



**Minutes of the Oberlin City Council Public Hearing**  
Held in Council Chambers, 85 South Main Street, Oberlin, Ohio  
January 20, 2026

**Public Hearing – 6:00 p.m. – Council Chambers**  
Purpose: Consider a Recommendation by the Planning Commission to Adopt a New Zoning Code and Map for the City of Oberlin

A public hearing of the Oberlin City Council was held on January 20, 2026, at Oberlin City Hall in Council Chambers, located at 85 S. Main Street, Oberlin, Ohio. The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. by Presiding Officer Eboni Johnson for the above-stated purpose. *Roll Call was taken as follows:*

**Council Members:**

|                                       | Present                  | Absent                   |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Eboni Johnson, President              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Michael McFarlin, Vice President      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sondra Miller ( <i>arrived late</i> ) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Libni Lopez                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Jessa New                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Joseph Waltzer                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Kristin Peterson                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Appointees:**

- Greg Holcomb, City Manager
- Belinda Anderson, Clerk of Council
- Jon Clark, Law Director
- Marin Fowler, Finance Director

**Others Present:**

- Carrie Porter, Planning and Development Director
- Nolan Nicaise, Consultant with ZoneCo

Members of the Council heard from Carrie Porter, Oberlin Planning Director, that the entire code has not been updated since 1965, but with the 2024 Comprehensive plan, it was a major recommendation from the comprehensive plan that we redo our code. She then introduced Nolan Nicaise, a consultant from ZoneCo, which is a company from Cincinnati, Ohio that specializes in preparing new zoning codes. Nicaise gave a presentation about the proposed zoning code.

*A copy of the presentation is attached to the minutes.*

During the presentation, Nicaise allowed the Council to ask questions.

Peterson commented regarding the elimination of minimum off-street parking space. On-street parking is a big issue, especially when there is snow that needs to be plowed. Nicaise found the section where parking standards were written, as it was under the Generally Applicable Standards chapter. The purpose of the parking loading stands requires a parking space count. This code does not include minimum off-street requirements. However, where a landowner chooses to supply off-street parking, such parking shall conform to all requirements of this section. There are still some regulations related to parking if a landowner chooses to provide that parking. The comment was about snow removal and some of the challenges that may occur with not having off-street parking, correct? Peterson noted, assuming that those off-street parking spaces would then become on-street parking spaces, yes. Nicaise stated that the elimination of off-street parking requirements is something that is not unique to Oberlin. There are a lot of environmental, social, and economic reasons for not mandating that off-street parking be supplied at a certain rate. One fear that produces communities all the time when discussing the elimination of required off-street parking is not going to be no parking ever. The reality is that no parking spots aren't going to cease to exist three months from now. There's still going to be a lot of off-street parking around the City because it already exists, and development takes time as it is slow and incremental.

Waltzer asked a follow-up question, whether the city has any ability to say that someone cannot build a parking lot, and whether there are any ADA requirements. Nicaise responded that, according to the proposed zoning code, it would not unless the use was seeking a conditional use approval, for example. There are codes that the city administers to see if the business is causing backups on city streets that could be a public health risk. With the ADA question, he was unsure of what the ADA requirements are, and he would have to look at the American Disabilities Act for an answer.

McFarlin asked whether the language in the code reflects the square footage of a dwelling unit. Nicaise responded that the language in the proposed code does not illustrate or describe a minimum square footage for a dwelling unit. However, there are occupancy requirements in the residential building code.

Later in the presentation, Lopez asked how a suburban residential district was defined, and does that mean that the traditional neighborhood would only be one-unit use? There was a house that caught fire and was operating as a multi-unit, and he wasn't sure if they could build under the current zoning. If someone wanted to build under the current zoning, would that mean that someone would be unable to build because it is a one-unit purpose? Nicaise responded that under the proposed traditional neighborhood district, the two-unit residential use is permitted with an administrative review process. Under the suburban residential district, the two-unit residential use is permitted with an administrative review process. With zoning codes, there are permitted uses and conditional uses. A two-dwelling unit is an allowed use, and it's allowed through an administrative review process, which is faster. Some uses might be listed as conditional use review, and that means that they have to go through a conditional use approval process, which is much more burdensome. Porter commented that in the traditional neighborhood district, we allow one to eight units. The property in question was a three-unit property, and that would be allowed by administrative approval. Right now, in the code, it wouldn't be allowed, but in the proposed code, it would be. Lopez asked again how the boundaries were determined. Nicaise said a lot of the boundaries were determined via the future land use map that was contained within the comprehensive plan in 2024. Porter noted that the density was looked at, the type of development, and whether there were any commercial uses mixed in with the residential.

Waltzer commented that the administrative review is allowed as long as it meets the requirements and doesn't have to go to anyone, while a conditional review would be burdensome. He asked who says no and how easy it is to say no. Can someone just say no, or does there have to be a reason? Porter noted that for low-density residential, which is covered under the Ohio Residential Building Code, they have to get a building permit. Those plans would be reviewed by our chief building official before they could build. For anything else, if it says administrative review, it has to go to the Planning Commission for site plan

approval. If it says conditional use, it has to go to the Planning Commission for a conditional use permit approval. There is an approval process that they have to go through. Waltzer asked how they were allowed to say no and under what grounds. Does conditional use allow judgment on whether something is good for the community, or are they bound by making sure that they go through the correct channels? Porter commented that for conditional use, there are standards. Planning Commission is supposed to look at things like whether it is good for the community and whether it protects the public’s health, safety, morals, welfare, and all those standards. Site plan review, though, there are site plan standards, but if the standards are met, it would still need to be approved. Conditional uses are different, so there could be circumstances for particular uses that are bad for the neighborhood and thus could be denied by the Planning Commission. Nicaise read some of the proposed code relating to conditional uses. He noted the list is liberal in giving the Planning Commission the power to decline compared to other plans he’s worked on. Waltzer added that, regarding districts, when looking at loud uses in the downtown district, it seems quite different from what the City would want in the downtown. It would be good to look at some of the allowed uses in the downtown district.


Nicaise commented that it is recommended that the Council review the plan. When the Council decides to adopt the plan, it gives him two to four weeks to make those changes to the final documents and send them back to the Council.

Nicaise outlined the action steps for the planning and zoning code:

1. Public Meeting of the Code by the City Council.
2. Adoption of code by City Council at the third reading.
3. Integrate Planning Commission’s recommended changes, as adopted by City Council.
4. Integrate any additional recommended changes by the City Council.
5. Correction of any cross-reference placeholders (e.g., XXXX.XX)
6. Update the effective date as listed in the code text.
7. Correct any page-break issues, such as page-split tables.
8. Final read for correction of typographical errors.
9. Update of page numbers on the Table of Contents
10. Deliver all final files (map files, InDesign files, PDFs, image files, etc.) to City of Oberlin.

**Adjournment:** Since there was no additional information to come before the Council, the public hearing adjourned at 6:57 p.m.

**Prepared by:**

  
Briana Reynolds  
Clerk of Council’s Assistant

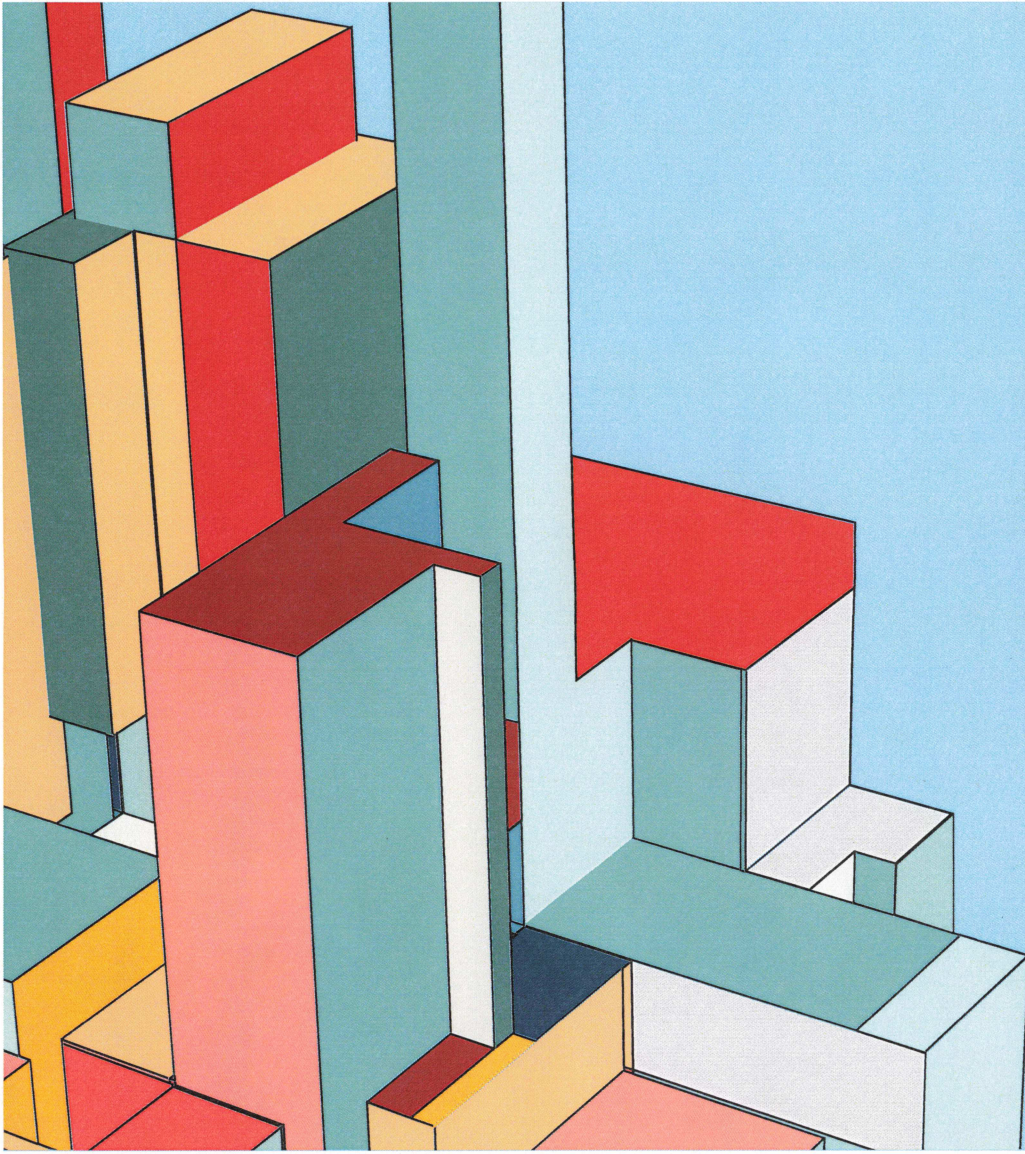
**Attest:**

  
BELINDA B. ANDERSON, MMC  
CLERK OF COUNCIL

  
EBONI A. JOHNSON  
PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL

APPROVED: 02/02/2026

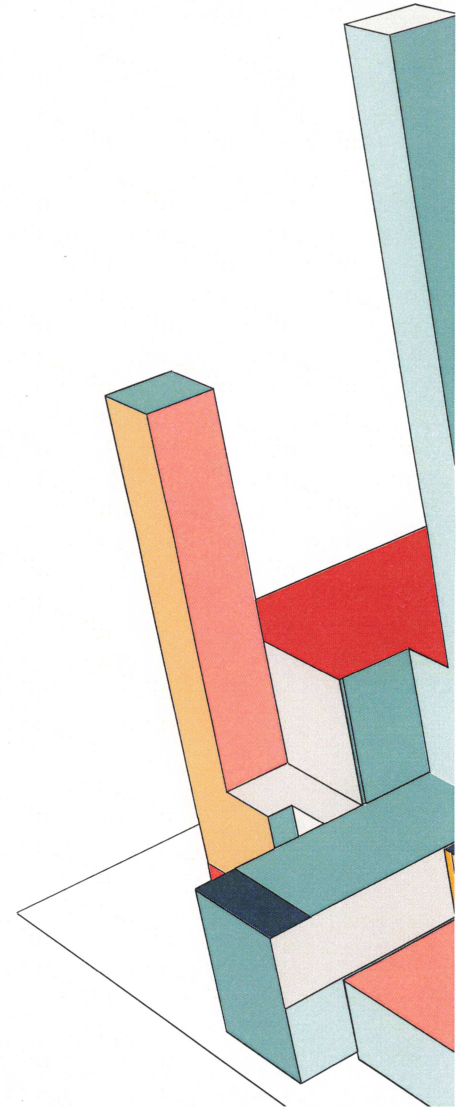
POSTED: 02/03/2026



**THE 2024  
COMPREHENSIVE  
PLAN AND THE  
NEW ZONING CODE  
& MAP**

## **WHICH SECTIONS OF THE 2024 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN WILL THE NEW ZONING CODE AND MAP ADDRESS?**

- Housing
- Economic Development
- Quality Community Services

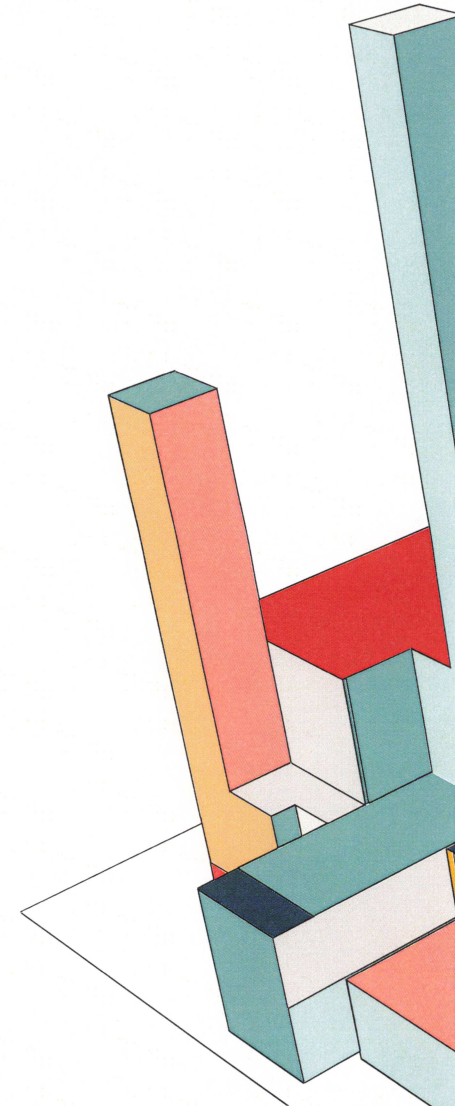


# **HOUSING GOALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES**



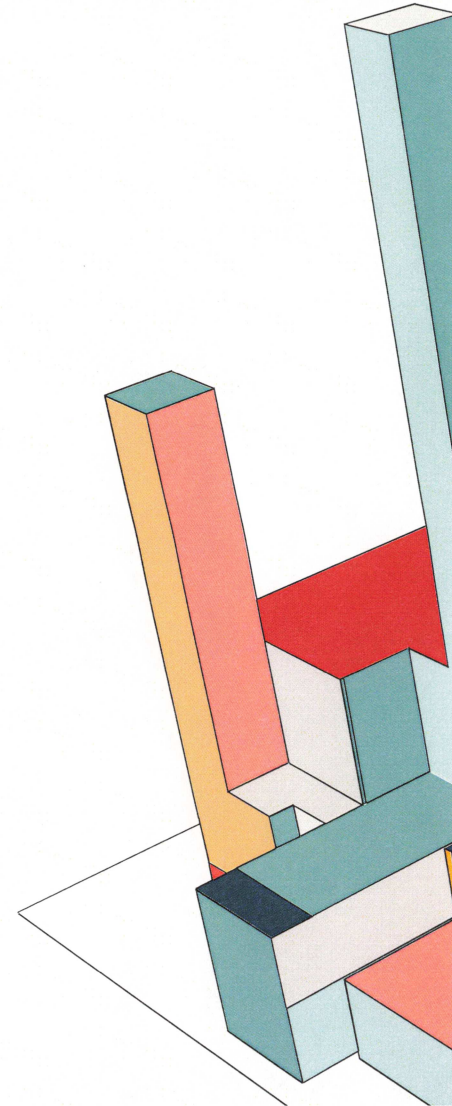
# HOUSING

- Goal 1: Expand Diversity and Affordability of Housing. Provide a full range of housing types and price points across the City that allows for diverse lifestyles and provides quality, affordable homes for all Oberlin residents.
- Objective 1.1: Expand quality and diversity of housing types through City policy and development partnerships.
- Strategy 1.1.1: Provide expanded quantity of housing and types of living options including co-ops, co-housing, boarding homes, cluster homes and accessory dwelling units.
- Strategy 1.2.4: Provide affordable smaller for-sale homes and multi-family rentals, while continuing to expand housing opportunities at all price levels.



# HOUSING

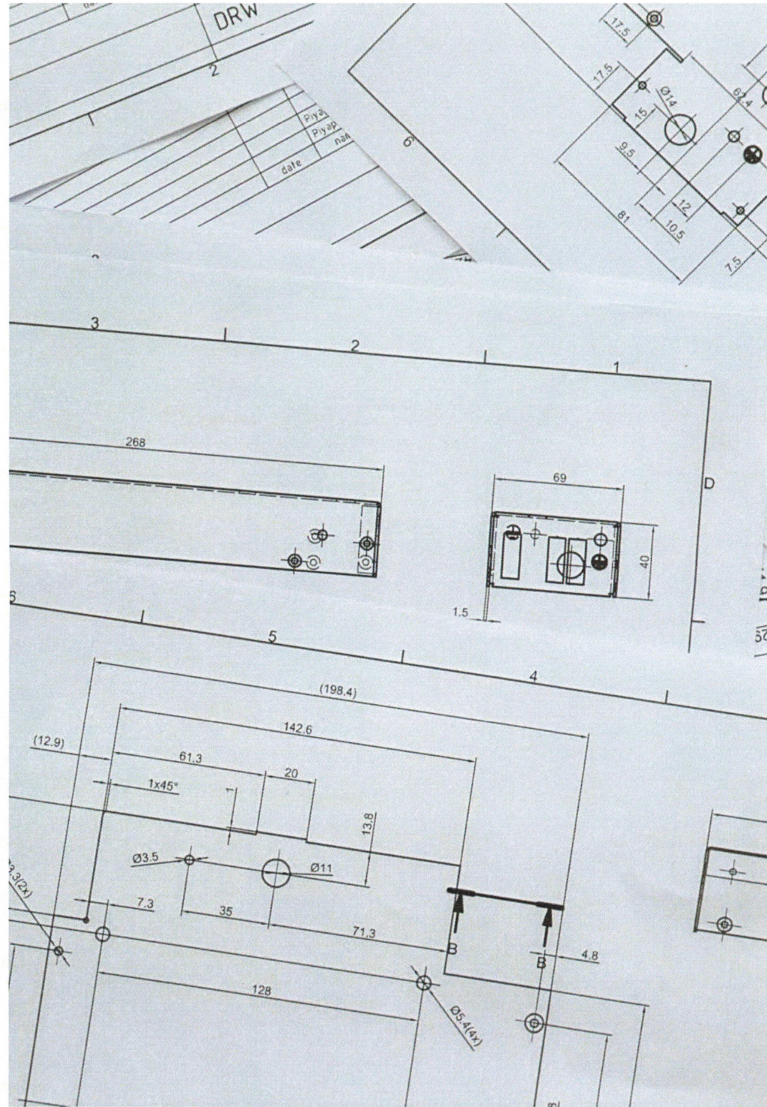
- Objective 1.5: After full community discussion, update the City's Zoning Map and regulations (Zoning Code) to align with the future land use map and goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan, with particular attention to residential uses.
- Strategy 1.5.1: Implement "green" and sustainable building and development code opportunities that address smart growth policies.
- Strategy 1.5.2: Review City codes and subdivision standards to assure subdivision and other street and utility regulations are up to date and consistent with neighboring communities.
- Strategy 1.5.3: Adopt revised residential zoning districts that permit multi-family housing, co-ops, co-housing, boarding homes, cluster homes, and accessory dwelling units, and other types of housing in keeping with the recommendations of the Plan.
- Strategy 1.5.4: Consider a mixed-use zoning district regulation that aligns with the future land use map and provides flexibility for varied building typologies while maintaining high design quality and complementing the surrounding context.



## HOW WILL THE NEW CODE & MAP ADDRESS THESE HOUSING GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES?

- Allows for increased densities of housing - reduced lot sizes, no minimum square footage requirements for dwelling units, reduced side yard setback requirements.
- Allows for many more types of housing - multi-family, cluster housing, cottage court housing, townhomes, accessory dwelling units, etc.
- Allows for mixed use development in the Traditional Neighborhood, Neighborhood Mixed Use, and Downtown Zoning Districts.

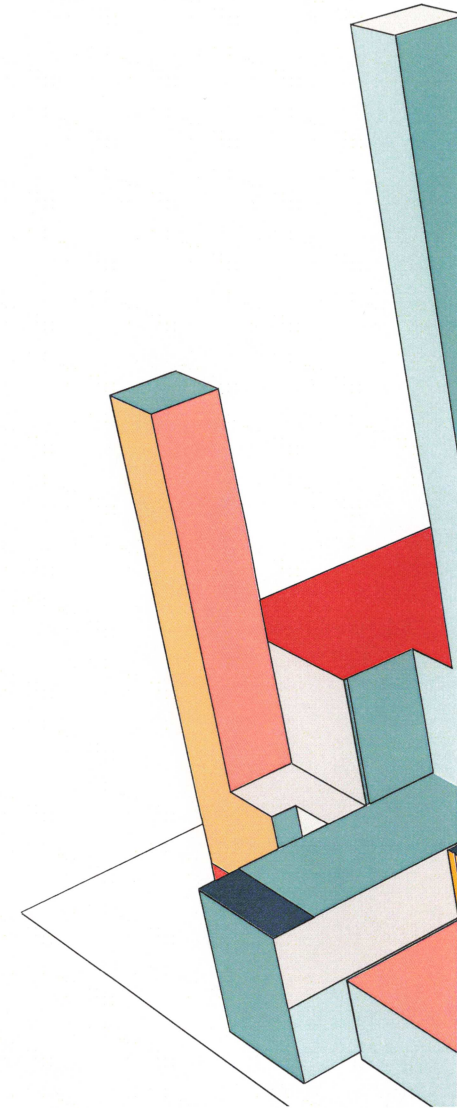




# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Goal 2: Continue and Expand Economic Development. Provide quality economic development services and facilities to enable businesses and families to thrive.
- Strategy 2.2.1: Address the need for an increased tax base through new light industrial facilities and office areas.
- Strategy 2.2.4: Promote new small and adaptable office and innovation environments that support the evolving workplace environment and growth of small businesses.
- Strategy 2.2.5: Review and update Industrial and Commercial Zoning District regulations to ensure that they accommodate innovation, entrepreneurship and small business need for flexibility.



# HOW WILL THE NEW CODE & MAP ADDRESS THESE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES?

- New Innovation District zoning district will be created for existing and new industrial parks. Uses in this district have been updated from existing Light Industrial District.
- Consolidated commercial district zoning.
- Allows for mixed-use zoning districts to allow for more flexible spaces for residential and small businesses.
- Retained the home occupation regulations which allow for home-based businesses.

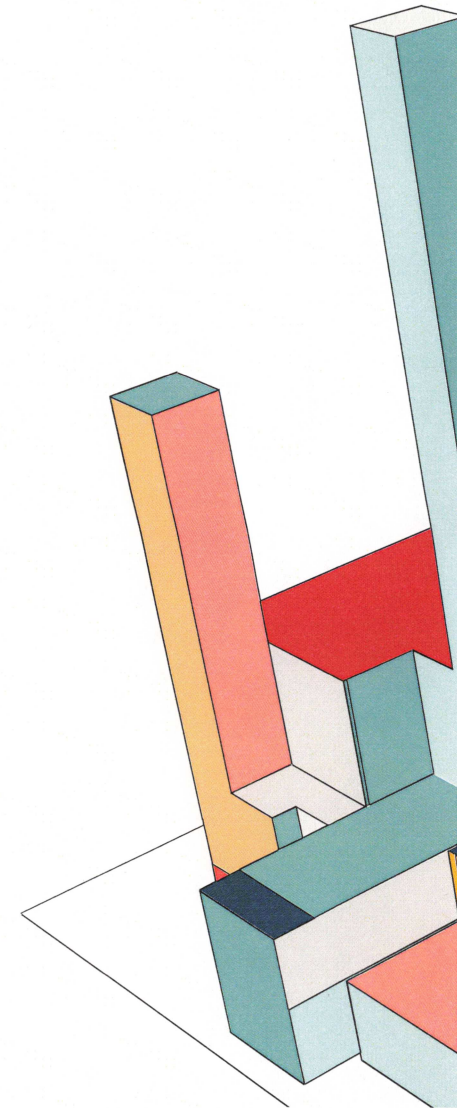


**QUALITY COMMUNITY  
SERVICES GOALS,  
OBJECTIVES &  
STRATEGIES**



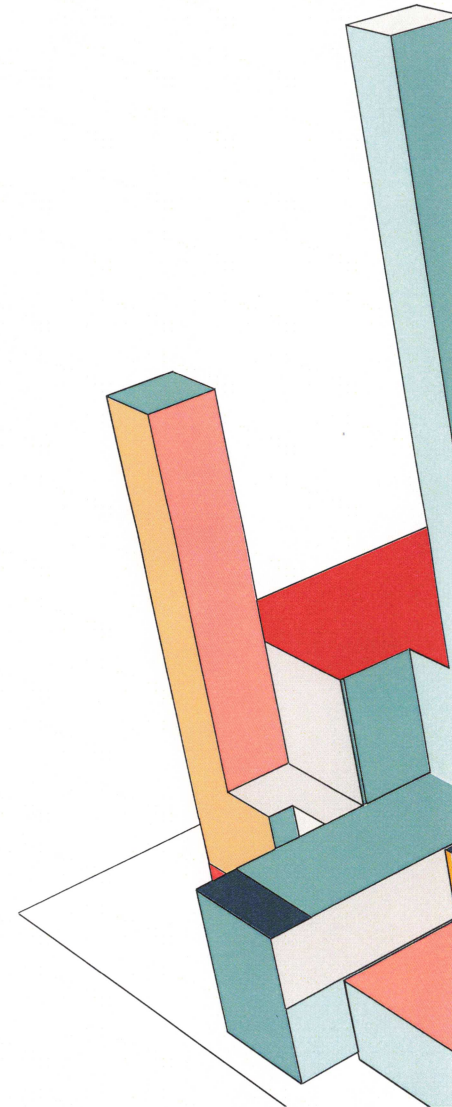
## QUALITY COMMUNITY SERVICES

- Goal 3: Continue to Provide Quality Community Services. Retain and enhance quality of life in Oberlin through providing individuals, families, businesses and neighborhoods with quality public services and partnerships.
- Objective 3.2: Strengthen, diversify and improve safe and convenient mobility options that will allow residents and workers to access key destinations throughout the City via walking, biking, public transportation, or automobile to suit their needs.
- Strategy 3.2.1: Evaluate parking and the role of the City in assuring areas are visible, safe, accessible, maintained, and inviting to visitors; support a district parking approach where useful and possible; reduce or provide on-site parking in commercial areas, where shared parking agreements are possible; consider reducing or eliminating parking minimums.



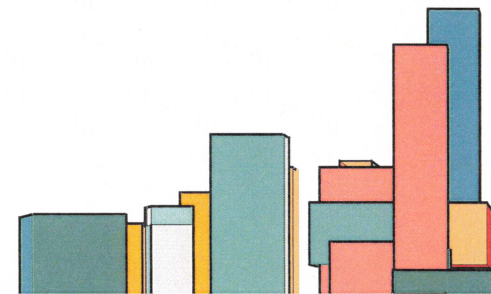
## QUALITY COMMUNITY SERVICES

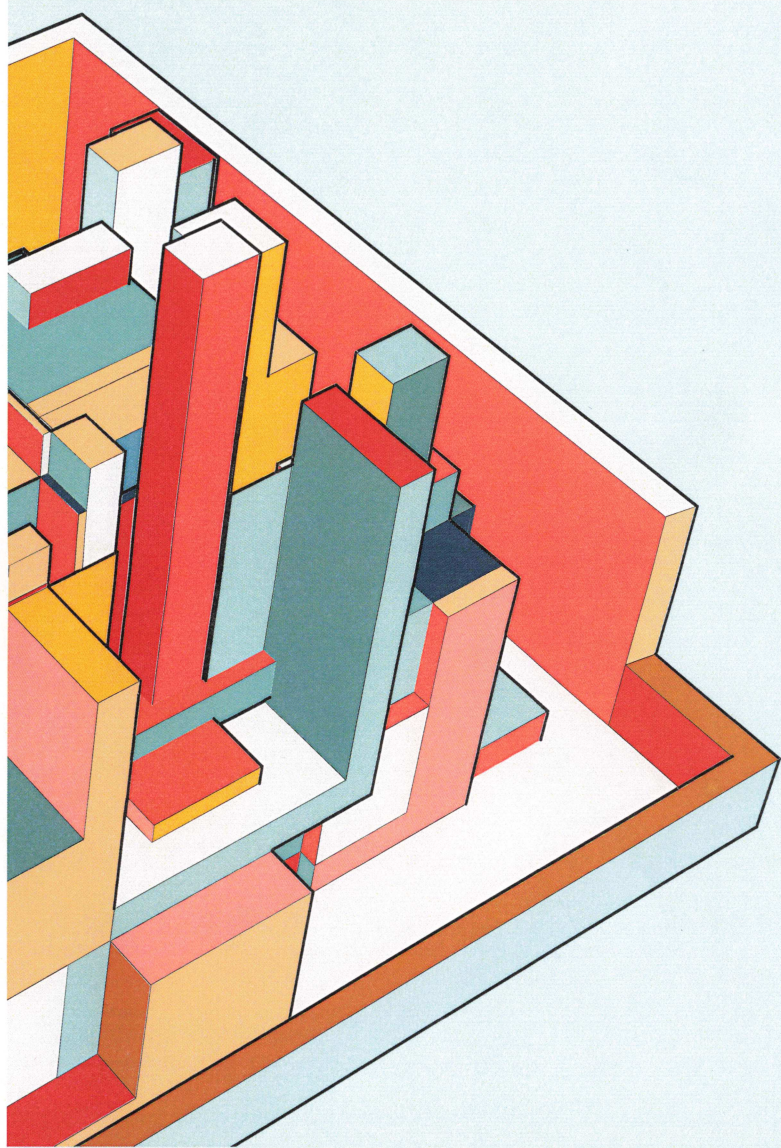
- Strategy 3.5.3: Incorporate Climate Action Plan goals into City actions related to urban forestry to create additional carbon sinks and combat the urban heat island effect.
- Strategy 3.7.2: Support Oberlin Schools in creating a redevelopment future for the former Eastwood School.
- Strategy 3.11.1: Create a streamlined development review approach that optimizes City and applicant time, while providing transparency and opportunity for public input.



# HOW WILL THE NEW CODE & MAP ADDRESS THESE QUALITY COMMUNITY SERVICES GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES?

- Tree planting and landscaping requirements for residential and commercial development.
- Minimum off-street parking requirements have been eliminated.
- Required pedestrian and bicycle facilities for commercial development.
- New zoning district for Eastwood School (Neighborhood Mixed Use District) will allow for re-use of this property.
- Would allow for shared parking arrangements where appropriate.
- Shortened development review time for multi-family residential and mixed-use developments (no more lengthy Planned Development Overlay District process for approval).
- Public hearing requirements maintained for conditional uses, variances, administrative appeals and zoning text and map changes. One more public hearing added at the Planning Commission level for zoning text and map changes.





**QUESTIONS?**

# THANK YOU

Carrie Porter

Director of Planning and Development

[cporter@cityofoberlin.com](mailto:cporter@cityofoberlin.com)

440-775-7250

