

Let's Build More Housing, Detroit

Making Housing More Affordable By Expanding Supply



**Opportunity
Rising**

July 2025

Detroit Needs To Build More Housing

Detroit leads the state in population growth, adding nearly 7,000 residents last year

There's an urgent need to build more housing to ensure affordable, safe, quality housing for all Detroiters:

- 2,700 new units needed per year to keep up with population growth
- 1,600 new units created per year

We need to build 1,100 more units per year



Building More Housing Helps Keep Prices Affordable

Increasing supply of housing lowers its price

That's why experts across the spectrum are calling for zoning updates to build more housing

Michigan needs statewide zoning reform to bring down housing costs

MACKINAC CENTER
FOR PUBLIC POLICY

**Building Opportunity:
Expanding Housing in
America by Reforming Local
Land Use**

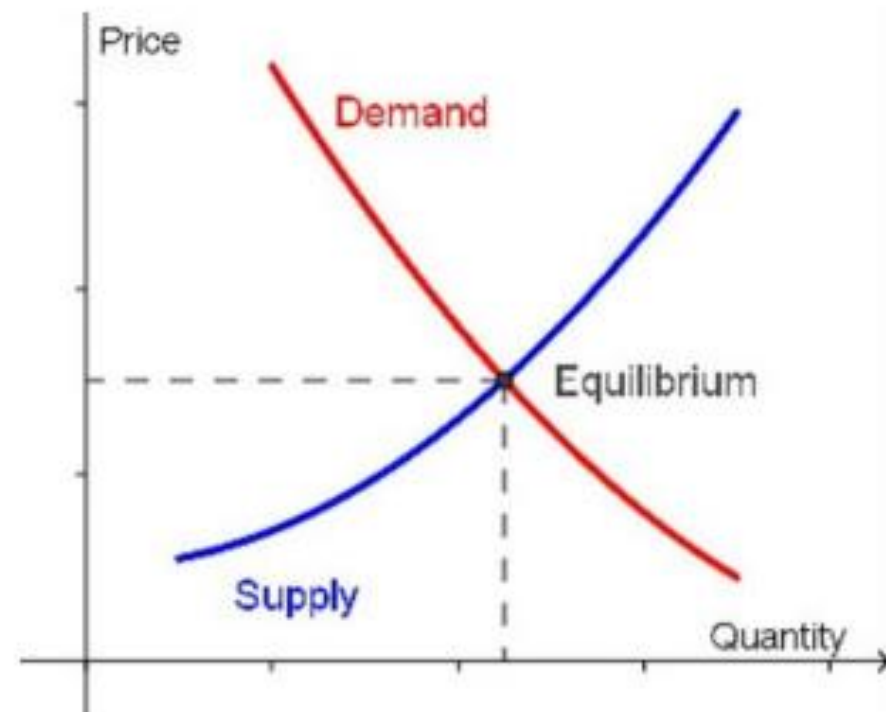
THE CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS

What Is Zoning Reform and Why Do We
Need It?

American Planning Association

**Zoning Reforms to Mitigate America's
Affordable Housing Crisis**

URBAN LAND

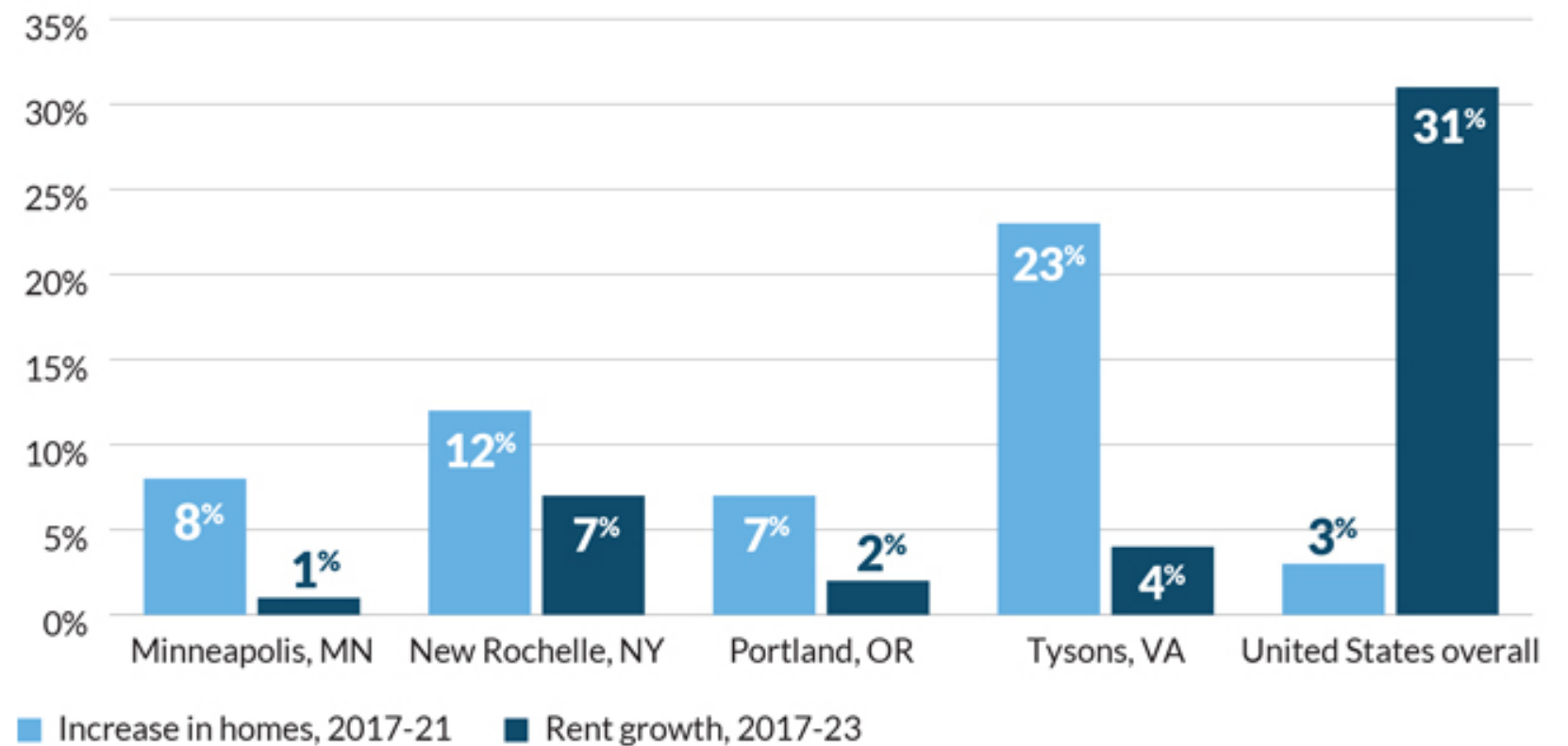


Dozens of Cities Are Updating Zoning to Help Build More Housing & Lower Housing Costs

A small subset of examples:

- Grand Rapids
- Minneapolis & St. Paul
- Columbus
- Cincinnati
- Buffalo
- Champaign, IL
- Raleigh & Durham
- Ecorse & River Rouge

Cities that Reformed Zoning Saw More Homes Built and Slower Rent Growth



In Minneapolis, rents were \$1,700 less per year after zoning updates than if rent had continued growing at prior rate

Goal: Accelerate Key, High-Impact Policies That:

1) Increase Housing Supply & Affordability

2) Align with Long-Term Zone Detroit Approach

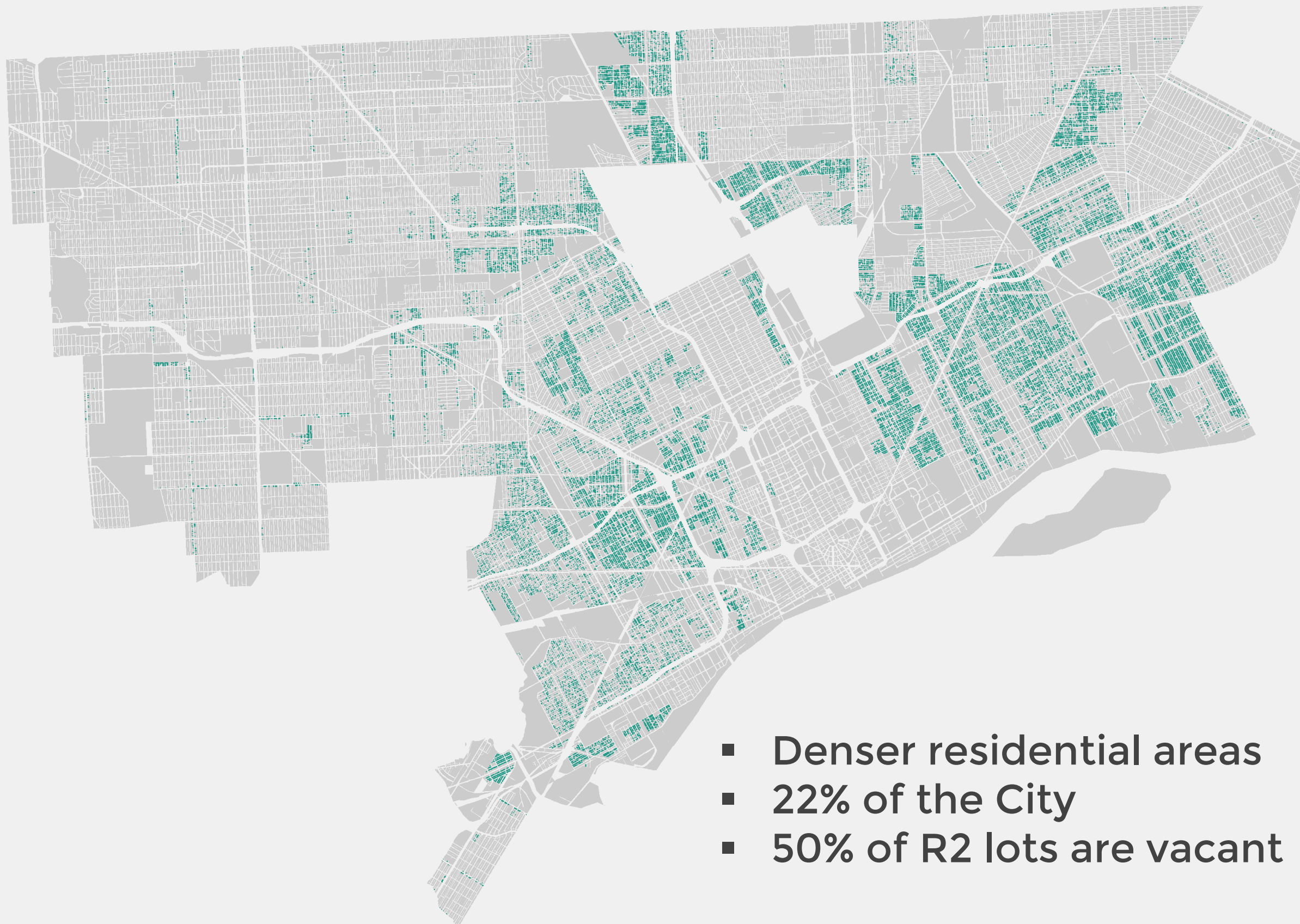
Three Key Updates Proposed

- 1 Build more housing by expanding the types of housing that can be built in R2
 - Triplexes, quads, townhouses
- 2 Make it easier to rebuild houses on vacant lots
 - Allow housing that matches existing neighborhood
- 3 Give projects more flexibility on the size of their parking lot
 - Some projects may not need a big surface parking lot depending on location & clientele



Build More Housing By Expanding Housing Types: What Parts of the City Do These Updates Apply To?

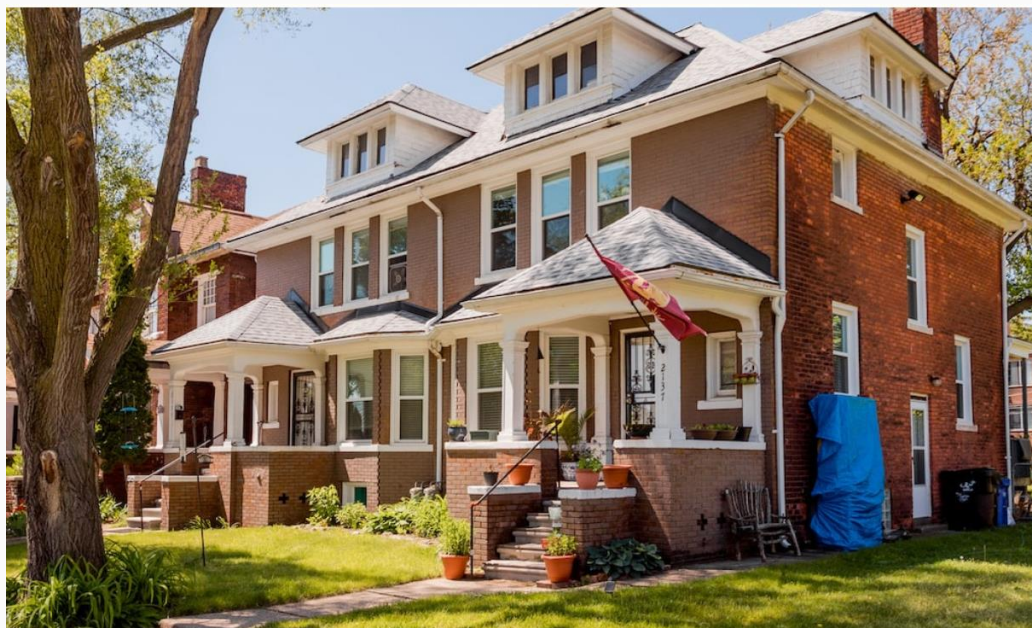
Residential “R2” Zones



1 Build More Housing By Expanding Allowable Housing Types

- Before current rules took effect, triplexes, fourplexes, and townhouses were commonly built in R2 zones; over half of fourplexes in the City are in R2
- Now, these homes require special approval from the City to build (i.e., conditional zoning)
- Proposal: Allow them to be built again without special approval (i.e., by-right)

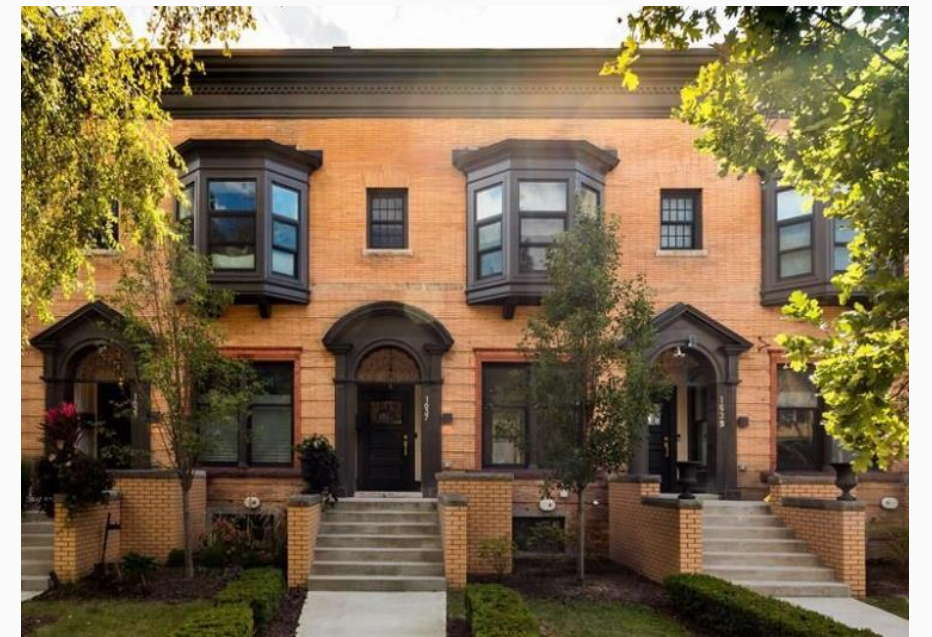
Current: Single Family or Duplex



Proposed: 3 to 4 Unit



Proposed: Townhouse



1 Build More Housing By Expanding Allowable Housing Types

- Conditional zoning allows certain homes to be built only after a public hearing where neighbors can weigh in
- Proposal: increase the number of units that could be approved conditionally

Current: Up to 8 units can be approved

Proposed: Up to 12 units could be approved; maximum of 2 – 3 stories tall



Springwells, 8 units



Dexter Linwood, 10 units



Virginia Park, 9 units

2 Make it Easier to Rebuild Vacant Lots in line with Existing Neighborhoods

Current: Zoning rules on sizing & spacing of homes make it difficult to rebuild on vacant lots & often require special City approval to do so (i.e., variances)

Proposal: make it easier to rebuild on vacant lots by allowing size and spacing that matches earlier homes in the neighborhood

Existing Homes with Sizing Requirements Like Proposal



Newly Built Homes Like Proposal



2 Make it Easier to Rebuild Vacant Lots in line with Existing Neighborhoods

- 95% of Detroit lots would not meet baseline zoning requirements to build a typically-sized home (28 x 38')
 - 50' wide
 - 5,000 sq. ft.
 - 14' side setbacks & 20' front
- Because of this, some flexibilities provided for smaller lots, but:
 - Can only build a single-family house
 - Most dimensional requirements remain unchanged (except side setback), making buildable area small
 - So complex that development professionals – and City staff – struggle to navigate

2 Make it Easier to Rebuild Vacant Lots Where Would this Apply?

Citywide: applies to lots below minimum size or width (5,000 sq. ft. or 50 ft.) and created before 1968

- Historic District review will continue to apply in all designated districts
- Most impact for R2 – R6; very minimal impact for R1

Zone	Current*	Proposed
Homes allowed	Single family only	Any type allowed in zone (e.g., townhouse, duplex)
Side setback	10.5’ combined	10’ combined
Front setback	20’ – but can move up or down based on neighbors	10’ – but if neighbor is larger, must match
Rear setback	30’	20’
Height	Varies by zone: 35’ limit or floor area ratio limits	35’
Lot coverage	45%	60%

*Shows min. or max. permissible through flexibilities offered in various code provisions for smaller-sized lots, in this case a 30 ft. wide by 100 ft. deep lot

Rebuilding on Vacant Lots: What Would This Look Like?



Virginia Park Community
Duplex

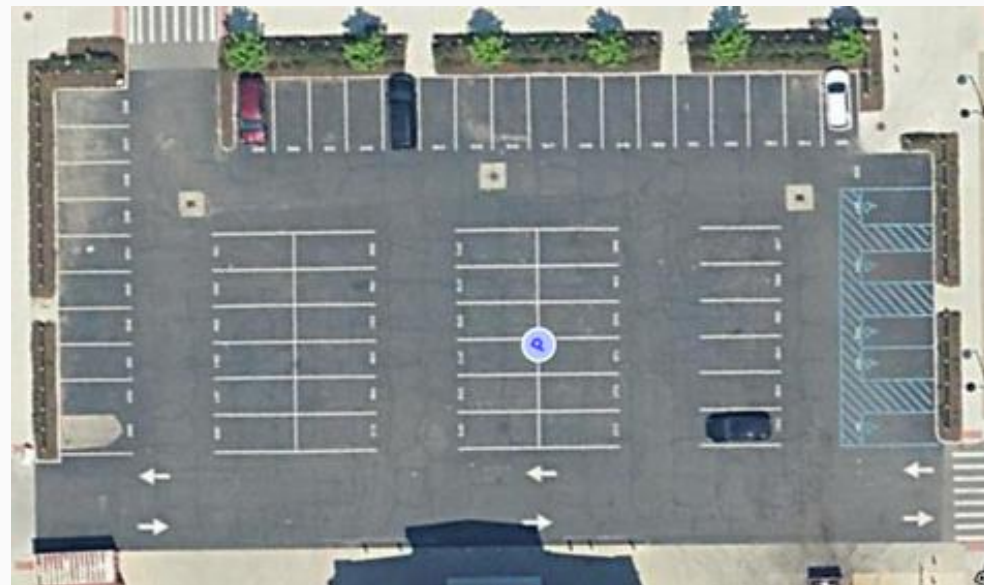


Gratiot Woods
Single Family

3 Give Flexibility on Parking Lot Size in Targeted Cases

Current: zoning requires minimum parking lot size for each of 177 land uses

- Building large parking lots is a barrier to revitalization– that's why some areas of the City are exempt or can have smaller parking lots:
 - 0 parking required in Downtown, Eastern Market, New Center
 - Smaller parking lots allowed for:
 - Midtown
 - Within 10-min walk of high-frequency transit corridors
 - Traditional Mainstreet Overlay Districts



3 Give Flexibility on Parking Lot Size in Targeted Cases

Why is flexibility needed?

- Each parking space costs \$8k to build & cost gets passed on to Detroiters
 - Raises rent by \$400/year
 - 1 in 3 families doesn't have a car
- Parking lot size should depend on location & who the building serves
- Some land can't be developed if parking lot can't fit

What would be the impact?

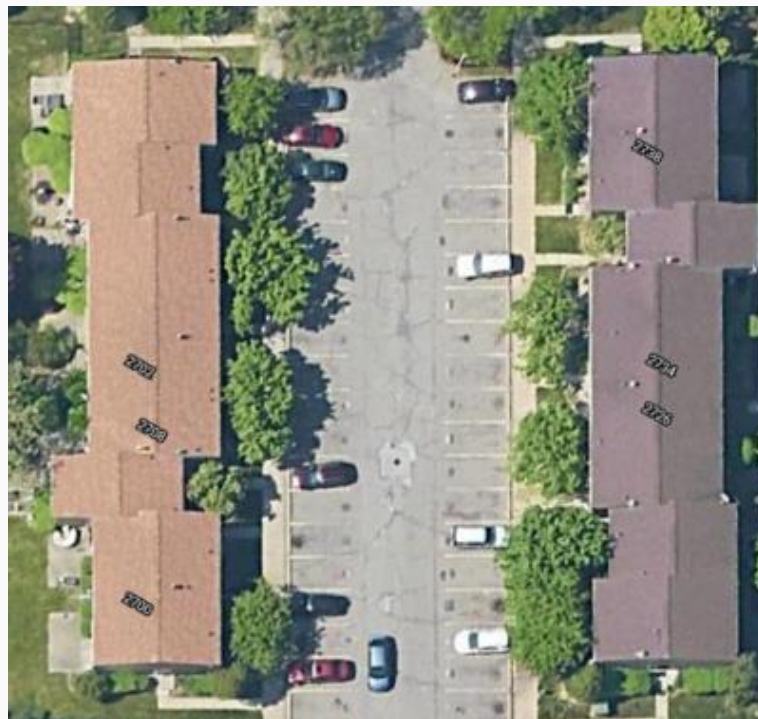
- More housing
- More small businesses & thriving commercial corridors
- Projects have choices – can still build as many spaces as needed



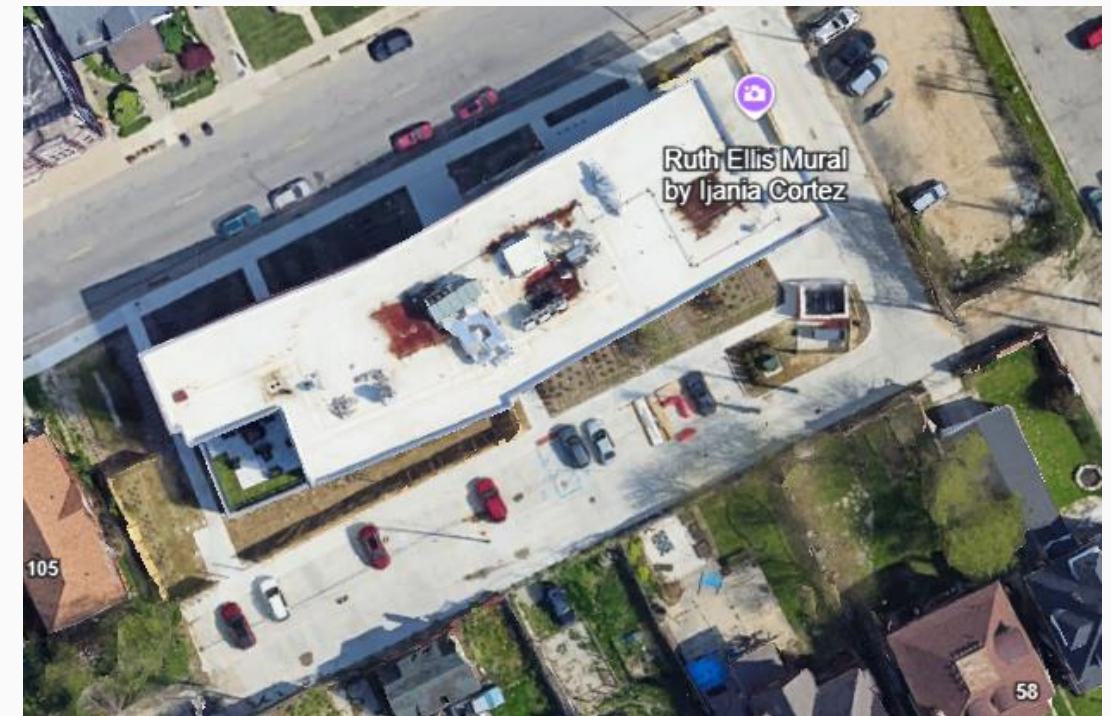
Goal: Build On Policies that Have Successfully Supported Revitalization in Detroit Neighborhoods

- A. Small buildings: expand policy that allows smallest buildings to decide how large a parking lot they need
- B. In areas near frequent transit: allow parking lot size tailored to needs:
 - Reduced size within 10-min walk of frequent transit
 - Exemption for small commercial spaces in larger building
- C. Alternative plans: make it more feasible for projects to propose alternative plans

Current Approach



Proposed Approach



What Would This Look Like? Flexibility for Small Buildings

Current (Sec. 50-14-7)

- Structures under 3,000 square feet – and built before 1998 – have no parking lot requirement

Case study: Quadraplex

- Older building, so “grandfathered in” to having no parking lot
- 5 spaces required if built new; roughly the size of 2 apartments

Proposed

- Structures under 6,000 square feet – built any year – would have no parking lot requirement



What Would This Look Like? Flexibility Near Frequent Transit

Current (Sec. 50-14-153)

- For “minimally deficient” buildings, BSEED can waive up to 20% or 10 spaces, whichever less

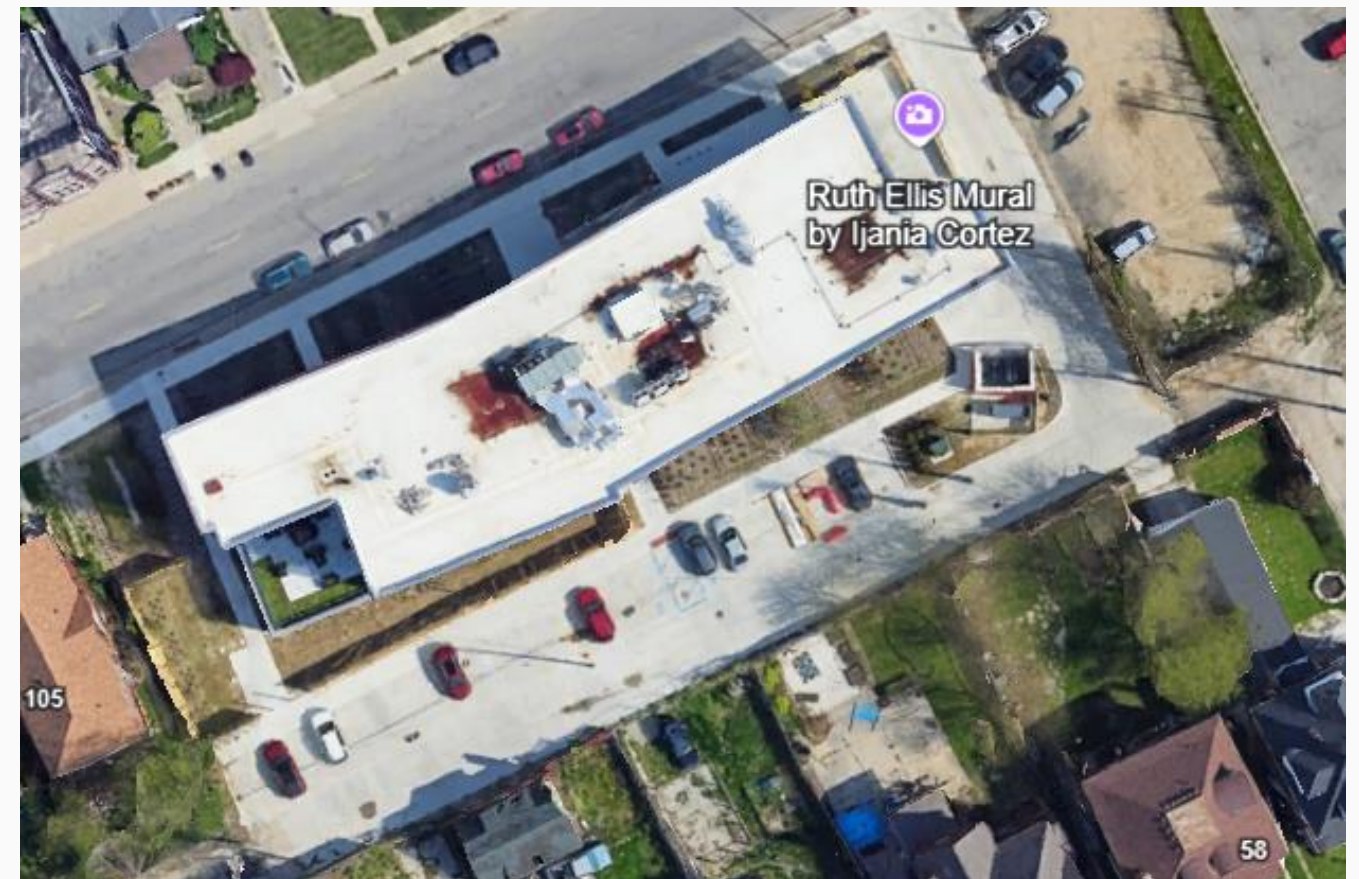
Proposed

- Allow waiver of up to 30% or 20 spaces, whichever less, within 10-min walk of frequent transit
- Only for residential, public/civic, and retail/commercial (except auto-related)

Case study: Ruth Ellis Clairmount Center

- 54 spaces required by baseline code
- 32 after discount from nearby transit
- 21 built after BZA approval

Proposal: allows smaller parking lot without requiring BZA approval because location is near frequent transit on Woodward



What Would This Look Like? Alternative Parking Plan

Current (Sec. 50-14-154)

- Projects can propose alternative parking plan to BSEED
- Requires special land use hearing
- No known use

Proposed

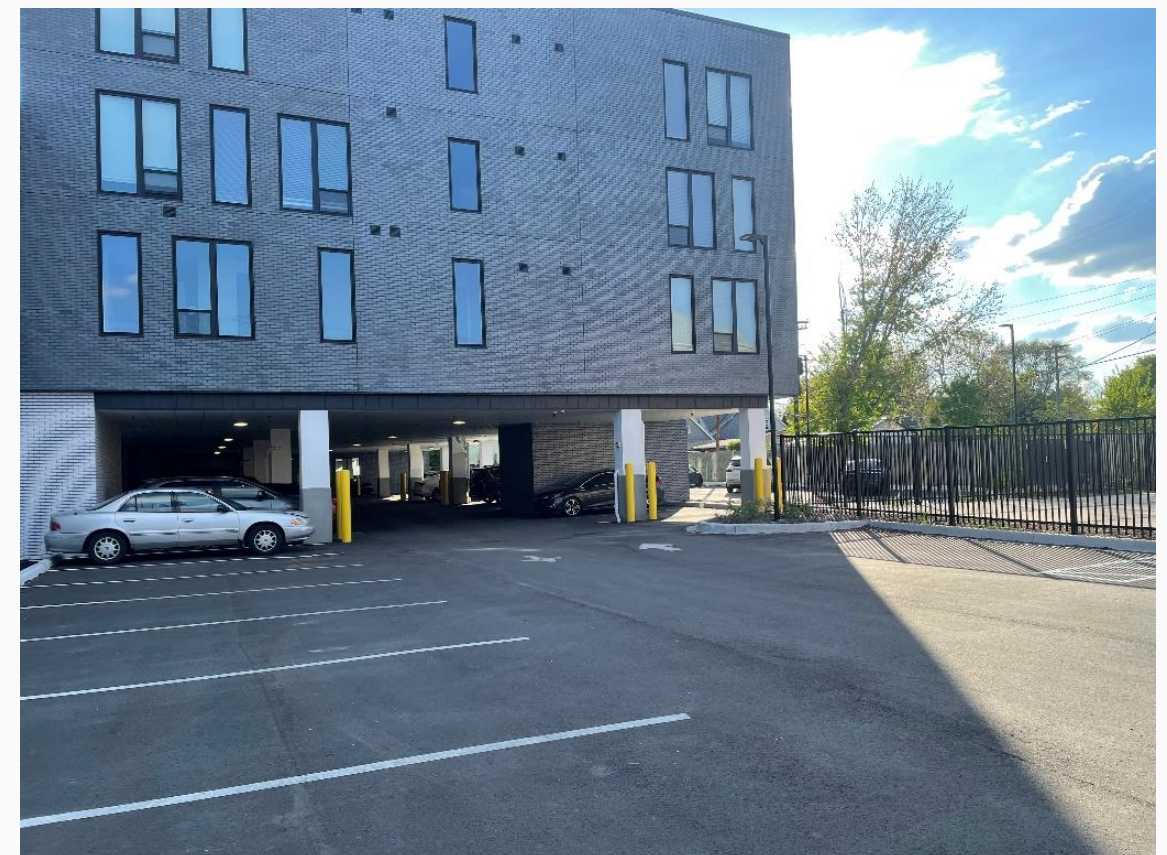
- Allow review & decision on alternative parking plan through building permit review
- Only for residential, public/civic, and retail/commercial (except auto-related)

Case study: La Joya Gardens

- 40 spaces required after available reductions
- 19 spaces full (~50%) on recent visit

Proposal: allows project to propose alternative plan that could include parking lot, bike parking, rideshare drop-off, etc.

La Joya Gardens parking lot on a weeknight



How Do These Changes Benefit Residents?

- 1 Helps to meet Detroit's need to build 1,100 more housing units per year
- 2 Allowing more housing to be built makes it more affordable
- 3 Offers more options to buy a home affordably (e.g., condo buildings)
- 4 Offers more options to rent affordably in the neighborhoods

Owner-Occupied Condos in Detroit



Duplex, Schaefer 7/8 Lodge



Quad, Woodbridge



Community Engagement: Drawing on Zone Detroit



Community Engagement: Timeline and Next Steps

Community Engagement: Drawing on Neighborhood Plans

- Among 21 Neighborhood Plans:
 - 100% wanted more housing options, affordability, or density
 - 90% wanted walkable or multi-modal transit

Next Steps

- Ongoing: District-level, in-person community meetings
- July 31: CPC public hearing
- Aug.: Continued engagement