

ADAPTIVE REUSE ORDINANCE

Reusing Detroit's Existing Buildings



Detroit's Adaptive Reuse Ordinance is meant to facilitate the reuse of older, decommissioned, or underutilized institutional buildings into vibrant, neighborhood-serving commercial, residential, or maker uses. The ordinance removes zoning barriers to encourage reinvestment and improve access to neighborhood amenities that support sustainable growth across Detroit neighborhoods.

WHY ADAPTIVE REUSE?

- Encourages reinvestment in vacant or underutilized buildings
- Preserves anchor buildings that retain the character and culture of neighborhoods
- Reduces development costs and time tied to rezoning
- Supports housing creation and neighborhood economic activity and jobs
- Promotes sustainability through reuse rather than demolition

ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONAL BUILDINGS

The ordinance applies to certain existing buildings located in residential zoning districts that were originally constructed for, or lawfully occupied by certain public, civic, or institutional uses (such as churches or schools), as defined in Detroit's Zoning Ordinance, referred to as Institutional Buildings.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Flexible Use Allowances: Permits a broad range of residential and mixed-use activities within qualifying buildings.

Zoning Flexibility: Allows relief from select dimensional standards—including density, loading, and parking—when reusing existing structures.

New Construction Residential: New construction residential units may be permitted on the same site as a qualifying renovated institutional building, without the need for a zoning change.

Citywide Residential Zoning Applicability: Available across all residential zoning districts, subject to eligibility and required reviews.

Compatible with Tactical Preservation: This facilitates the partial or incremental reuse strategy for larger buildings.

Community Engagement: Projects remain subject to site plan review and a conditional land use hearing.