

ZONEiN COLUMBUS

What's Next?

THE NEXT STEPS FOR MODERNIZING THE CITY
OF COLUMBUS' ZONING CODE TO SUPPORT
OUR CONTINUED PROSPERITY

THE CITY OF
COLUMBUS
ANDREW J. GINTHER, MAYOR



What's Next?

Table of Contents

1.	Why We Are Modernizing the Zoning Code.....	3
	Zone In Project Goals	
	Zone In Accomplishments	
	What Is a Zoning Code?	
	Restrictive Codes v. Enabling Codes	
2.	Zone In Next Steps: Economic and Housing Opportunity.....	5
	The Case for Continued Reform	
	Area of Focus for Progress	
	Priorities and Strategies	
	Focus Area Map	
3.	Leading with Policy — Columbus Growth Strategy.....	16
	Why Is It Needed?	
	What Will It Do?	
	Code v. Policy	
4.	Zone In on What's Next.....	17
	What's Next and When	
	Learn More	

1. Why We Are Modernizing the Zoning Code?

The City of Columbus is modernizing its zoning code to promote growth in ways that meet the needs of a growing population and economy. An updated zoning code will create the conditions for expanded housing, economic opportunity and new development that benefit all Columbus residents.

Mayor Andrew J. Ginther and Columbus City Council have prioritized this effort through Zone In, a multi-year initiative to modernize the city's zoning code to respond to current and future growth.

The first Zone In code changes were legislated by City Council on July 29, 2024. Prior to that, the city's zoning code, written more than 70 years ago, restricted the city's ability to respond to modern needs and challenges. By continuing to update the code, Columbus can encourage responsible development, improve affordability and support connected, vibrant communities.

Zone In: Project Goals

- Modernize our zoning code to reflect our community's current and future needs, values and aspirations.
- Support growth that prioritizes environmental and economic sustainability through improved transit, additional housing opportunities and the creation of job centers.
- Encourage thoughtful investment in neighborhoods that have experienced racial and economic segregation caused by past urban development policies.
- Guide the design and development of main streets, activity centers and neighborhoods to support community goals while celebrating the unique character of our neighborhoods and creating a sense of place for our residents.
- Ensure that the Columbus zoning code is fair, understandable and accessible.

A generational success, the first code updates (i.e., Title 34) resulted in the rezoning of 140 miles of Columbus' primary corridors and enabled the future development of up to 88,000 residential units.

What is a Zoning Code?

Zoning codes are a set of rules that regulate what can and can't be done on a particular piece of property. They influence where we live, where we work and how we get around. Zoning can be used to help attract new businesses, encourage the construction of new housing and protect natural resources.

Restrictive Codes v. Enabling Codes

Columbus' zoning code was previously designed to limit land uses and reduce density, but this outdated approach prevented Columbus from adapting to modern growth and community needs.

Zone In seeks to change this by modernizing our zoning code to support flexibility, encourage investment and expand housing and economic opportunity citywide.

2. Zone In Next Steps: Economic and Housing Opportunity

The first Zone In reforms laid the groundwork for expanding access to housing by modernizing Columbus' zoning code and removing barriers to new construction along the city's primary corridors. While this was a crucial first step, it primarily addressed only one part of the affordability challenge. Columbus must also ensure that residents have access to high-quality jobs with fair and sustainable wages — in addition to housing — to fully support affordability and opportunity for all.

The Case for Continued Reform

Columbus' zoning code has not kept pace with the city's changing economy. Industrial and employment-based districts have gone largely unchanged for over 70 years, with references to obsolete uses like basket and hamper production. These outdated regulations do not reflect the needs of today's industries — such as logistics, data centers, life sciences or advanced technology — and fail to support the kind of modern, flexible work environments that attract and retain employers and local talent.

Many areas also fall short in supporting mixed-use developments that combine housing, retail, services and transit access. This limits the city's ability to create vibrant, walkable areas that improve quality of life for workers and surrounding communities. Likewise, zoning for major institutions like hospitals and universities often lacks the flexibility to ensure their continued growth aligns with neighborhood needs.

At the same time, industrial zoning from previous generations has had lasting consequences for many nearby neighborhoods. Incompatible land uses, inadequate separation between industrial and residential areas, and a lack of environmental safeguards have contributed to historic disinvestment, pollution and gaps in the location of jobs and resources. Moving forward, the zoning code must do more to protect residential communities while promoting economic and housing opportunity citywide.

Area of Focus for Progress

Zone In will now focus on expanding economic *and* housing opportunities for all Columbus residents. This work will continue to modernize the zoning code to support job growth, build more housing and foster prosperity citywide by updating zoning regulations for areas that have been identified as being well-suited for enhanced mixed-used developments, industrial and warehouse operations, and business and institutional campuses — including hospitals, academic institutions and office parks.

Mixed Use

Flexible, walkable areas, often along major roads and transit corridors, where people can live, work and gather in the same place.

These developments bring together housing, shops, restaurants and offices — ranging from quiet neighborhood streets to busier corridors near public transit.

Not intended for industrial or warehouse uses.



Industrial & Warehouse

Spaces dedicated to jobs like manufacturing, storage, logistics and distribution.

These areas help drive the Columbus economy by providing room for factories, warehouses and delivery centers — establishing appropriate buffers and protections for nearby residential areas.



Business & Institutional Campuses

Job hubs such as hospitals, universities and office parks.

These areas focus on providing space for jobs and services, but may also include amenities like shops, restaurants or housing, where appropriate.



Zone In Economic and Housing Opportunity Priorities:

The priorities outlined below reflect themes that were strongly supported as part of Zone In's initial reforms, including the need for more housing, expanded economic opportunity and better connectivity between jobs, services and neighborhoods. We will continue to engage with the community to ensure these priorities still reflect today's needs and perspectives. This represents our ongoing commitment to transparency and shared decision-making throughout the zoning reform process.

Leverage additional corridors to create more housing in more places to help address the city's and region's housing shortages by supporting changes that make it easier and more likely to build more housing.

Strategies to support progress:

- Adjust standards, such as height limits and parking requirements, to increase housing capacity and increase feasibility for new construction.
- Allow a variety of housing options to accommodate a range of households.
- Include zoning incentives to support housing affordability.
- Expand areas where residential uses are permitted on ground floors.
- Include additional corridors as identified in the Columbus Multimodal Thoroughfare Plan.

Grow the local economy and support neighborhood investment by modernizing employment-focused sites, supporting small businesses and guiding growth to benefit all neighborhoods.

Strategies to support progress:

- Improve industrial zoning regulations and safeguards.
- Protect viable existing office and industrial, reserve prime employment opportunity areas, and allow other locations to be developed for housing and mixed-use development.
- Facilitate a range of allowable uses that support entrepreneurial efforts and enable sites to evolve as community needs and market conditions change.
- Improve design standards, such as landscaping and screening, to reduce industrial impacts on nearby homes.
- Encourage investment in every part of the city.

Zone In Economic and Housing Opportunity Priorities:

Connect housing, jobs and transportation to make it easier for people to live near work, services and transit.

Strategies to support progress:

- Expand where higher-density, mixed-use development is allowed.
- Focus development along corridors and transit routes.
- Facilitate walkable neighborhoods in locations with easy access to community assets such as job centers, parks, restaurants, shops, community centers, schools and financial institutions.

Promote high quality development with a code that relies on clear, objective standards and is easier to navigate.

Strategies to support progress:

- Reduce reliance on site-by-site negotiations for development.
- Make the zoning code easier to utilize through the use of graphics, clear language and simplified regulations.
- Ensure high-quality development in all neighborhoods guided by clear, objective design standards for new construction.
- Reduce barriers to the adaptive reuse of older buildings.

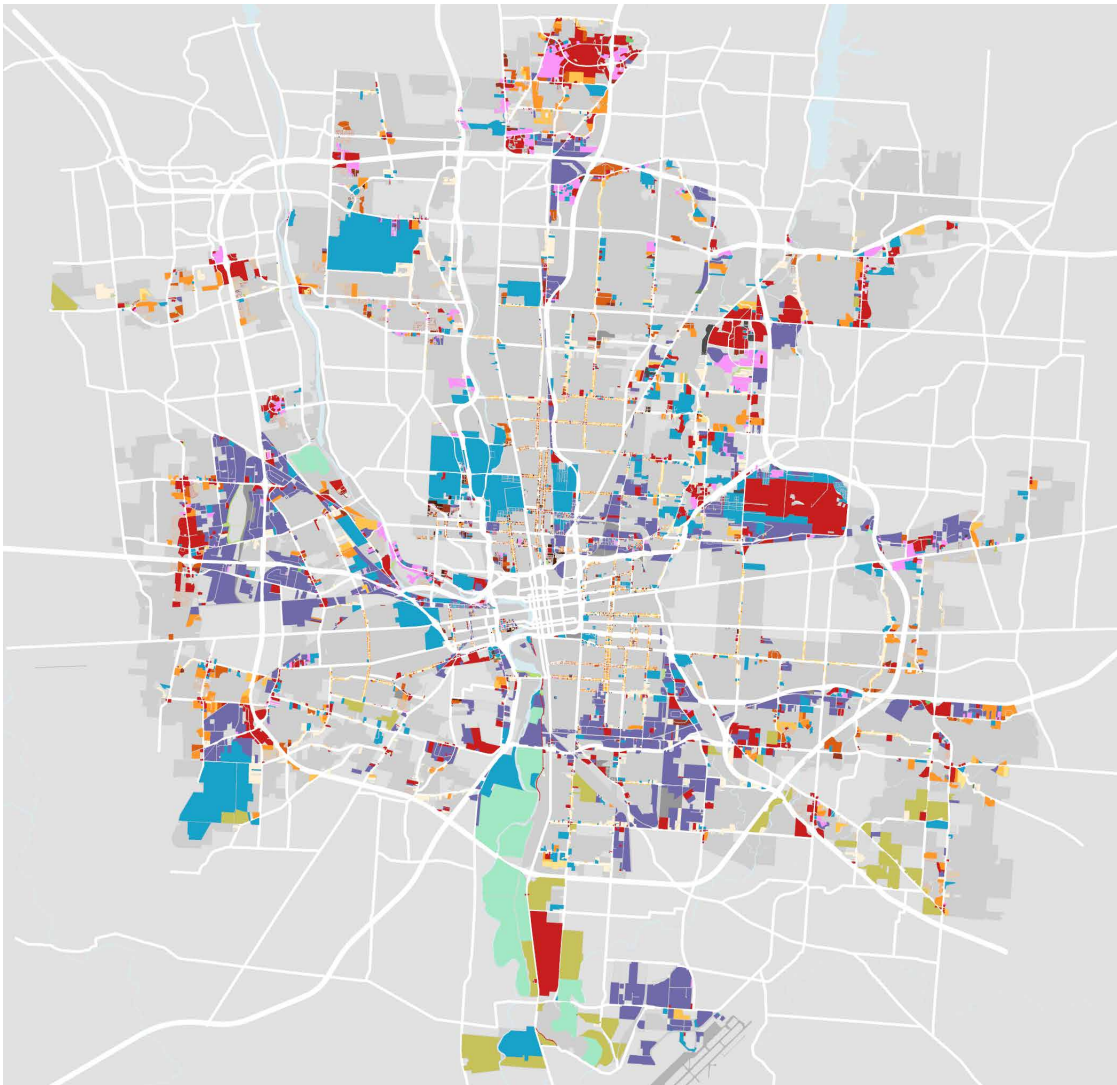
Focus Area Map

The Zone In team identified areas of the city that support Economic and Housing Opportunity priorities by selecting all manufacturing, commercial and institutional properties, along with select residential parcels based on surrounding uses or proximity to corridors and transit. These parcels were further evaluated using the following resources to confirm alignment with project focus areas (Mixed Use, Industrial & Warehouse, and Business & Institutional Campuses). Based on this evaluation, parcels were either included in the focus area map or set aside for future Zone In work.

Resources used to define areas of focus include:

- Existing Land Uses within Focus Area
- Existing Area Plan Recommendations within Focus Area
- Existing Zoning Districts within Focus Area
- Columbus Multimodal Thoroughfare Plan
- COTA and LinkUS bus routes
- Site-specific considerations such as parcel size and configuration, particular adjacent land uses, and other specific constraints informed the geographic area

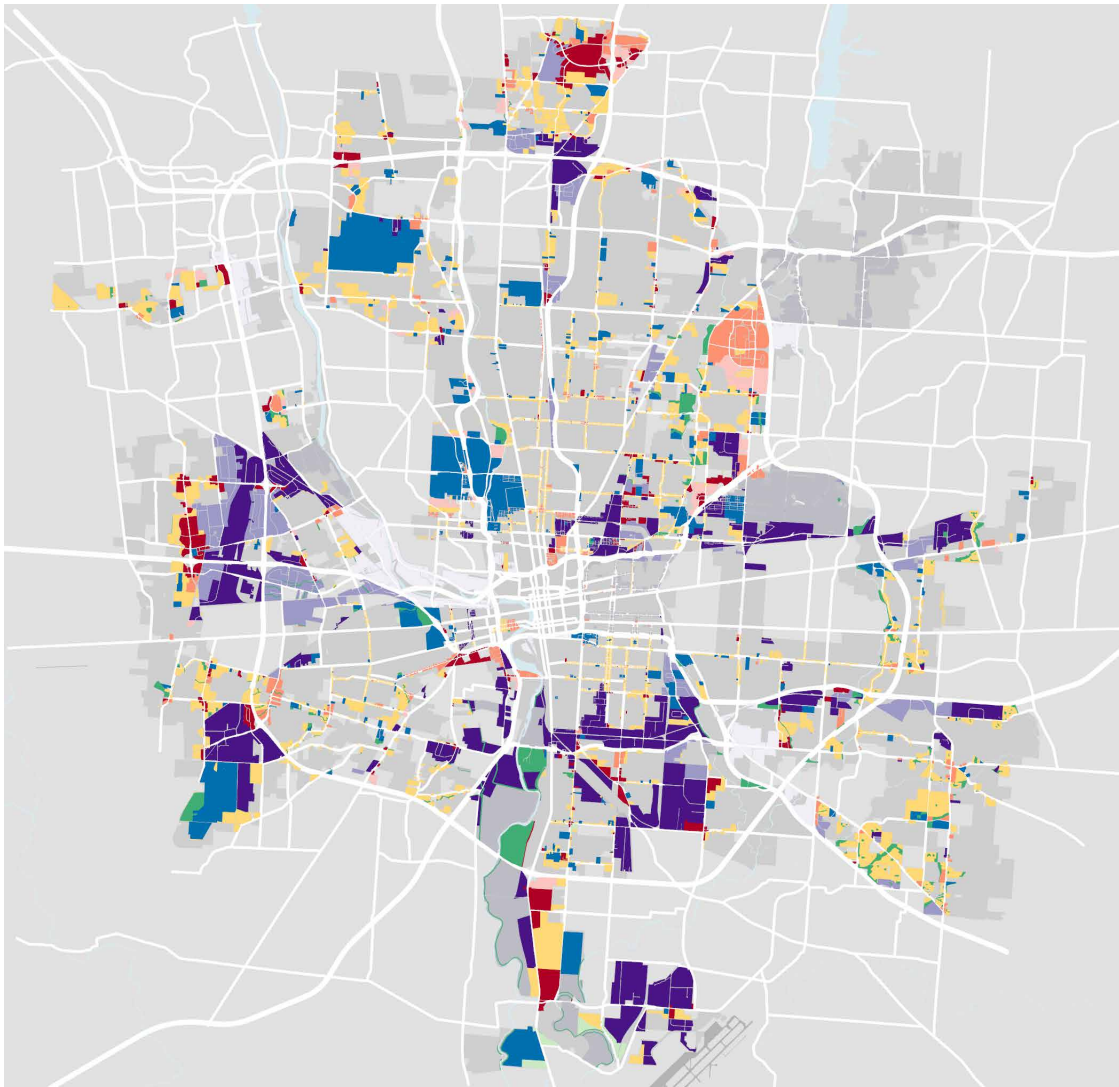
Focus Area Map



Existing Land Uses Within Focus Area

Existing land uses were referenced to assess alignment with the Economic and Housing Opportunity focus areas of Mixed Use, Industrial & Warehouse, and Business & Institutional Campuses.

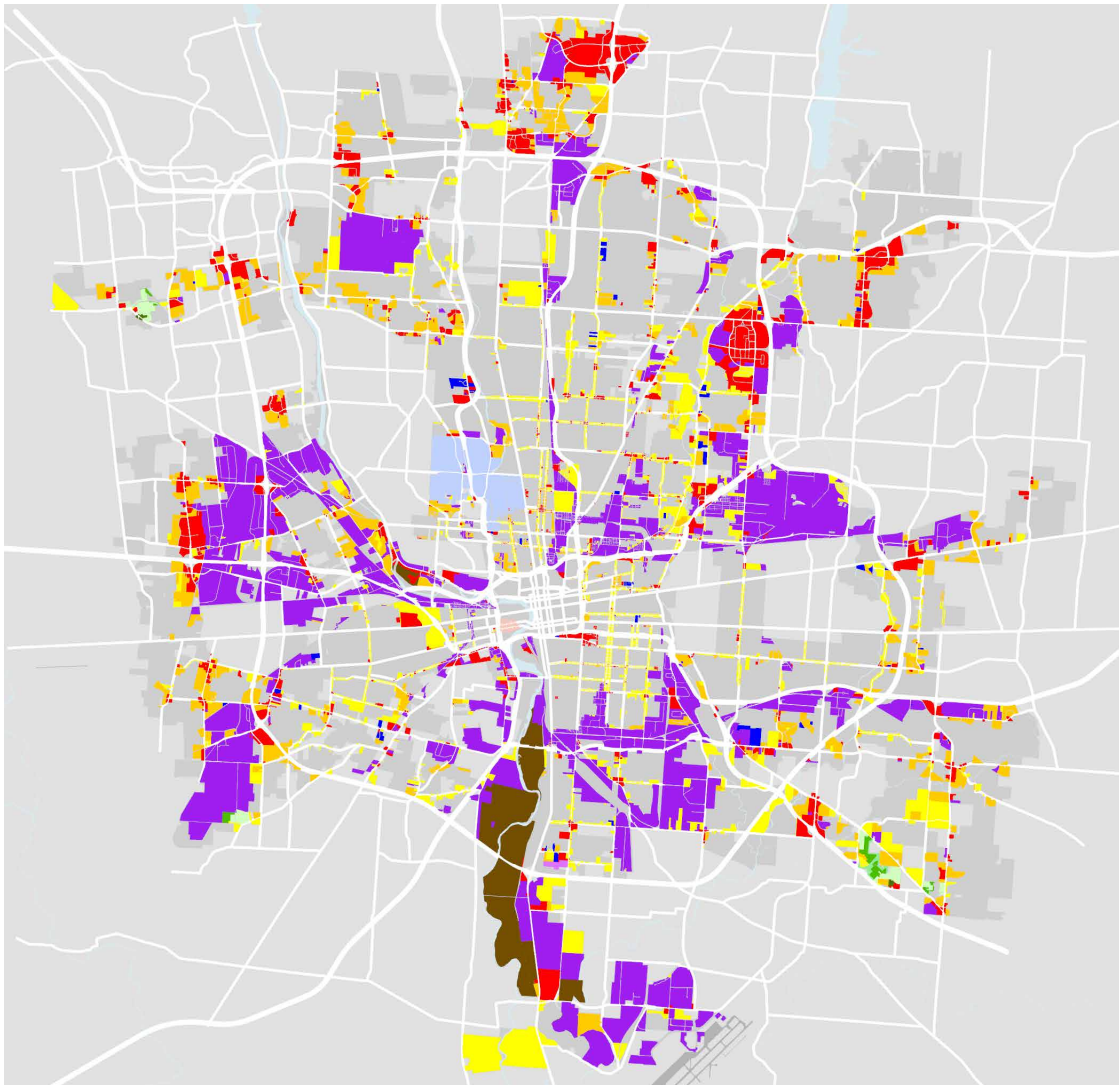
Focus Area Map



Existing Area Plan Recommendations Within Focus Area

Area plan recommendations were reviewed to assess alignment with the Economic and Housing Opportunity focus areas of Mixed Use, Industrial & Warehouse, and Business & Institutional Campuses.

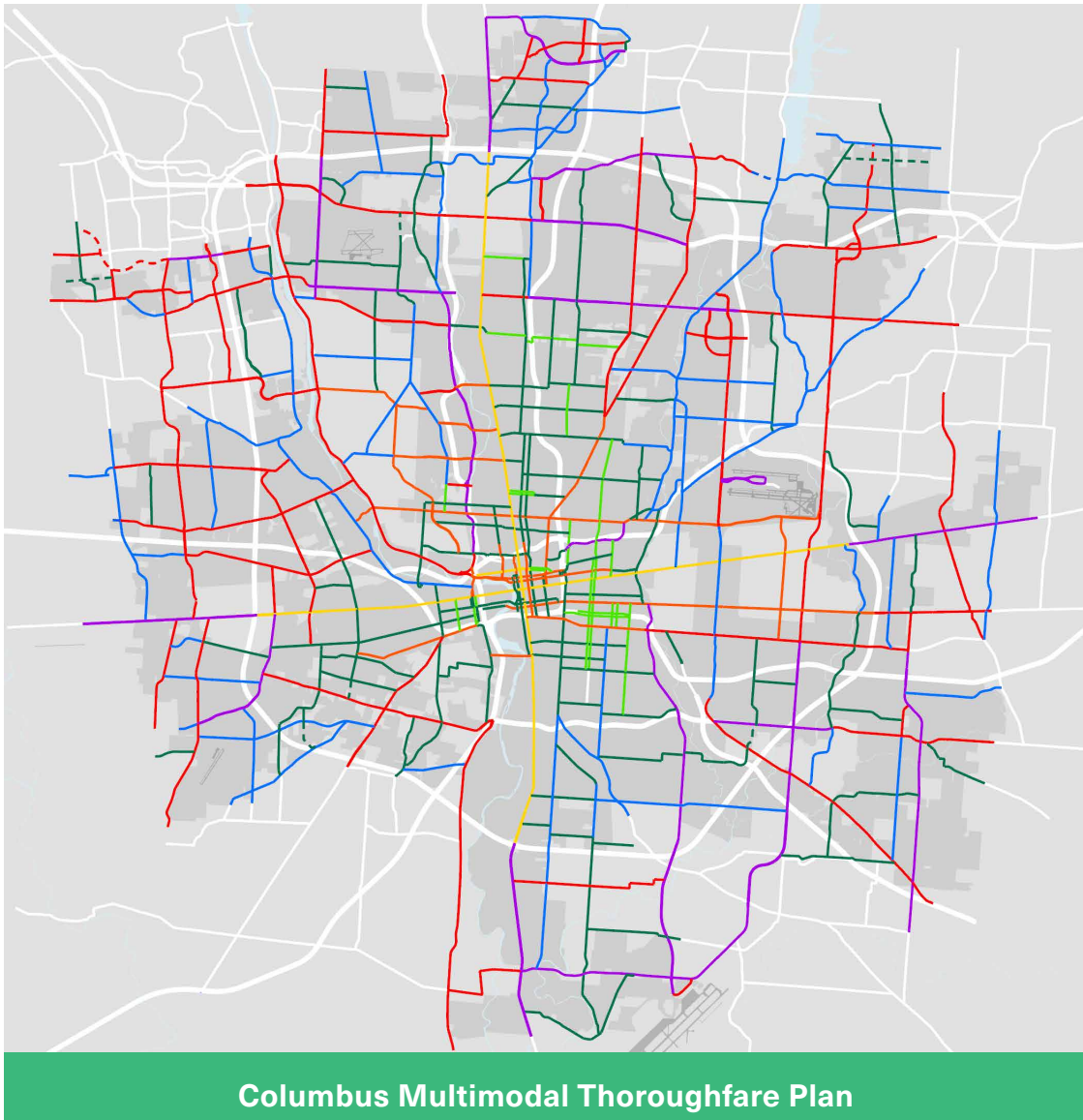
Focus Area Map



Existing Zoning Districts Within Focus Area

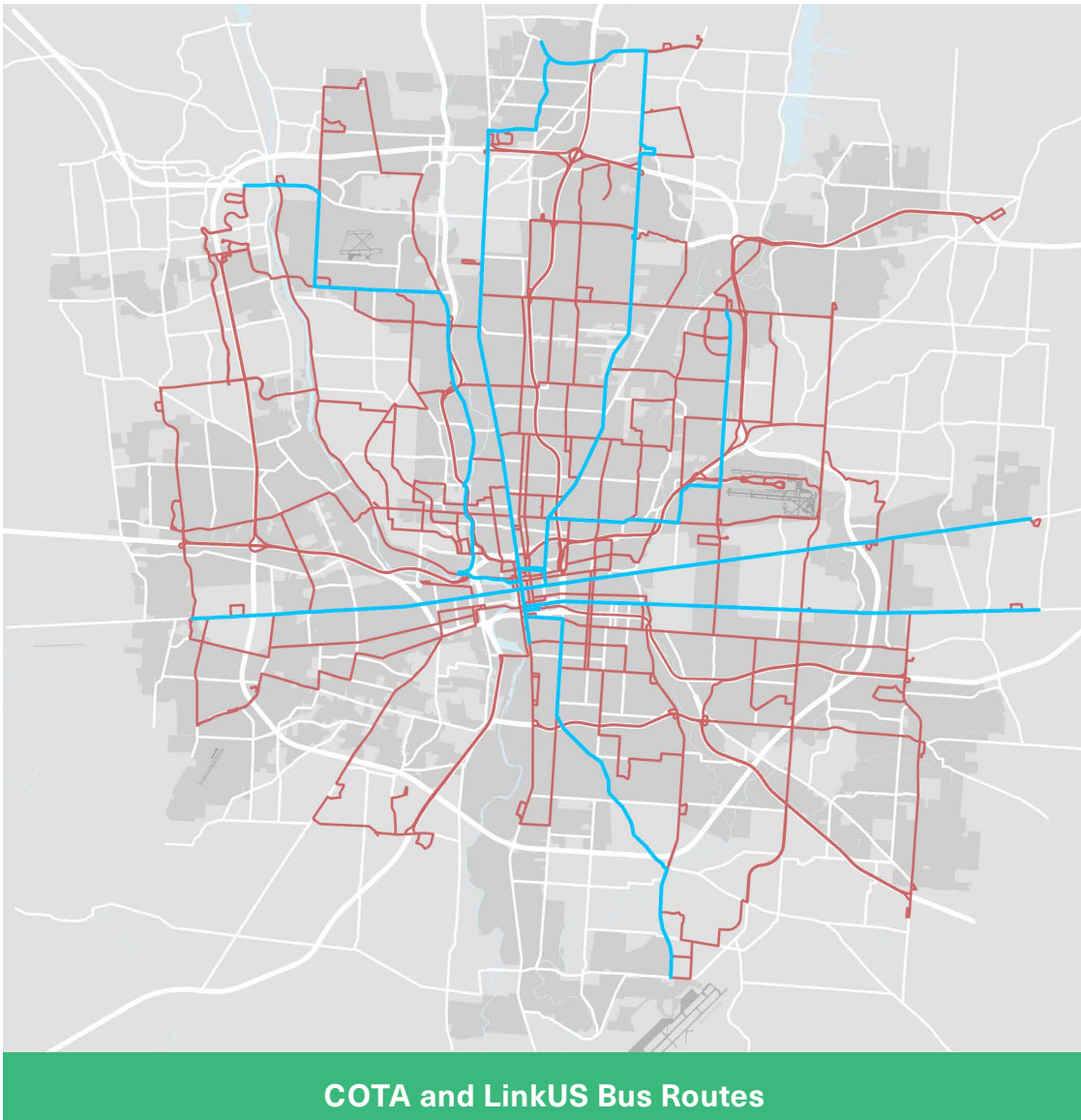
All manufacturing, commercial and institutionally zoned parcels were evaluated. Select residential parcels were also evaluated based off of site-specific circumstances.

Focus Area Map



The Columbus Multi-Modal Thoroughfare Plan informed the identification of additional priority corridors for potential redevelopment or investment.

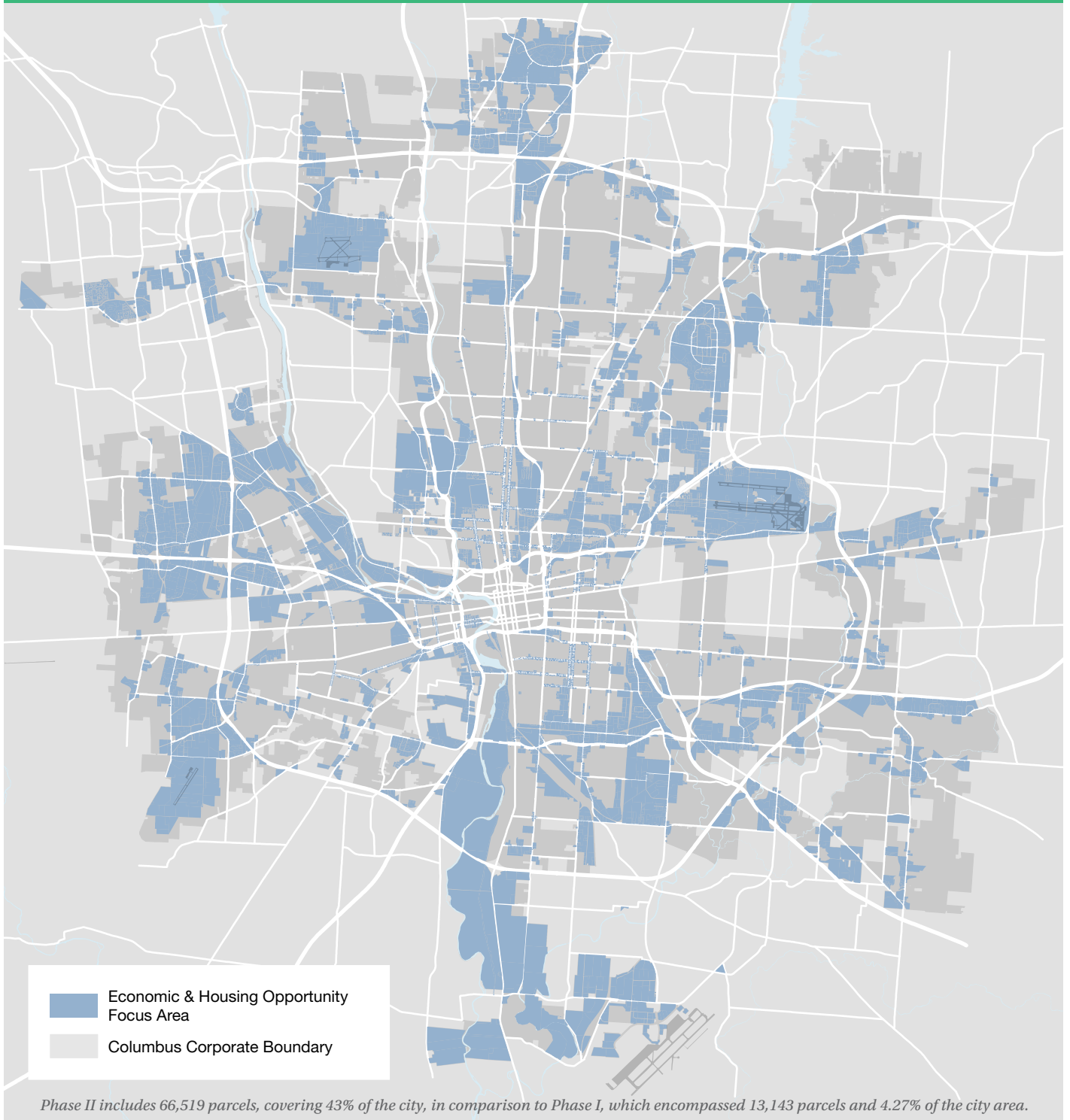
Focus Area Map



COTA and LinkUS bus routes were referenced because they will play a critical role in connecting people with jobs, education, health care and other destinations in an accessible and affordable manner.

Focus Area Map

Economic and Housing Opportunity



When these five criteria are overlaid and site-specific circumstances are evaluated, there are over 66,000 parcels that have the greatest potential to support job growth, build more housing and foster prosperity citywide.

3. Leading With Policy

Before comprehensive zoning reform can move forward, Columbus must first establish a clear, citywide land use policy to provide the legal and strategic foundation for future rezoning. While the city has a strong tradition of neighborhood-based planning, with dozens of area and corridor plans shaped by community input over many decades, this localized approach alone is no longer sufficient to guide the city's growth. As Columbus confronts a rapidly growing population and rising demand for housing, jobs and infrastructure, it has become clear that the absence of a cohesive, citywide land use plan is a critical gap.

To address this, the Department of Development's Planning Division — working in parallel with the Zone In project — will also be developing an amendment to the Columbus Citywide Planning Policies. This amendment will result in updated policy guidelines and a citywide land use map which will provide the essential foundation for future Zone In reforms.

Clear, citywide land use policy is essential to strengthening coordination, enhancing predictability and reflecting the city's collective vision for growth.

To meet this need, the City of Columbus will work with the community to develop an amendment to the Columbus Citywide Planning Policies, which will:

- Articulate a community vision for growth, to be adopted by a vote of Columbus City Council. It will support the Zone In goals and priorities and the creation of citywide land use policy.
- Change the name of Columbus Citywide Planning Policies to become the "Columbus Growth Strategy."
- Expand the land use policy basis for the remaining work of Zone In. This will be completed in a phased approach to align with Zone In's areas of focus.
- Include citywide design guidelines that balance quality development standards with housing supply and infrastructure needs.
- Establish policies in support of capital planning and investment, including land acquisition.

Code v. Policy. "Code" refers to the specific, legally binding regulations (like zoning ordinances) that determine how land can be used.

"Policy" represents the broader, aspirational goals and frameworks guiding land use decisions. Policy provides the foundation and direction that the zoning code is designed to implement, ensuring that regulations align with the community's long-term vision for growth.

4. Zone In on What's Next

We are committed to working with the community to shape the future of zoning reform. This engagement will also serve as the public input process for the Columbus Growth Strategy, ensuring that community feedback informs both the city's land use policy and future zoning code updates.



What's Next and When



Go to columbus.gov/zoningupdate to learn more about the project and how to join the conversation. Also, sign up for our mailing list at zoningupdate@columbus.gov to receive additional information on upcoming events, opportunities to share your feedback and helpful resources to learn more about this historic initiative.