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Zoning as a Housing Affordability Solution: A Piece of the Puzzle

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Table of Contents

- Housing as a Wicked Problem
- Political Support for Housing in the United States
- Research Question
- Methodology
- Implementation Strategies
- Additional Considerations
- Key Takeaways

Housing as a Wicked Problem



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Housing as a Wicked Problem

Intractable

**Wicked
Problem**

Pervasive

Complex



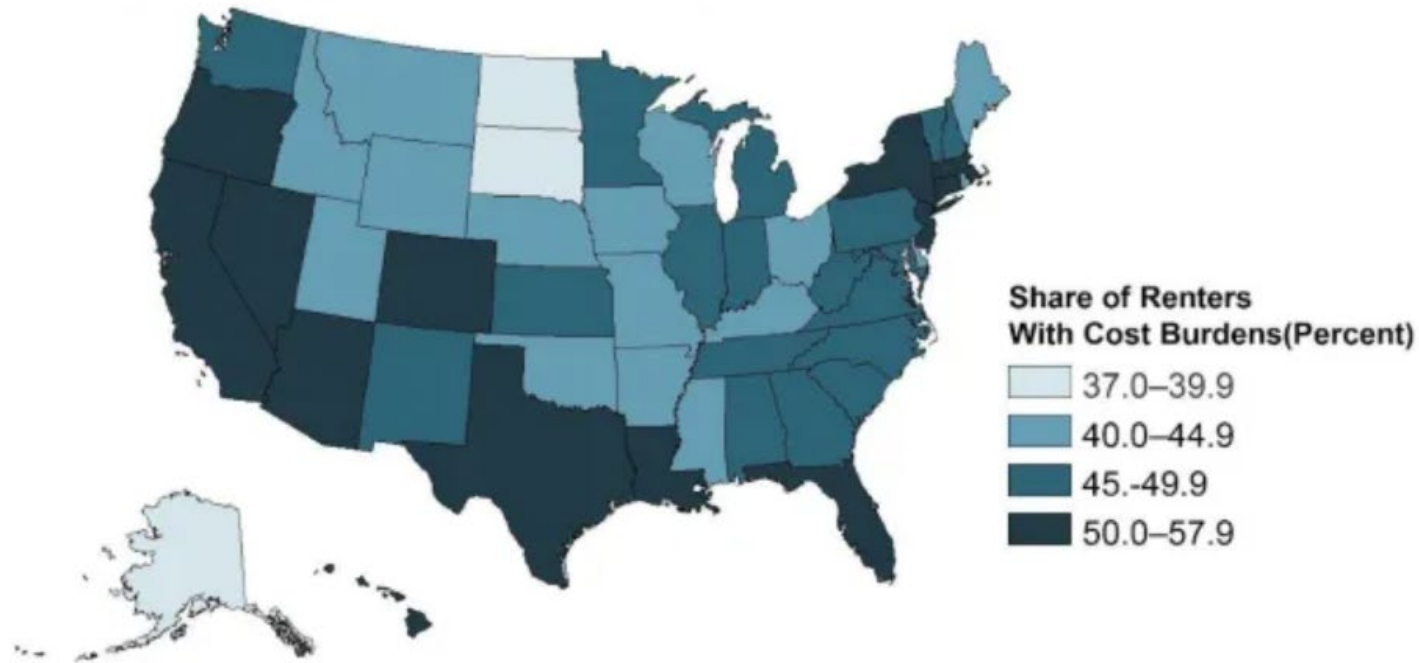
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Current State of Housing in America

- **Cost Burdened:** A household that spends over 30% of their income on housing costs
- **Severely Cost Burdened:** A household that spends over 50% of its income on housing costs
- 40% of Americans are cost burdened

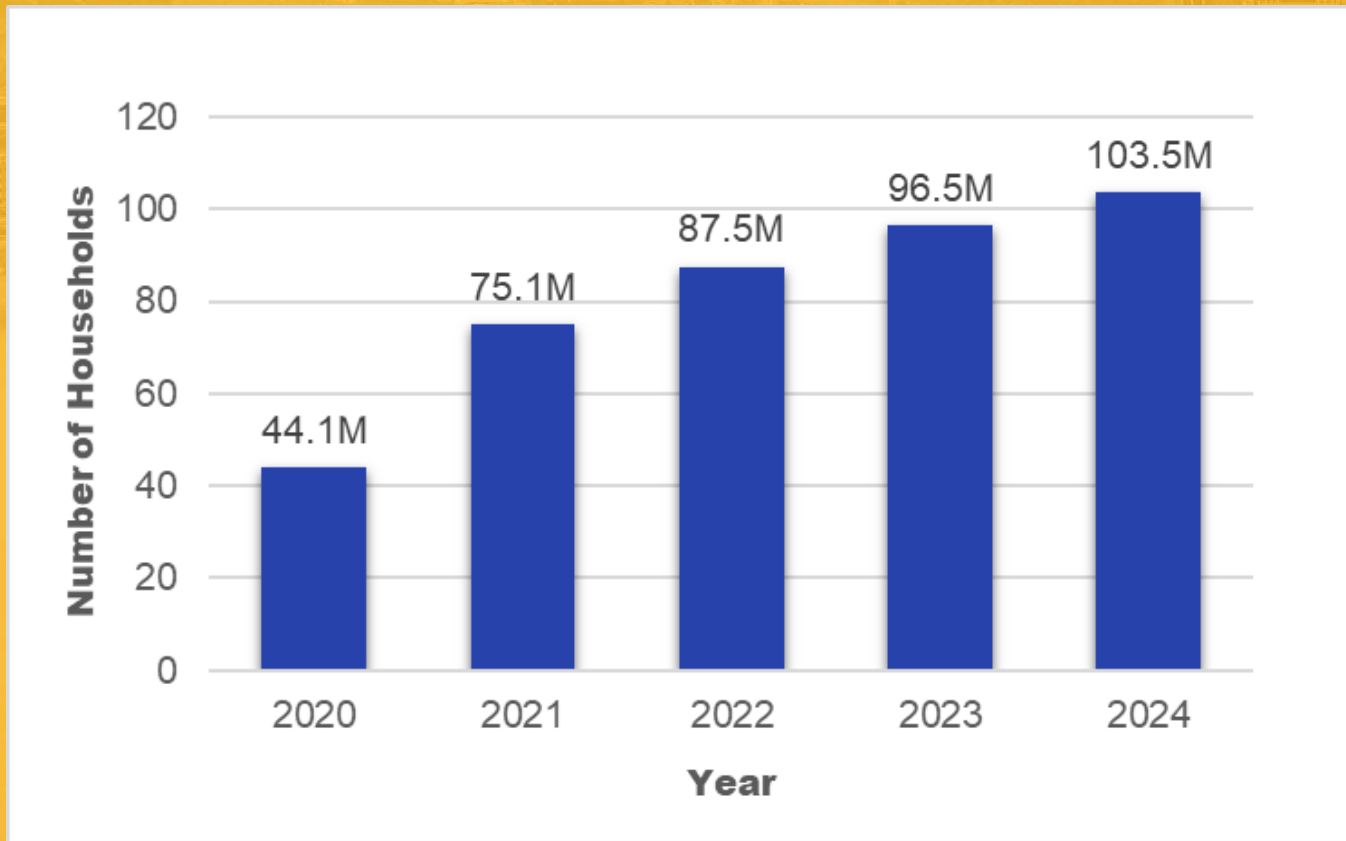
Renters Cost Burdened in the U.S.

More Than a Third of Renters Are Cost Burdened in Every State in the Country



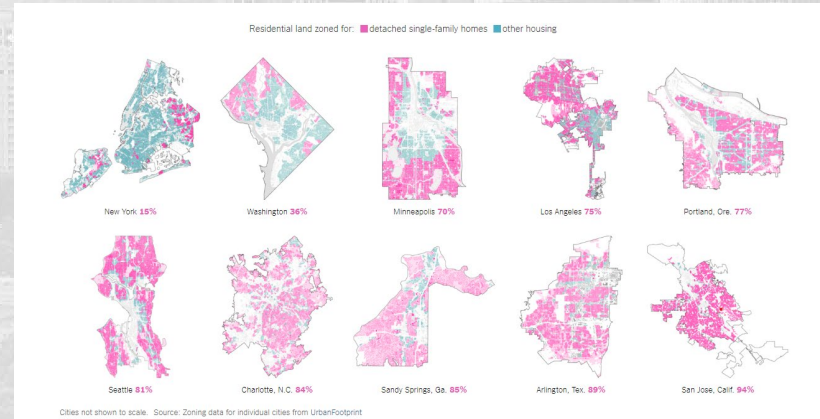
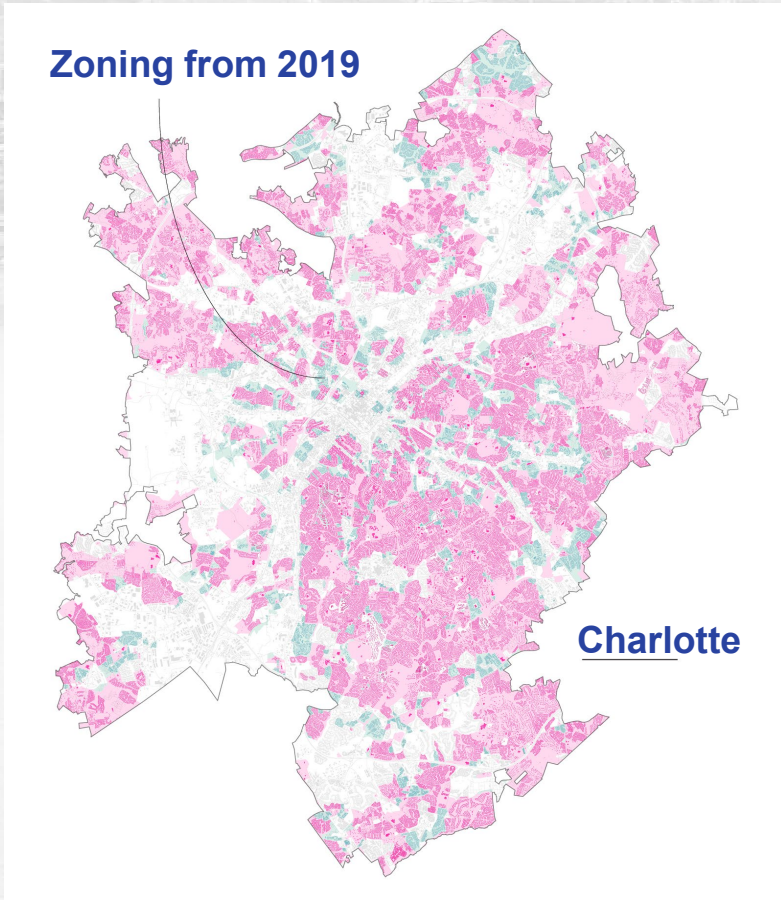
Source: Defender Network: Black and Latino renters hit hardest by all-time high rents

Number of U.S. Households Unable to Afford a Median-Priced Home



134% increase over the last 5 years
70% in 2021 alone

Single-Family Zoning Identified in Major American Cities

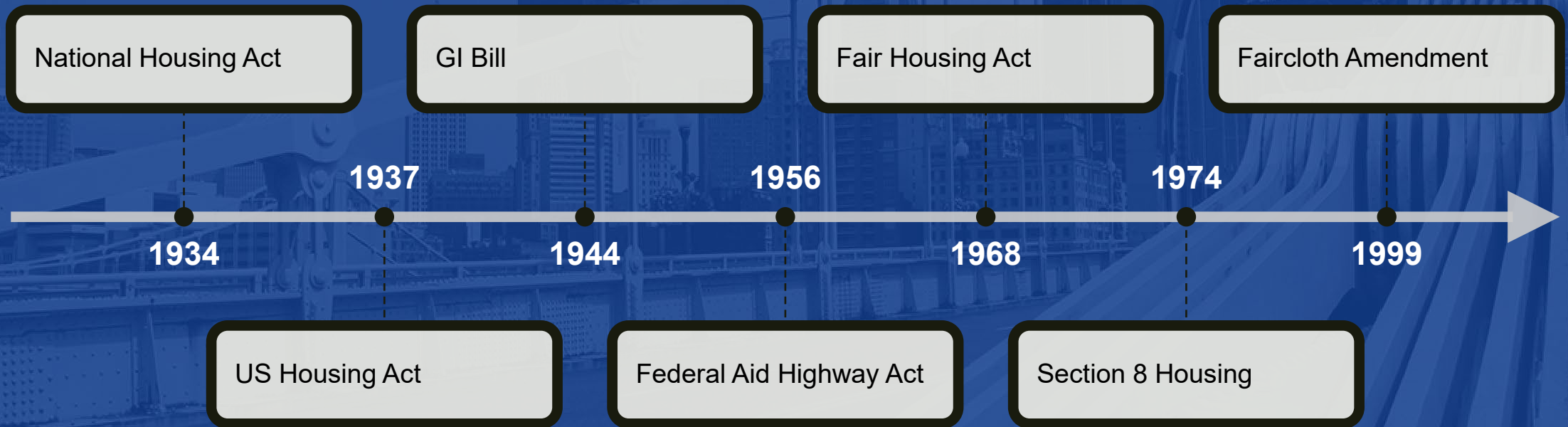


"Today the effect of single-family zoning is far-reaching: It is illegal on 75 percent of the residential land in many American cities to build anything other than a detached single-family home."

Source: Emily Badger and Quoc Trung Bui, New York Times

Policy and Politicians Supporting Housing in the United States

Timeline of Federal Housing Policy in the United States



Bipartisan Political Support

“Clear away some of the outdated laws and regulations that make it harder to build homes”

- Former President Obama



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Bipartisan Political Support

“50% of housing costs today... is all those restrictions. It’s a killer [for projects].”

- Former President Trump



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Research Question

Research Question

How can municipalities promote housing development and affordability through zoning changes, specifically through the elimination of single-family home zoning?

- What changes local governments have been trying
- Implementation lessons learned
- Political, fiscal, and other considerations



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**Housing accessibility + availability =
affordability**



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Methodology

Methodology

- Conducted cross-sectional interviews with city planners and housing policy experts across the country
 - Synthesized best practices and lessons learned
 - Included perspectives from a wide array of municipalities/jurisdictions
- Assessed the language of zoning ordinances in those municipalities
- Reviewed literature on zoning history and best practices

Implementation Strategies

Policy Proposal: The Elimination of Single-Family Zoning

Implementation – Ordinance Example

Built Form Standards

Below is a summary of the built form standards that will help to ensure compatible neighborhood scale.

1. **Height:** The current limit is 35 feet and will remain the same.
2. **Density:** No maximum density limit, however, minimum density is established by Map LUP-8 in the 2040 General Plan.
3. **Floor Area Ratio (FAR):** No minimum FAR requirement. The maximum FAR is established by Map LUP-6 and Figure LUP-5 (Sliding FAR Scale) in the 2040 General Plan. See page 7-8 for an excerpt of the 2040 General Plan showing Map LUP-6, Figure LUP-5 and related policies.
4. **Lot coverage:** No maximum lot coverage. The setback and open space requirements will ensure adequate open space is provided on-site.
5. **Street side-yard setback:** The current requirement of 12.5 feet will remain the same, except:
 - a. In the Central City Special Planning District, where the minimum will be 3 feet, and
 - b. On sites designated in the General Plan with a maximum FAR of 2 or greater (and not located in the Central City Special Planning District), where the minimum will be 5 feet.
6. **Interior side-yard setback:** If the project is proposed adjacent to an existing detached single-unit dwelling, then the current requirement of 5 feet (or 3 feet if the lot width is less than 52 feet) will remain the same; otherwise, there is no minimum requirement.
7. **Rear-yard setback:** The current requirement of 15 feet will remain the same, except:
 - a. When the parcel is less than 2,900 square feet or when abutting a public alley, then a setback of 4 feet will apply, or
 - b. On sites designated in the General Plan with a maximum FAR of 2 or greater, where the minimum will be 10 feet.
8. **Front-yard setback:**
 - a. On sites designated by the General Plan with a maximum FAR of less than 2:
 - i. The current requirement is to match the setback of existing adjacent buildings, which will remain the same. If no adjacent buildings exist, a minimum of 12.5 feet will apply.
 - b. On sites designated in the General Plan with a maximum FAR of 2 or greater, the setback is equal to the least of the following:
 - i. Match the setback of existing adjacent buildings, or
 - ii. 12.5 feet, or
 - iii. 8 feet, if located in the Central City Special Planning District.
9. **Allowed projections into front-yard setback (and street-side setback for corner lots):** If the building contains a front porch measuring at least 6 feet in depth and 8 feet in width, free from any posts, columns, railings, door landings, platforms, and door swings:
 - a. Interior lot: The first and second floor of the building may project into the front-yard setback up to 40% of the required setback depth, or 5 feet, whichever is greater; the width of the projection may be up to 50% of the width of the building's front façade.

- Removal of Density Limits
- Interim Ordinance
- House-Scale Buildings



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Implementation – Coalitions and Collaboration

- 'Yes in My Backyard' - YIMBY
- Community outreach
- Local, regional, and national nonprofits
- Developers and business community
- Intergovernmental collaboration

Implementation – Communication and Community Engagement

- Start with support
- Supply initial information – Clear messaging
- Strategic planning
- Provide a space to be heard
- Respond to concerns



Implementation – Communications and Community Engagement

- Policy explanation
- Timeline
- Opportunities for comment

BOISE ZONING REWRITE

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Boise's zoning code has shaped Boise as we know it, outlining how property can be used in our city. To support our city's long-term vision as our community grows and changes, we have started the process to rewrite our zoning code in three modules.

This first module of the zoning code outlines what is and is not allowed within certain zones across the city. This module proposed the following changes to help better align our zoning code with the city's long-term vision:

- Condense and rename zoning districts
- Allow new housing types within all residential zones
- Allow small-scale commercial in some residential zones
- Create new zones that allow mixed-use development

The City of Boise sought feedback on this draft document from May 10 to June 15. The Boise community had the opportunity to take part in an online public survey, attend in person and/or virtual meetings, or meet with a planner through scheduled "office hours." Community input will help refine the first module to ensure the City grows in a sustainable, efficient, and responsible manner that allows us to support and enhance our quality of life.

HOW DID WE REACH OUT?

From May 10 to June 15, the Zoning Code Rewrite team began to advertise and perform the engagement tactics noted below to gather public input on Module 1. In-person events were held at a variety of times and locations throughout the City of Boise to accommodate various schedules and provide convenient engagement opportunities near where residents live.

Notice for each engagement opportunity was shared through the project's email list, the city's "In the Know" newsletter and on social media throughout May and June. Partner agencies and Neighborhood Associations were also informed of engagement opportunities.

Local media advertised the outreach events including two articles on [BoiseDev.com](https://www.boisereview.com), an interview on Radio Boise (KRBX) Vital Idaho, and several repeating segments on KTVB.

ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITY	DATE / TIME	LOCATION	PARTICIPANTS
Community Wide Survey	May 10 - June 15	Online	1,054
Office Hours with a Planner	Every Monday and Wednesday from May 19 to June 14; 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM	Virtual and at City Hall	7
City Council Work Session	Tuesday, May 18 4:00 PM	City Hall	N/A
Community Conversation	Friday, May 21 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM	Virtual	32
Community Conversation	Monday, May 24 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM	Cassia Park	4
Community Conversation	Wednesday, May 26 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM	Baggley Park	1
Community Conversation	Wednesday, June 2 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM	Winstead Park	8
Community Conversation	Monday, June 7 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM	Virtual	22
Community Conversation	Thursday, June 10 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM	Magnolia Park	+/-60



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Implementation – Communications and Community Engagement



CREATE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

A strong and diverse economy is an important component to a healthy city. Our goal is to continue supporting homegrown innovation and invest in education to ensure our residents have opportunities to pursue their passions, secure a job with quality pay and benefits, and contribute to an economy that is resilient throughout large-scale changes and trends.

Zoning districts that support a wide range of industries

- A comprehensive framework of zoning districts that can attract and allow businesses to expand throughout the City of Boise within mixed-use and industrial areas. *Sections 11-02-03 Mixed-Use Zoning Districts and 11-02-04 Industrial Zoning Districts*

Reinforcing the role of downtown Boise as the city's civic, cultural, and employment center

- A zoning district specific to the downtown area that will support a variety of uses and people through the creation of housing, jobs, services and entertainment. *Section 11-02-03.5 MX-5: Mixed-Use Downtown Zoning District*
- A variety of allowed uses that creates an active and vibrant urban district downtown and throughout the Boise State University campus. *Section 11-03-02 Table of Allowed Uses*
- An individualized zoning district specific to the educational needs of the Boise State University Campus and its location near the downtown core to ensure the students and community have what they need to gain a high-quality educational experience. *11-02-03.6 MX-U: Mixed University Zoning District*

Creating housing throughout the city that allows people to live near their place of work

- Establish zoning districts that support a variety of homes near our major transit corridors, activity centers, and pathways. *Sections 11-02-02 Residential Zoning Districts, 11-02-03 Mixed-Use Zoning Districts, and 11-04-03.7 Incentives*

Encouraging small business development and a creative economy

- Creating a wide variety of home occupations within our residential zoning districts to allow individuals an opportunity to work out of their homes on a small scale. *Section 11-03-03.2O Home Occupations*
- Creating live-work opportunities within our residential zoning districts as well as the MX-1 Mixed-Use Neighborhood, MX-2 Mixed-Use General and MX-3 Mixed-Use Active zoning districts to allow individuals an opportunity to work out of their homes at an intermediate scale. *Section 11-03-03.2F Live-Work Dwelling*

- Citizen education
- Defined priorities
- Clear benefit



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Implementation – Fiscal Consideration

**High
administrative
costs to
rewrite**

**Entire
zoning code
rewrite can
be more
financially
feasible**

**Tie housing
to economic
success**



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Implementation – Political Considerations

Higher density housing increases property values

Higher density increases tax revenue for municipalities

Many zoning codes originate from discriminatory practice



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Additional Considerations

Additional Considerations

- This policy proposal is one piece of the puzzle to tackling housing affordability
 - Thus is the nature of wicked problems
- There are other things municipalities can do:
 - Reduce parking requirements
 - Reduce required setbacks in certain situations
 - Legalize Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)



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Key Takeaways

Key Takeaways

1. Highlight what matters to your community
2. Start where you can
3. Tackling wicked problems requires bold action