. It is likely that the new zoning will draw investment into our neighborhoods. New development will increase the value of your home which will slowly over time increase property taxes. However, all properties in the State of Michigan are governed by laws that significantly limit the amount local governments can increase property taxes each year.

Can this type of zoning help residents build generational wealth?

Yes. The options allowed in this type of zoning provide opportunity for wealth building in a number of different ways. An accessory dwelling unit or carriage house (often above a garage) can be rented to help with mortgage payments on the home. A family who owns a duplex can live in one side and rent the other half to earn income. In a live/work space, the rent on the commercial space helps pay for the mortgage of the entire unit. New investment in the neighborhood secures property values and builds equity in the surrounding homes.

How does this type of zoning help existing residents stay in their neighborhood?

Since this new zoning includes housing choices with a mix of price points, neighbors are able to find an option that fits their family size and income level as it changes throughout a lifetime. It allows some to rent while saving to purchase a home, some to own a home, and others to downsize and rent when they can no longer care for a yard. Allowing construction of smaller starter homes and family sized rental units keeps housing within reach of current neighbors. Housing options provide opportunities for residents to build generational wealth through rental income on a duplex or carriage house and through rising property values.

Why does the city want to expand this type of zoning?

There are many benefits to this type of zoning, and those benefits can be seen in the neighborhoods where the zoning has been changed. The city wants more neighborhoods to benefit from this zoning with investment into developments that meet the city's vision to offer a vibrant, affordable and ethnically diverse city where citizens feel safe and enjoy their neighborhoods.

Where does the Form Based Code currently apply in Muskegon?

The majority of Nelson Neighborhood, portions of the Lakeside Neighborhood, and Downtown Muskegon are currently zoned with Form Based Code.