SMALL - LOT CODE REFORM



DRAFT POLICY

Small Lot Code Reform

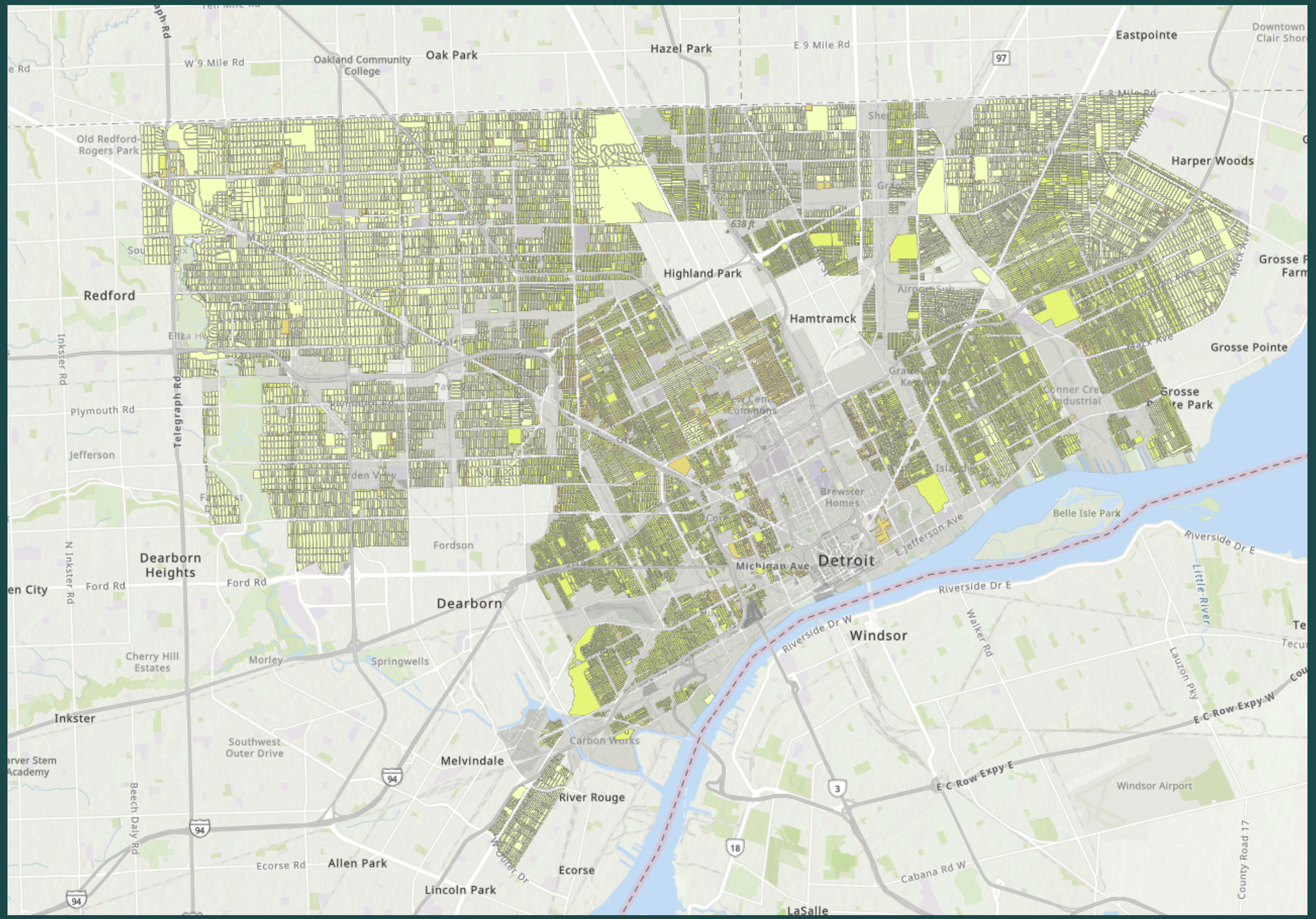
Make it easier to rebuild homes on vacant lots;
changing dimensional standards for single- and two-family homes where already permitted

ZONING DISTRICTS INCLUDED

Residential

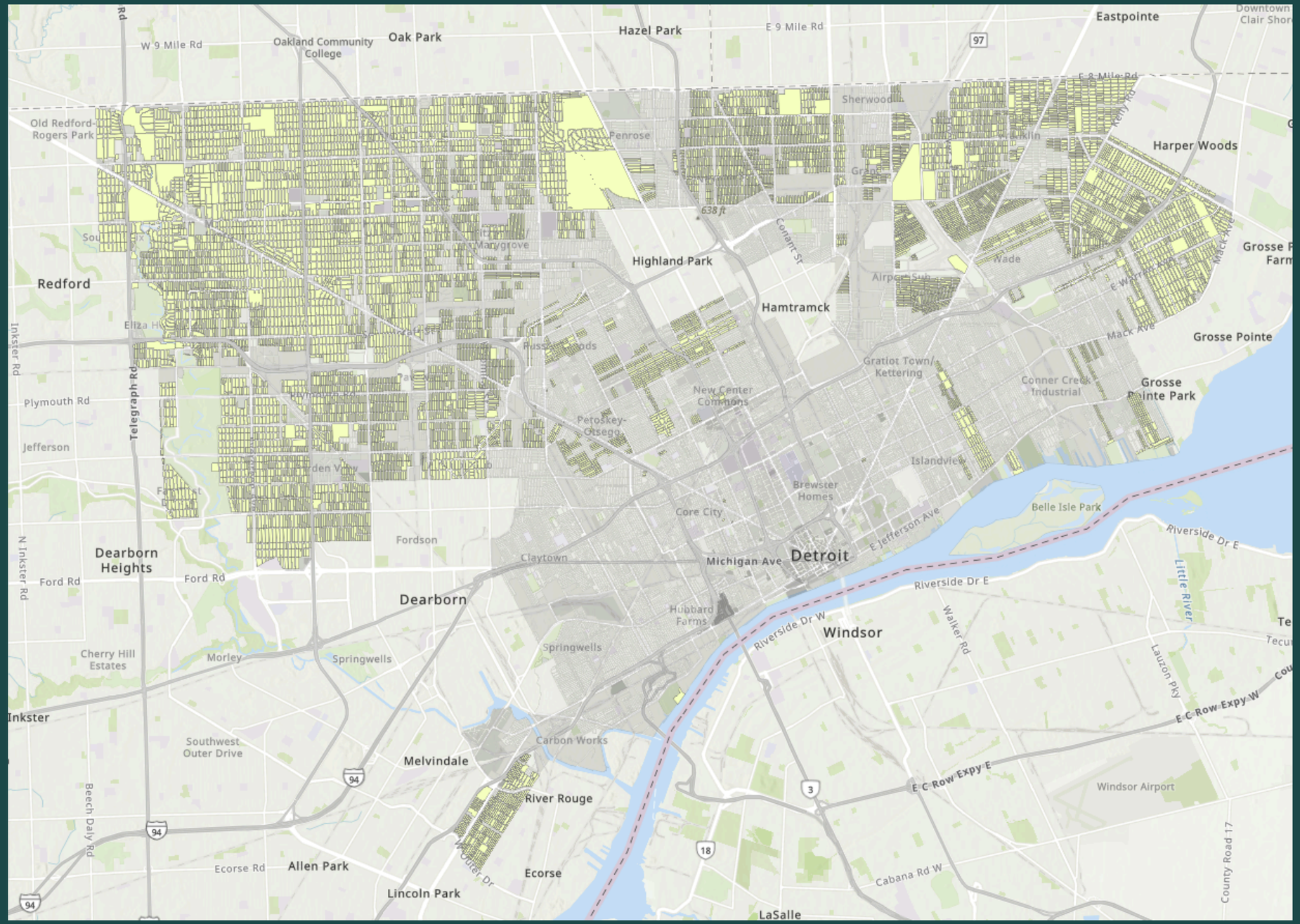
R1 Single-Family Residential District
R2 Two Family Residential District
R3 Low Density Residential District

R1–R3



Oak Park
Hazel Park
E 9 Mile Rd
Eastpointe
W 9 Mile Rd
Oakland Community College
Old Redford-Rogers Park
Harper Woods
Highland Park
Hamtramck
Redford
Grosse Pointe
Plymouth Rd
Jefferson
Telegraph Rd
Inkster Rd
Brewster Homes
Belle Isle Park
Fordson
Dearborn Heights
Ford Rd
Michigan Ave
Detroit
E Jefferson Ave
Riverside Dr E
Dearborn
Riverside Dr W
Windsor
Walker Rd
Little River
Cherry Hill Estates
Morley
Springwells
Inkster
Southwest Outer Drive
Carbon Works
Melvindale
E C Row Expy W
E C Row Expy E
Windsor Airport
River Rouge
Beech Daly Rd
Ecorse Rd
Allen Park
Ecorse
Lincoln Park
Cabana Rd W
LaSalle
County Road 17

R1



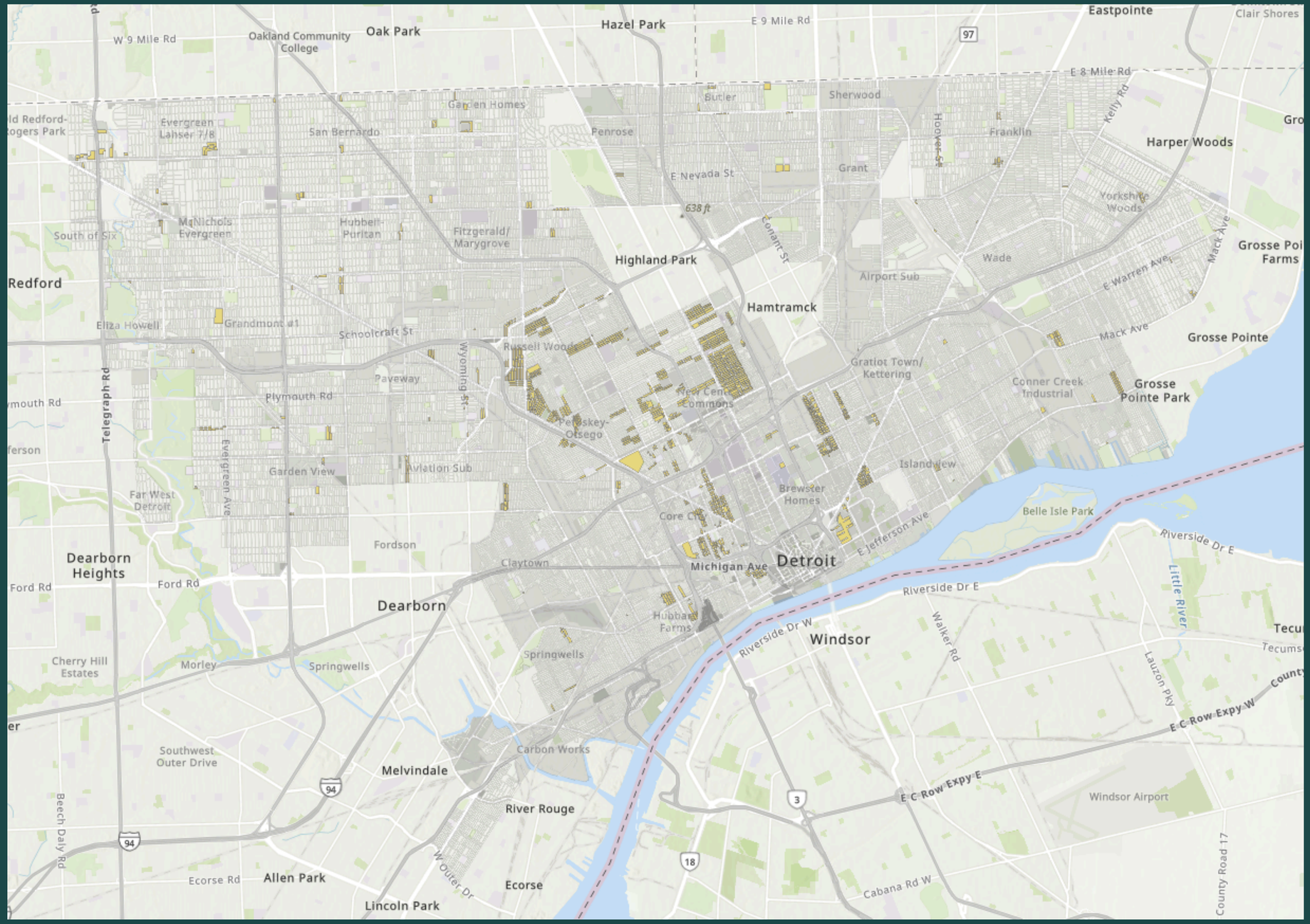
187, 046 residential R1 parcels

R2



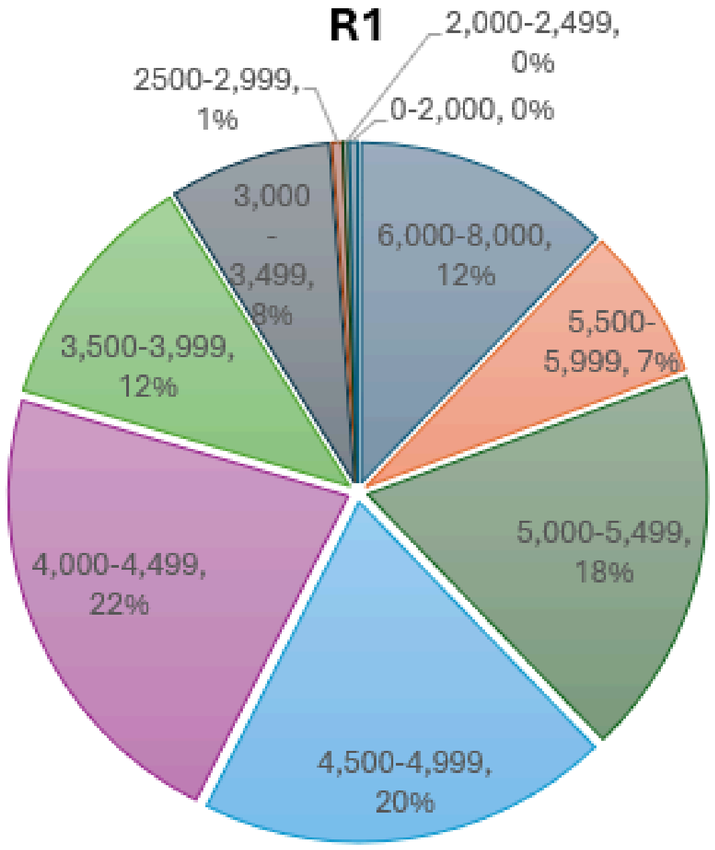
126, 764 residential R2 parcels

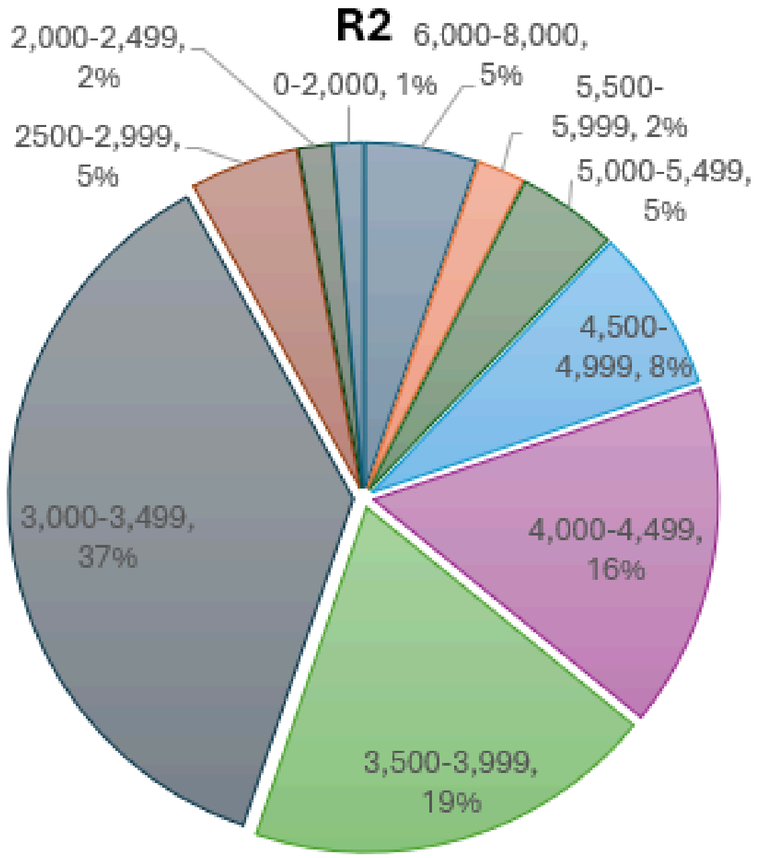
R3

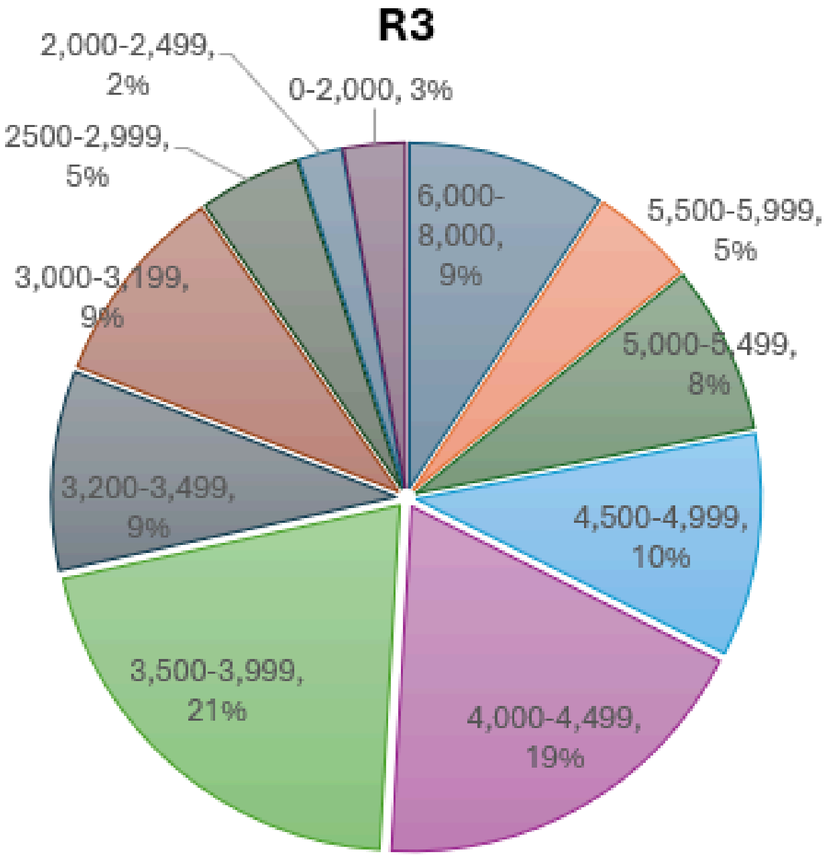


9, 209 residential R3 parcels

EXISTING LOT SIZE





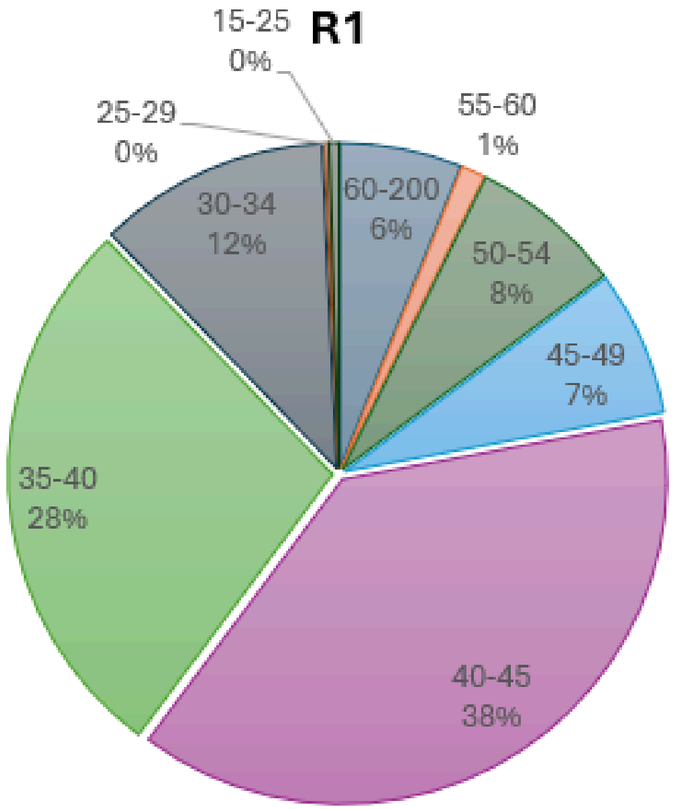


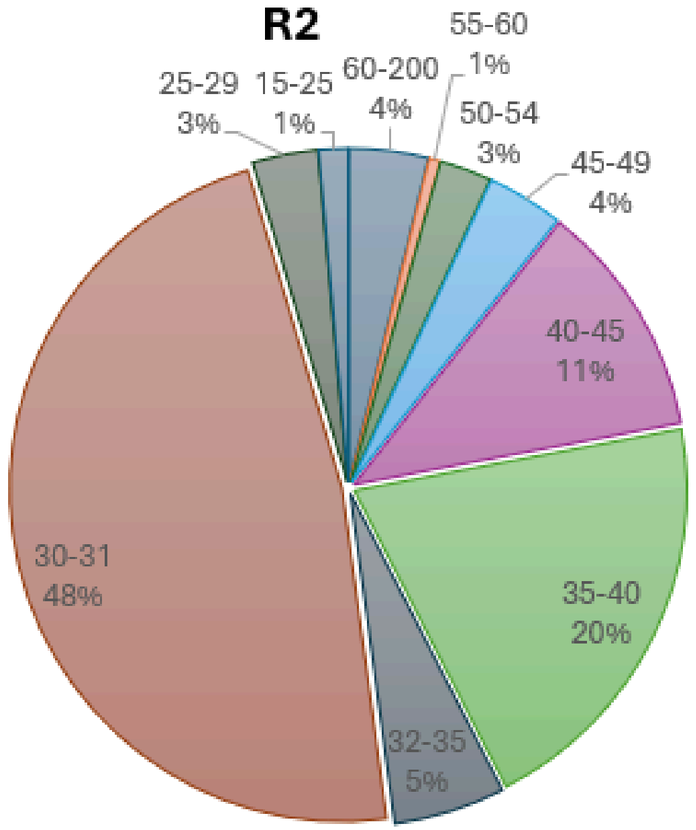
R1	Percent Conforming
Current Zoning- 5,000 sf	35.8%
Proposed -4,000 sf	75%

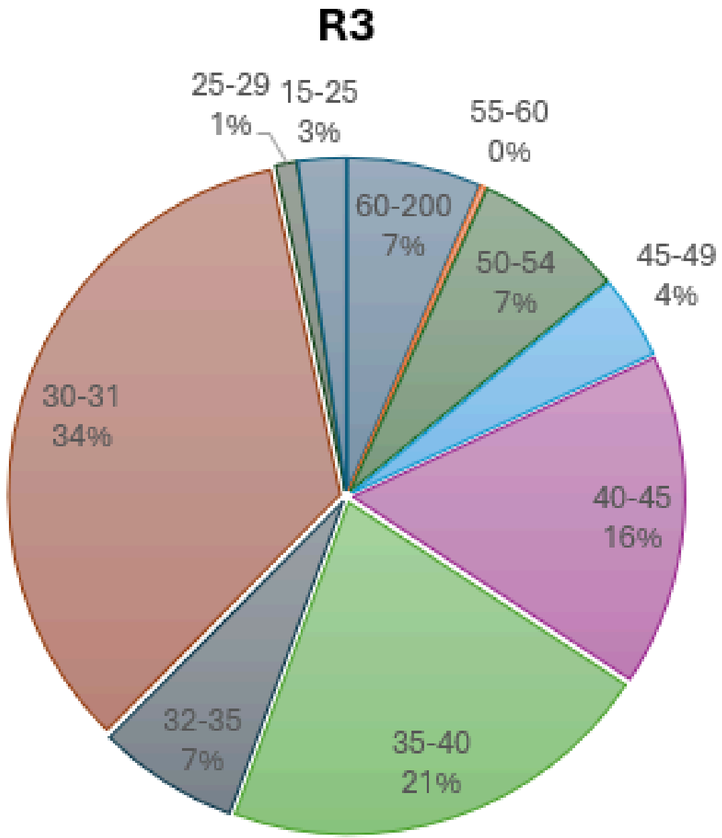
R2	Percent Conforming
Current Zoning - 5,000 sf	11.9%
Proposed-3,200 sf	67%

R3	Percent Conforming
Current Zoning - 5,000 sf	13.5%
Proposed-3,200 sf	77%

EXISTING LOT WIDTH







R1	Percent Conforming
Current Zoning- 50’	14.8%
Proposed - 40’	60%

R2	Percent Conforming
Current Zoning- 50’	6.8%
Proposed - 32’	48%

R3	Percent Conforming
Current Zoning- 50’	6.8%
Proposed - 32’	60%

R1 Current vs Proposed Standards

	Existing R1	Proposed R1	Proposed R1 Small Lot
Min Lot Area	5000	4000	--
Min Lot Width	50	40	--
Front Setback	20	15	15
Side Setback	4/14	5	3/8
Rear Setback	30	20	20
Max Coverage	35%	40%	45%
Height	35	35	35

**Historic District Regulations will not be impacted*

**No lot splits for lots that did not meet intensity and dimensional standards as of January 1, 2027*

R2–R3 Current vs Proposed Standards

	Existing R2	Proposed R2-R3	Proposed R2-R3 Small Lot
Min Lot Area	5000	3200	--
Min Lot Width	50	32	--
Front Setback	20	15	10
Side Setback	4/14	4	3
Rear Setback	30	20	20
Max Coverage	35%	45%	50%
Height	35	35	35

**Historic District Regulations will not be impacted*

**No lot splits for lots that did not meet intensity and dimensional standards as of January 1, 2027*

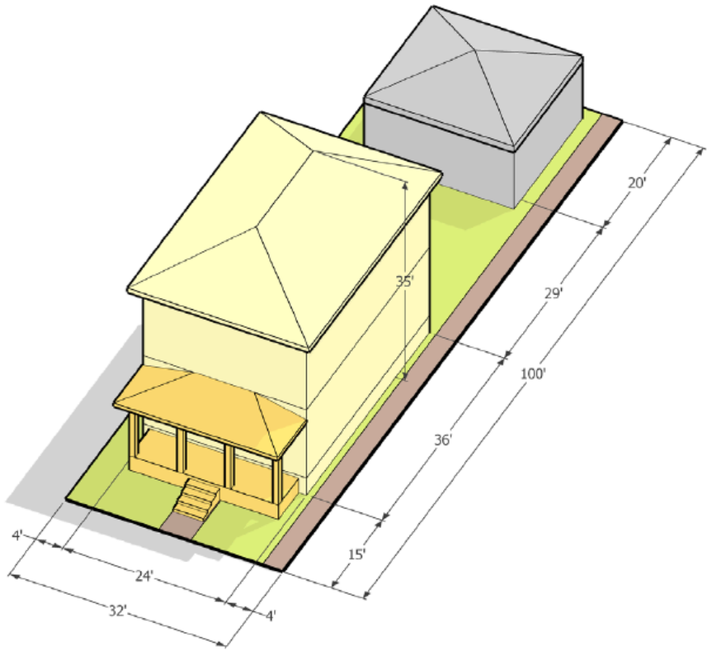
R2

Proposed Rules 32’ Lot

C Single Unit, With Garage

	Required	Modeled
Site		
Lot Area (min)	3,200 SF	3,200 SF
Lot Width (min)	32’	32’
Total Coverage (max)	45%	45%
Setbacks		
Primary street (min)	15’	15’
Side street (min)	4’	4’
Rear (min)	20’	49’
Massing		
Height (feet)	35’	35’
Dwelling Units		
Total DU	-	1
DU Size	-	1,700 SF
Parking		
Access	-	Alley
Spaces per DU	-	2 (Garage)

Key
- Dwelling Unit
- Entry Feature
- Walkway
- Open Space
- Parking / Garage

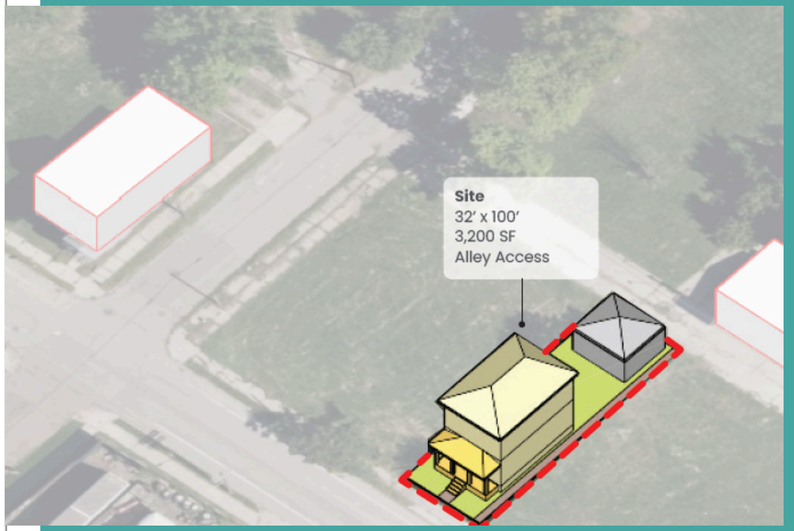


Lot Coverage: The portion of a site that is covered by principal and accessory buildings and structures, as measured from the outside of the building or structure at ground level, and expressed as a percentage of total site area.

Lot Line: A line bounding a lot that divides one lot from another lot or from a street or any other public or private space.

Lot Width: The horizontal distance between side lot lines.

Setback: The required minimum distance between the building and the front, side or rear lot line.



CASE STUDY: Four Homes Built by Habitat for Humanity in the Morningside neighborhood in 2025

Habitat for Humanity® Detroit





Under the Current Zoning

Limited land availability: Finding two adjacent, buildable parcels with clear title, restricts where we can construct homes.

Increased costs: Acquiring and combining parcels adds land acquisition, maintenance, and administrative expenses that could otherwise support construction.

Extended timelines: Lot acquisition, consolidation, and zoning approvals add significant time to the development process.

This ordinance will reduce the complexity of building single- and two-family homes



Allow Rebuilding of Existing Multi-unit Housing After a Fire or Disaster without Requiring Conformance to Existing District

Sec. 50-15-32. Damage or destruction to principal structures containing nonconforming uses. The following provisions shall apply with respect to damage or destruction to principal structures that contain nonconforming uses:

(1) Where a structure that contains a nonconforming use is damaged or destroyed by any means to the extent of more than 60 percent of the assessed valuation, as defined in Section 50-16-113 of this Code, of the structure at the time the damage occurred, the use shall not be re-established except in compliance with all applicable regulations of Article XII, Article XIII, and Article XIV of this chapter. No repairs or reconstructions shall be undertaken, unless a building permit for such repairs/construction has been obtained within two years of the date of the damage or destruction. The Board of Zoning Appeals may modify the applicable regulations of Article XII, Article XIII, and Article XIV of this chapter only after a public hearing, upon satisfying the approval criteria of Article IV, Division 6, of this chapter. The Board may impose any limitations or conditions that the Body deems necessary to carry out the intent, spirit, and purpose of this chapter;

(2) Pursuant to the authority that is specified in Section 208 of the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, being MCL 125.3208, and notwithstanding Subsection (1) of this section, a nonconforming ~~single-family~~ residential dwelling(s) which is damaged or destroyed may be repaired or reconstructed without need for approval by the Board of Zoning Appeals; such repair or reconstruction shall not result in an increase in the gross floor area of the ~~single-family~~ residential dwelling(s) as existed at the time that the damage or destruction occurred. No repairs or reconstruction shall be undertaken, unless a building permit for such repairs.

Thank you