LAND USE BARRIERS STUDY

City of New Orleans

City Planning Commission
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FOREWARD

by Bob Rivers

Executive Director, New Orleans City Planning Commission

Like it or not, the City of New Orleans has a reputation as being a difficult place to do business – particularly when it comes to development. There are a number of reasons for this – climate, environmental issues, insurance rates, construction costs, etc. However, one factor is consistently identified as a leading culprit: the City's land use regulatory and permitting processes. These processes are often viewed as overly-burdensome, overly-complex, inconsistently applied and inefficiently administered. This study is intended to look into this perception – to identify barriers and to make recommendations for improvement.

More than anything, this is a study about reform. Zoning and permitting reform have become increasingly popular nationwide: the American Planning Association identifies "Prioritizing Zoning Reform" as one of its primary objectives:

> *"Planning-led zoning reform is key to tackling many of the nation's greatest challenges, especially the housing supply crisis. With adequate support, zoning reform can increase housing choice, bolster local economies, address inequities in our communities, and connect people to opportunity."*

The movement towards zoning and permitting reform is based on a very simple premise: land use regulations, by definition, are restrictions on development. Theoretically, regulations serve a vital public purpose. For example, zoning regulations which serve to protect and enhance historic and environmental resources are critically important for a City like New Orleans, where quality of life and economic opportunity depend on the City's vibrant culture and natural amenities. However, oftentimes, regulations may not have such a direct benefit for the public, and actually impede beneficial projects.

This study identifies a number of regulations and processes which fall into the latter category:

- Regulations and processes that do not add sufficient public value to justify the cost to the City and applicants
- Regulations and processes that are overly inflexible, confusing, or unpredictable in a way that discourages investment
- Regulations and processes that are unnecessary, overly time-consuming or redundant
- Regulations and processes that divert limited staff resources from more important matters
- Regulations and processes that are outdated, or are based on speculative fears about worst-case outcomes.

In addition to the above, one theme stood out during the course of our research: the City has historically under-resourced its permitting and regulatory agencies such that the volume of work often exceeds the City's capacity to handle it. Past studies were consistent in recommending that the City needs to significantly increase support – funding, staffing, training, technology and other resources – in order to effectively administer its land use regulatory and permitting responsibilities. This is especially true in the area of enforcement: even the most well-thought-out regulations are meaningless if the City cannot effectively enforce them. This fact leads to the all-too-common practice in New Orleans where development proposals are denied solely because of fears that the City will not be able to enforce its own regulations.

In recognition of the fact that the City is currently facing a significant budgeting shortfall, it is likely that the City cannot immediately ramp up financial support for permitting and regulatory agencies. Accordingly, a short-term approach may be to reevaluate regulatory and permitting priorities. While it is preferable to have a comprehensive and broadly-reaching regulatory framework guiding land use in the City, if the resources are not available to excel at everything, the chances are greater that we will fail to excel at anything. It may be worthwhile to reexamine land use priorities, and focus available resources on those that are the most important. The Council's recent emphasis on short-term rentals is a notable example of such an approach.

Land use decision making is one of the most contentious governmental functions because of the impact it has on both the quality of life that residents demand and the availability of economic opportunities that businesses need. Often, these two ideals are pitted against one another: "We need to either protect neighborhoods or promote economic development." This is especially true in New Orleans, which has such a wealth of cultural resources, but also has a struggling economy. We are often called upon to maximize regulations under the guise of protecting neighborhoods. We are just as often called upon to minimize regulations under the guise of economic development. The CPC staff rejects these sentiments as false choices. We can do both: we can protect culturally significant and diverse neighborhoods while at the same time facilitating transformative economic development. That is the essence of progressive city planning, and the core of the CPC's vision: "facilitating the preservation of the character of the City's many varied neighborhoods, while guiding developments that are catalysts for positive change."

Thanks very much for your interest and participation in this important subject. The City Planning Commission staff is proud of the role we play in providing a public forum for important land use issues like these. We welcome your feedback.

RDR.

Executive Summary

On April 10, 2025, the City Council passed Motion M-25-225 directing the City Planning Commission to conduct a public hearing to identify barriers and hurdles in the land use process which unnecessarily complicate and prolong the permitting and licensing process, as well as potential paths for removing these hurdles.

The City Planning Commission is directed to complete the study within four months of the date of the Motion. In the process, the City Planning Commission will work with the Council Land Use Officer, the Department of Safety and Permits and consult with governmental agencies, City departments, residents, neighborhood associations, developers, nonprofit sector experts, and private-sector experts, as needed, to fulfill the full scope of the study contemplated in the motion.

The City Planning Commission staff, in conjunction with the Zoning Division of the Department of Safey and permits, the Council Land Use Officer and stakeholder meeting input, have identified a significant number of reforms within the CPC processes and the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance that are needed to streamline, clarify and improve the zoning regulations that govern New Orleans and the systems in place to create land-use entitlements.

The findings and recommendations in this study are drawn from CPC staff's expertise working within the confines of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (CZO, the City's Home Rule Charter, the City's Code of Ordinances and CPC's own Rules and Regulations. In discussions with stakeholders, the Zoning Division in Department of Safety and Permits and the Council Land Use Officer, additional recommendations were added, particularly concerning transparency, improved communication with the public and among interdepartmental agencies, and the need for public education in both the City Planning Commission and the Department of Safety and Permits.

The bulk of the findings and corresponding recommendations relate to the CPC processes and zoning code. These recommendations are in recognition that conditional use approval, zoning changes, design reviews and variances are in and of themselves a barrier to the creation of housing, economic development and the promotion of small businesses. Additionally, small changes to the CZO are necessary to ensure the regulations are consistent, clear and logical.

As New Orleans continues to evolve, so too must the regulatory systems that shape its neighborhoods and guide development. The identified findings and recommendations include updates to the zoning ordinance to remove conditional use requirements where they create unnecessary barriers, and to allow additional uses in districts where they are currently prohibited but appropriate, such as new housing typologies. Staff also reviewed the Institutional Master Plan and Design Advisory Committee processes to improve consistency and efficiency.

Additional reforms under consideration include expanding administrative approvals for certain minor variances and subdivision requests, reducing off-street parking requirements, and ensuring

the bulk and yard regulations align with both historic development patterns and contemporary needs.

Lastly, there is a common thread between discussions with representatives from the Department of Safety and Permits, the Stakeholder meetings and the past reports reviewed as part of this Study. Significant resources must be allocated to hiring qualified staff and to retain staff once they're trained. Not only are there simply not enough staff within the Department of Safety and Permits and the City Planning Commission, but the wages are not competitive and the incentives to stay are minimal. The turnover this creates is to the detriment of the public who receive inconsistent information and slow responses. Hiring qualified staff is only part of the equation to increasing public transparency and trust. Educational opportunities and clear public-facing documents and flow charts are needed to gain trust and understanding. Empowering developers and small business owners to invest in the City is critical to New Orleans' future success.

The CPC regards zoning regulations and planning procedures as living documents - tools that must evolve alongside the city itself. The study is reflective of the City Planning Commission staff's efforts to continually assess, refine and improve land use policies.

Key Findings

<u>Prior Studies and Research</u>

- Several reports and studies have already been published that evaluate the current systems within the Department of Safety and Permits and identify both barriers and solutions.
- Three of these studies were conducted in the past few years and specifically researched issues within the Department of Safety and Permits: The City Services Coalition, The Matrix Report and the Permitting Task Force Report.
- The reports identify many of the same issues including:
    - Inability to assess where a permit is in its review process and who to reach if there are questions. The reports indicate staff at the Department of Safety and Permits are difficult to reach or slow to respond.
    - Lack of staff with the authority to approve permits creates bottleneck situations. The lack of staff translates to less individuals who can review plans, inspect work, and ultimately approve permits leading to a delay in receiving a Certificate of Occupancy.
    - The lack of pay and incentives to stay in the Department are some of the reasons for high turnover rates.
    - There is a lack of transparency regarding the process of obtaining a permit with a lack of visual flow charts and data visualization.
    - The length of time to obtain a permit is too long.

Zoning Administration Subset of the Zoning Division within the Department of Safety and Permits

- The Zoning Administration reviews all permit applications except for solar and roof permits. In 2024 alone, the Zoning Administration reviewed nearly 7,000 building permit applications, inspected 845 reported zoning violations, and processed 4,424 zoning licenses.
- Staff must pay out-of-pocket for professional certifications, such as International Code Council (ICC) or the Zoning Inspector Certification for Zoning Plans Examiners.
- Not all staff have access to necessary software, like Bluebeam, that would allow digital mark-ups/measurements and overall simplify the plan review process.
- An automated notification is not triggered when there is a new permit application to review in the City's internal database system - LAMA. Staff must instead complete a manual query periodically to check if there are new applications for review.
- The OneStop App provides applicants review comments from the respective divisions, but the applicant must navigate the OneStop App to review comments; they are not automatically sent to the applicant. Review comments are filed under "print summary" – which is not intuitive or user-friendly.
- Once corrected plans are uploaded, it is the applicant's responsibility to notify City staff that there are new documents to review.
- There is not a dedicated staff member to answer the DSP's main phone line.

Community Engagement

- The Neighborhood Participation Program (NPP) meetings provide opportunities for an applicant to inform and garner community support for their land development proposal, but they can create negative externalities, where residents may air out personal grievances against applicants that are unrelated to the proposal or potential impacts.
- As of 2020, there were at least 852 neighborhood association members, comprised of 60% White residents, 35% Black residents, 7% Latinx residents, 4% Asian residents and 4% residents of other ethnicities. This indicates that white residents are almost twice as represented as Black residents. Homeowners are also generally overrepresented within membership.
- NIMBYism has thwarted the development of past affordable housing developments and residential care facilities.

Ongoing and Completed Initiatives to Improve Processes with the City Planning Commission

- Despite significant progress in modernizing and adapting New Orleans' land use systems to better support housing, development and investment, there are still significant reforms needed to respond to the city's evolving development trends.

City Planning Commission Processes

- The Design Review process adds additional time to the permitting process. This review is important for certain larger scale projects, but certain minor renovations with less impact also trigger this review.
- The Design Advisory Committee (DAC) was originally created for the review of public projects but has since expanded to include mostly private developments. The Advisory Committee is comprised of representatives from various City departments who may or may not have a background in design or architecture.
    - Regulations that trigger DAC review are found in three documents, some of which are inconsistent with one another.
- The City Planning Commission is responsible for reviewing proposed demolitions in the Central Business District (CBD) – when not located within a local historic district. This regulation is outdated and was created to ensure the demolition would not result in a surface parking lot. However, surface parking lots are no longer permitted in the CBD.
- The Institutional Master Plan (IMP) was implemented in 2015 for universities and hospitals in the EC Educational Campus District and the MC Medical Campus District. There are two types of IMPs – permitted and conditional. Permitted IMPs are an additional barrier that does not serve the institution or community as uses already permitted in the base zoning district must go through added review.
    - When the IMP is created, it may not capture what will eventually be developed on the campus. Most changes to the IMP require a full IMP revision which may take several months.
- There is currently no limit to the number of times a variance can be deferred, placing a burden on staff and applicants.

Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance

Conditional Uses

- The Conditional Use process takes between 6-9 months to complete, not including close-out time on the backend to ensure all provisos have been met. This adds significant time, money and uncertainty for developers.
    - Several uses that require conditional use approval are consistently approved, such as standard and fast-food restaurants, neighborhood commercial establishments, cultural facilities, community centers and the retail sale of packaged alcohol.
    - Certain zoning districts require conditional use approval when uses that are permitted by-right are in an existing structure over a certain size, disincentivizing the adaptive reuse of vacant larger structures.

Parking

- Regulations for Electrical Vehicle (EV) charging stations were adopted in 2023. However, they are overly cost-prohibitive and necessitate reconsideration to ensure their requirements are reflective of the city's need.
- The CZO has parking exemptions for single- and two-family developments situated on narrow lots of 30 feet or less in width in the Historic Urban Neighborhood Districts. This exemption acknowledges the difficulty in developing narrower lots with parking requirements but does not account for narrow lots between 31 and 45 feet in lot width.
- The HMC-2 Historic Marigny/Tremé/Bywater Commercial District and the HM-MU Historic Marigny/Tremé/Bywater Mixed-Use District are the only two Historic Core zoning districts that have a parking requirement. The HMC-2 District permits residential uses, but there are no parking exceptions for this use, regardless of the lot width. Similarly, the HM-MU District does not provide any off-street parking relief for any use, despite that its Historic Urban counterpart, the HU-MU Historic Urban Neighborhood Mixed-Use District, provides relief for the first 5,000 square feet and allows on-street parking spaces to count towards the off-street parking requirement for commercial uses.
- Required off-street parking spaces for residential developments are required to be located on the same lot as the residential use itself. Commercial uses can provide off-street parking on a lot within 300 feet of the site.
- Affordable Housing Plan Developments and affordable developments within a Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning boundary may receive between a 10-50% parking reduction if located within 600 feet of a transit stop.
- Only one zoning district in the historic core and historic urban zoning districts can utilize on-street parking to count towards the commercial parking requirements; residential developments are excluded from this exemption.
- Certain uses have parking requirements incongruent with the use's need; for example, medical and dental clinics require 1.5 off-street parking spaces per exam room.

Use and Use Permissions

- Certain housing types are prohibited in the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance despite the need for more flexible housing typologies. For example, co-housing and accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are prohibited uses but would help the City address its housing crisis by creating low impact infill development.
- Affordable Housing Planned Developments are required to have ten or more rental housing units that must include a 10% set-aside of units up to the 60% AMI level for at least 99 years. The incentives attached to this development are not triggered for housing developments under 10 units.

- The CBD-5 District imposes restrictive limitations on restaurant use. Currently, no more than one restaurant of any kind - whether a standard restaurant or a specialty restaurant like a coffee or ice cream shop - is allowed per block face.
- Research and Development, for example, is a use type only allowed in three of the CBD Districts, and recording studios are only permitted in four of the CBD districts, despite their low impact nature. Community centers and cultural facilities are prohibited in the CBD-7 Bio Science District and movie studios are completely absent from the use tables in Article 17 of the CZO.

Bulk and Yard Regulations

- In many cases, lot area per dwelling unit requirements limit flexibility, especially on infill lots where compact development is more appropriate. Building form is already dictated by the setback, height and open space requirements.
- Small tweaks and modest increases to building height limitations can improve project viability and maximize land value, especially when the ground floor must be of a certain height for commercial use.
- Multi-family height limitations are inconsistent in the Historic Urban Neighborhoods Non-Residential Districts.
- In the MU-1 Medium Intensity Mixed-Use District and MU-2 High Intensity Mixed-Use District, the rear yard setback for residential uses is 20 feet, compared to 0 feet for non-residential and mixed-use buildings.
- The C-2 Auto-Oriented Commercial District and the C-3 Heavy Commercial District have a rear yard setback requirement of 25 feet, a requirement that exceeds that of the C-1 General Commercial District, and the MU-1 and MU-2 Districts.
- The Historic Urban and Commercial/Mixed-Use districts, have front yard setback requirements that necessitate interpretation by the Zoning Division in the Department of Safety and Permits.
- Current regulations assume conventional lot types, either interior or corner lots, and do not address through lots or larger lots that comprise an entire block. In such cases, rigid definitions of "front" and "rear" yards often result in impractical design constraints and the need for variances.
- The Historic Urban Neighborhood Residential Districts require the lot area to contain 30% permeable open space. In the Historic Neighborhood Non-residential Districts, the required permeable open space is 10% of the lot area, regardless of use, signifying that open space ratios should be reevaluated throughout the City.
- Variances that applicants continually seek, such as bulk and yard regulation relief for single- and two-family developments in the Historic Urban Residential Districts indicate the regulations may be too stringent and in need of modification.

Subdivision Regulations

- Major subdivisions trigger the need for an NPP Meeting. While the impacts that some major subdivisions have on surrounding development warrant the NPP process, staff occasionally come across major subdivisions requests that do not result in any impacts on adjacent properties.
- The Division of Real Estate and Records has only one staff person responsible for reviewing subdivision applications, affecting the overall review timeline because subdivisions cannot be approved until the Division of Real Estate and Records has cleared any lot and parcel record inconsistencies.

Customer Service

- The OneStop Shop was created under the Landrieu Administration in 2015 to provide a centralized point for applicants to submit and track permits. This effort was later reenvisioned as the Office of Business and External Services (OBES) in 2020. However, it was never fully transferred to OBES leading to only partial implementation.
- The Department of Safety and Permits only receives applications through the OneStop App, while the City Planning Commission receives applications through e-mail or in-person only.
- One of the most utilized public facing websites for both the public and city staff is Property Viewer. However, the site does not allow viewing of individual zoning districts, overlays or IZDs on the map. Instead, the map shows all at once.
- There are no flow charts or public facing documents to help guide applicants when multiple reviews from different city departments are necessary.
- The Historic District Landmarks Commission hosts quarterly presentations with stakeholders, but the City Planning Commission has not implemented this type of public outreach.

Stakeholder Meetings

- Some Stakeholders believed there should be more uses that require conditional use approval while others wanted the conditional use approval eliminated entirely.
    - Some stakeholders also believe that conditional uses are granted too easily; each should be vetted to provide an actual "public need" and meaningful effort to respond to that need through their overall development plan and community engagement.
- Stakeholders argued that the NPP process can often stall projects because a lot of community input is not related to the scope of the proposed projects. Moreover, the notices can be costly or wasteful when notices are returned undeliverable.
- Other stakeholders noted applicants may not provide clear communication and transparency regarding their proposals at the NPP meetings. They may ultimately apply

for different uses than were mentioned in their NPP meetings and do not always follow up about residents' concerns.
- The zoning verification process is extremely time-consuming and results in unnecessary project delays.
- There is an "epidemic of mistrust" in the community and that it appears a small handful of neighbors often make decisions on behalf of larger communities.
- The same information may need to be submitted to multiple departments when it all is funneled into the same data source (LAMA).
- Public comments are due eight days before public hearings, and staff reports are generally released five to seven days before these hearings. This structure prevents residents from responding to staff recommendations.
- Some stakeholders felt that permits are too easily granted, and many developers who operate without permits do not face consequences. They believe better enforcement - including the imposition of fines and disconnecting utilities for non-compliant developments - may discourage unscrupulous developments in the future.
- The timeline for opening a new business is critical and even small delays can end the business before it opens.
- Permitting in Orleans Parish has not been updated to meet innovations in "urban agriculture" business. Farmers find that it's generally easier and less expensive to do business in Jefferson Parish.

Analysis of Recommendations

Many of the same recommendations were identified throughout the study. For purposes of brevity, duplicative recommendations are not stated below.

Table 1: Consolidated Recommendations

Recommendations	
Topic	**Recommendations**
Administrative and Organizational	Remove all branding associated with OBES
Staffing	Create a position to shepherd applicants through the permitting process and ensure each division has dedicated staff responsible for assisting the public.
	Hire additional staff, particularly zoning and building inspectors, to reduce backlogs.
	Increase pay, training, and professional development opportunities to retain staff and their institutional knowledge
	Hire one additional staff member to review subdivisons in the Department of Property Management, Division of Real Estate and Records
	Hire a graphic designer to create flowcharts and public information pamphlets
Procedural Improvements	Reduce permitting timelines, ensuring a more predictable review process.
	Eliminate permitted Institutional Master Plans (IMP) but retain the "conditional IMP" version.
	Permit more IMP changes administratively.
	Remove the City Planning Commission review of demolitions in the CBD and replace it by City Council review by amending Section 26-4.
	Create limits for the number of variance deferrals so one request cannot be deferred indefinitely.
	Expand variance validity from one year to three years.
	Allow certain minimal variances to be approved administratively (lot size or parking up to a defined threshold).
	City Council could keep authority for large conditional uses and delegate smaller ones to CPC.
	Reform the DAC process by clarifying triggers, consolidating the DAC procedural documents into one document, ensure the membership has a design background and eliminate unnecessary reviews.
	Administratively approve subdivisions with 10 or fewer lots.
	Extend expiration of tentative subdivisions from one year to three years.

	Eliminate NPP requirement for subdivisions that only shift lot lines without creating additional lots.
	Clarify that compliant subdivision requests are permitted by-right.
	Create a standard operating procedures manual for DSP staff.
Technology	Ensure all staff have access to necessary software to help review plans (e.g., Bluebeam).
	Standardize and automate the OneStop App across departments. Automate assignments to appropriate staff and automatically send OneStop App review comments by e-mail and notify the reviewer when updates are uploaded.
	Add hyperlinks or graphics in the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance to relevant ordinances/interpretations or to help explain terms such as Floor Area Ratio (FAR).
	Improve Property Viewer to display individual layers (e.g., zoning districts) and create a chart that shows every zoning district where a use is permitted.
	Update department webpages to include chat functions or AI assistance.
	Automate the written public comment process.
	Offer pre-development meetings for larger projects.
	Work with the Information Technology and Innovation Office as well as the Office of Neighborhood Engagement to ensure the self-reported neighborhood association database stays updated.
Transparency, Public Communications and Education	Develop public-friendly materials (flowcharts, graphics, pamphlets) to explain permitting processes and processes necessitating review by multiple agencies.
	Enhance public education opportunities for architects, developers, business owners, realtors, architects and contractors.
	Reevaluate CPC's stakeholder engagement procedures to ensure a fair and equitable process.
	Expand the role of the Community Engagement Planner position to: • Examine best practices from comparable cities • Launch CPC 101 series • Upgrade outreach methods, tools, and tutorials • Update public interfaces • Update NPP Regulations
	Include contact information in all employee email signatures.
	Remove the restaurant block face limitation in the CBD-5 Urban Core Neighborhood Mixed-Use District.
	Limit the use of Interim Zoning Districts, which can create uncertainty and confusion.
	Comprehensively review use permissions within all zoning districts every few years in coordination with the Department of Economic Development.

Zoning and Land-Use Regulation	Make regulations context appropriate so that a developer does not need to seek a variance to develop a single- or two-family development in the Historic Urban Residential Districts.
	Permit single- and two-family residences in S-B1 and S-B2 Business Districts.
	Allow multi-family developments in HU-B1 districts (currently ground-floor dwellings already permitted).
	Revisit ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Units) as a permitted use in some districts.
	Eliminate Conditional Use approval for restaurants, package alcohol sales, community centers, cultural facilities, and neighborhood commercial establishments.
	Allow permitted uses in existing vacant structures regardless of square footage.
	Encourage flexible housing types such as co-living and SROs.
	Allow small affordable housing developments to qualify as AHPDs (under 10-unit threshold).
	Reevaluate lot area per dwelling requirements to reduce barriers for multi-family development (e.g., S-RM2 regulations).
	Increase allowable height in Historic Urban Non-Residential Districts (40 feet to 45 ft, and 3 to 4 stories).
	Create consistent maximum height across all Historic Urban Non-Residential districts for multi-family developments.
	Reduce overly restrictive yard setback requirements in the MU-1, MU-2, C-2, C-3 zoning districts.
	Replace ambiguous front and side yard setback requirements with clear ranges (0-10 feet in Historic Urban Districts, 0-20 feet in Commercial/Mixed-Use Districts).
	Establish clear front and rear yards for through lots with multiple street frontages.
	Re-evaluate open space requirements to ensure consistency across districts.
	Remove 120 sq ft usable open space per residential unit requirement in CBD to better enable conversions to housing.
	Evaluated uses that could potentially be permitted uses in some/all of the CBD Districts, including: Community Centers, Cultural Facilities, Educational Facilities, Movie Studios, Recording Studios, Research and Development, Auditorium, Wine Shop, Indoor Amusement Facilities, Manufacturing (light), Manufacturing (Artisan).
	Evaluate if certain ground floor design standards are necessary or if they simply add another regulatory burden for developments in the CBD.
	Introduce a text amendment to create a more expansive definition and use standards for various aspects of "urban agriculture" in the CZO. Examples include: Crop Cover, Bioswale, Farms, Mobile Food Truck (Fresh Food), Mobile Food Truck (Prepared Food).
	Eliminate off-street parking requirements for lots 35 feet wide or smaller.

Parking	Reduce two-family dwelling requirements to one off-street parking space if the lot is 45 feet in width or less.
	Add HMC-2 and HM-MU Districts to the districts that are parking exempt in the Historic Core Districts.
	Allow off-site parking within 300 ft, for multi-family developments with more than five units.
	Permit shared parking for residential uses with non-residential uses.
	Expand parking reduction radii near transit stop from 600 ft to 1,000 ft for AHPD and MIZ.
	Extend affordable housing parking incentives to all affordable housing developments.
	Allow on-street parking to count towards off-street parking requirements for multi-family and non-residential uses in Historic Core/Urban districts.
	Evaluate and recalibrate parking requirements by the use and actual demand.
	Allow payment-in-lieu option instead of EV installation for small projects.
	Limit EV requirements to new construction/large-scale developments and reevaluate applicability.
	Permit pre-wiring for EV future-proofing instead of a full build-out.

Next Steps

The Land Use Barriers Study, directed by City Council Motion M-25-225, will be presented to the City Planning Commission on September 23, 2025. The City Planning Commission can choose to forward the Study to the City Council with or without changes to the staff recommendations. If the CPC chooses to modify the recommendations, the staff will incorporate those recommendations and forward the revised Study to the City Council. The City Council may choose to hold its own public hearing on the Study, though it is not required.

Most of the recommendations within this report would require future text amendments to codify and effectuate the changes within the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance. Some of the recommendations could also include amendments to the City Code, City Charter and the City Planning Commission's Rules and Regulations.

If the Study is followed by a text amendment request, staff will docket the request and write a staff report with recommendations for specific zoning text changes. The zoning docket would require an additional public hearing before the City Planning Commission. The Commission may choose to recommend text changes to the City Council with or without modification of the staff recommendations, or they could recommend denial of the proposal. The City Council must hold a public hearing before considering adoption of zoning text changes. Finally, the Council may adopt, adopt with modifications, or deny the City Planning Commission's recommendations.

Introduction

On April 10, 2025, the New Orleans City Council passed Motion M-25-225, directing the City Planning Commission (CPC) to conduct a public hearing and prepare a comprehensive study identifying barriers and hurdles in the city's land use processes that unnecessarily complicate and prolong the permitting and licensing processes. The Motion requires the City Planning Commission, in collaboration with the Council Land Use Officer, the Department of Safety and Permits, and various stakeholders - including governmental agencies, city departments, neighborhood associations, developers, nonprofit and private-sector experts - to complete its study within four months.

Background

New Orleans' existing land use and permitting systems have been shaped by long-standing zoning regulations, evolving ordinances, and numerous updates over the years. Despite incremental reforms, a significant number of barriers remain. Multiple independent reports evaluated processes within the Department of Safety and Permits - the City Services Coalition, The Matrix Report, and the Permitting Task Force Report. These reports echo similar issues within the department such as difficulty in tracking permit status, insufficient staffing, high turnover, siloed communication, and overly complex or outdated code requirements.

Councilmember Helena Moreno, who authored Motion M-25-225, noted that this study was directly inspired by neighboring Jefferson Parish's ongoing efforts to reform their permitting processes. Jefferson Parish has undertaken extensive internal review of its Building Permits and Planning departments; in 2025, an Advisory Committee on Permitting and Planning was created to further advance these reforms.

In Orleans Parish, the three aforementioned reports are only a few of the many studies that have already been conducted documenting many of the same findings within the Department of Safety and Permits. Summaries of those previous reports - in addition to their recommendations and implementation status - are included in this study to avoid duplicating efforts and to ensure that the main focus is on process and regulatory improvements within the City Planning Commission. Identified barriers with the City Planning Commission hinder New Orleans' ability to streamline development, foster housing production, and facilitate economic growth. Rigid conditional use requirements, inconsistent standards, and unnecessary processes produce delays that impact residents, developers, and small businesses.

Study Goals and Purpose

This study seeks to systematically identify, analyze, and propose solutions for the major hurdles that exist within New Orleans' land use regulatory framework and permitting processes. The primary goals are:

- To clarify, streamline, and improve the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance and associated CPC processes, making regulations more logical, consistent, and responsive to contemporary needs.
- To recommend amendments that will remove unnecessary conditional use and variance requirements that create obstacles to the creation of housing and small businesses and deter investment.
- To evaluate staffing, compensation, and interdepartmental collaboration to improve efficiency, staff retention, and customer service.
- To promote transparency and public education, ensuring the public, developers, and staff can more easily understand and navigate the permitting and land use process.

Review and Synthesis of Prior Department of Safety and Permits Studies

The City of New Orleans has already dedicated significant time, resources and funding to study and improve processes within the Department of Safety and Permits. Several of these studies were completed in the last few years including the City Services Coalition Study, the Matrix Report, and the Permitting Task Force Report.

These reports consistently note the same issues: persistent challenges include understaffing, inadequate funding, limited resources and uncompetitive salaries. Rather than duplicate work that's already been conducted, the City Planning Commission staff reviewed and synthesized the findings in these previous reports, which highlight issues with enforcement processes, policymaking, and the general land use processes citywide. Each report also identified recommended solutions that are noted and reviewed in this section. The research points to the same systematic issues.

The section to follow offers a detailed synopsis of each analysis, its recommendations, and the current implementation status of the recommendation. The second part of this section delves into the details of the implementation status for each of the land-use recommendations.

Bureau of Governmental Research Emerging Issues

In its October 2003 *Emerging Issues* report, the Bureau of Governmental Research published its findings on the City of New Orleans' land use decisions. The issue, titled *Runaway Discretion: Land Use Decision Making in New Orleans*, identified the interconnectivity of residents, developers, and policymakers and the frustrations that stemmed from inconsistent, or fragmented, decision making. At the time of its publishing, the zoning ordinance had not been significantly updated since its creation in 1970. The Bureau suggested over a dozen ways to improve the land use process.

The Bureau's main recommendations and their implementation status are ascribed in the table below. Recommendations categorially reference the need for a legitimate Master Plan and updates to the existing land use process and the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance.

Table 1: Bureau of Government Research Recommendation Implementation Status

Bureau of Governmental Research Emerging Issues Implementation				
Recommendations	**Fully Implemented**	**Partially Implemented**	**Not Yet Implemented**	**Unable to Implement**
Create a Master Plan	X			

Bureau of Governmental Research Emerging Issues Implementation				
Recommendations	**Fully Implemented**	**Partially Implemented**	**Not Yet Implemented**	**Unable to Implement**
Create a zoning ordinance with allowable uses and designations consistent with the Master Plan	X			
Substantially reduce the number of conditional uses			X	
Limit zoning amendment considerations to a quarterly basis				X
Adopt the Master Plan and give it the force of law	X			
Change the language of the City Charter, specifically stating that any ordinance passed henceforth must conform to the Master Plan.	X			
Include language in the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance requiring that it conform to the Master Plan or at least to the land use section of the Master Plan	X			
Ensure that the Master Plan could not be altered except on a biennial or less frequent basis	X			
Shift decision-making authority on matters such as conditional uses from the Council to the City Planning Commission.			X	
Conditional use requests could be approved or denied at the administrative level			X	
Strengthen protections against the practice of spot zoning by specific, though broad-based criteria for the City Planning Commission to determine whether a zoning request constitutes a spot zone	X			
Develop a program to integrate neighborhoods into the beginning of the planning process with neighborhood liaisons to government.	X			

While more than half of the Bureau's recommendations are fully or partially implemented, several recommendations are 'Not Yet implemented' or are "Unable to be Implemented.' For recommendations marked 'Unable to Implement', staff in the City's permitting agencies have identified impediments to implementation in addition to providing alternatives or best practices as shown below:

- Recommendation: Limit zoning amendment considerations to a quarterly basis
  - Limitation: Limiting amendment considerations to once every three months (or 4 times a year) would severely prolong an already lengthy process. Therefore, this is a recommendation that the City Planning Commission does not intend to implement.

The Plan for Generational Economic Transformation

The Plan for Generational Economic Transformation was led by the Office of Economic Development and the New Orleans Business Alliance in February 2022, to create a broad and strategic vision for the economic future of New Orleans. The plan addressed deep-seated geographic and economic disparities and suggested streamlining land use and permitting processes to support business growth and neighborhood revitalization.

CPC staff analyzed the recommendations and separated out the land-use specific suggestions. The table below shows the current implementation status of said suggestions.

Table 2: Plan for Generational Economic Transformation Recommendation Implementation Status

Plan for Generational Economic Transformation Implementation Status				
Recommendations	**Fully Implemented**	**Partially Implemented**	**Not Yet Implemented**	**Unable to Implement**
Develop proposals that support affordable housing production and preservation		X		
Develop housing plans, community development strategies, and zoning policies that encourage access to affordable (multifamily or mixed-use) housing		X		

Permitting Task Force Report

The Permitting Task Force Report was initiated by the New Orleans City Council's Community Development Committee, led by Councilmember Freddie King III. The completed report was published in August 2023. The Task Force, made up of civic leaders with City staff support, focused

on operational and administrative obstacles within permitting and code enforcement operations. In doing so, the consulting group interviewed stakeholders within the development, preservation, and business communities to form a detailed set of recommendations that could improve the City's permitting processes.

Table 3: Permitting Task Force Recommendation Implementation Status

Permitting Task Force Implementation Status				
Recommendations	**Fully Implemented**	**Partially Implemented**	**Not Yet Implemented**	**Unable to Implement**
Improve enforcement of building violations (I.e., hiring of more inspectors and/or utilizing Union Reps to help inspect)		X		
Create a standard for excellent customer service (i.e., timeliness of email replies, phone call returns, a guide for all S&P customer service expectations, and other basic communications)		X		
Implement systems to bring more transparency in the permitting process (i.e., 'how to' and 'next steps' guides; visual cues; timelines)		X		
Dramatically improve internal communication between City departments		X		
Expedite permits, licenses, and other approvals for tradespeople				X
Internal inspectors should know both building and zoning code. Third-party inspectors should be assisted by an internal inspector.				X
Improve enforcement of land use violations (I.e., hiring of more inspectors and/or utilizing Union Reps to help inspect)		X		
Limit the use of Interim Zoning Districts			X	

For recommendations marked 'Unable to Implement', staff in the City's permitting agencies have identified impediments to implementation in addition to providing alternatives or best practices as shown below:

- Recommendation: Expedite permits, licenses, and other approvals for tradespeople.
  - *Limitation: Actively working to streamline approval processes across the board.*
- Recommendation: Internal inspectors should know both building and zoning code. Third-party inspectors should be assisted by an internal inspector.
  - *Limitation: Building code and zoning code are two completely different working documents and it would not be beneficial to have one person or multiple persons responsible for reviewing both codes.*

Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing Grant Application

In October 2023 the City of New Orleans applied for the Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing, or PRO-Housing, Grant administered by the United States' Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The application highlights the City's housing needs and considers approaches to resolving housing, policy and market shortcomings. In detailing the subsequent and compounding aftereffects of natural disasters, decreased funding, rising development costs, increased labor shortages and insurance, the application requests funding to focus on the development and preservation of affordable housing throughout the city. While the City of New Orleans was not a recipient of the grant, important implications for zoning and land use reforms were documented and ultimately set aside to reviewed when both time and funding permitted.

Several aspects of the application's zoning and land use reforms are to be reviewed as part of the Land Use Barriers Study. In total, staff identified three recommendations and their implementation status in the table below:

Table 4: ProHousing Grant Recommendation Implementation Status

Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing Grant Application Implementation				
Recommendations	**Fully Implemented**	**Partially Implemented**	**Not Yet Implemented**	**Unable to Implement**
Modify the zoning ordinance to reduce the lot area per dwelling unit to match the minimum lot width and lot depth requirements, so a lot which conforms to the minimums could be developed with a two-family development without waivers or exceptions		X		
Ensure there are a variety of housing types to accommodate different sizes and configurations of households		X		

Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing Grant Application Implementation				
Recommendations	**Fully Implemented**	**Partially Implemented**	**Not Yet Implemented**	**Unable to Implement**
Review the 'family' household definition			X	

Matrix Report

The Matrix Report was initiated in May 2023 by the City of New Orleans, and a draft version was published in March 2025. The city retained the Matrix Consulting Group to conduct a comprehensive review of current permitting, code enforcement, and adjudication operations. In doing so, the consulting group interviewed staff within Safety and Permits, enacted employee and stakeholder surveys, and did a comparative analysis with peer cities such as Birmingham, Detroit, Minneapolis, Savannah, Tampa, and Tulsa to form a set of recommendations that could increase efficiency and improve customer service.

The table below shows the implementation status of said suggestions after meeting with staff within the Department of Safety and Permits:

Table 5: Matrix Report Recommendation Implementation Status

Matrix Report Implementation Status				
Recommendations	**Fully Implemented**	**Partially Implemented**	**Not Yet Implemented**	**Unable to Implement**
Develop clear reports to track timelines involved in scheduling and completion of inspections	X			
Develop public-facing reports to provide current information regarding the performance of the city's permitting systems (i.e. 'we currently have 33 structural permit applications'; 'applications are generally processed in XX days')		X		
Conduct an application completeness check during the intake process and reject incomplete applications prior to forwarding on to reviewers.				X
All review comments should be made directly on the plans and memorialized in the permitting software system.			X	

Matrix Report Implementation Status				
Recommendations	**Fully Implemented**	**Partially Implemented**	**Not Yet Implemented**	**Unable to Implement**
The applicant should be provided with clear instructions regarding how to resubmit their application. All comments should be addressed prior to resubmission and submitted as a single resubmittal	X			
Eliminate the requirement for a copy of the contract for building permit applications and consider eliminating the requirement for notarized signatures on any documents.				X
Allow a fast-track (same day or instant) process for permitting of new roof, minor renovations, and replacement structures under certain size. These permits would be subject to inspection.		X		
Provide instant scheduling of inspections through LAMA or a dedicated phone line with a staff person who has access to a calendar of available slots.			X	
Create capacity and time slots for planners to meet with applicants or potential applicants to conduct pre-plan reviews and answer zoning questions. These can be through online meetings that could be scheduled electronically.	X			
Establish a maximum timeframe of no longer than three business days within which a Letter of Zoning Determination must be sent and ensure adequate staffing to achieve this.			X	
Eliminate the requirement for onsite inspection of home office business and consider eliminating the requirement for most other businesses.				X

Matrix Report Implementation Status				
Recommendations	**Fully Implemented**	**Partially Implemented**	**Not Yet Implemented**	**Unable to Implement**
Create a standard operating procedures manual that provides oversight of the City's code enforcement responsibilities and assignments.			X	
Hire or secure outside consultants equivalent to 4.25 Building plans examiners, one mechanical plans examiner, and 2.5 electrical plans examiners.	X			
Reframe One Stop Shop personnel to focus more on permit facilitation and response to questions from the public. Ensure staff are empowered and knowledgeable to provide answers to the most frequent questions that arise. (i.e., personnel should be able to provide knowledgeable responses to applicant questions)			X	
Transition to Certified Permit Technicians to staff the One Stop Shop and give them broader responsibility for facilitating permit review (i.e., personnel should be able to provide technical responses to applicant questions)			X	
Limit the use of Interim Zoning Districts			X	
Establish a list of building permit types that do not require zoning review and do not route these applications to zoning.		X		

For recommendations marked 'Unable to Implement', staff in the City's permitting agencies have identified impediments to implementation in addition to providing alternatives or best practices as shown below:

- Recommendation: Conduct an application completeness check during the intake process and reject incomplete applications prior to forwarding on to reviewers.
    - *Limitation: Full rejection is not the intended practice - permit intake will sit idly until applicant provides all needed material.*

- Recommendation: Eliminate the requirement for a copy of the contract for building permit applications and consider eliminating the requirement for notarized signatures on any documents.
    - *Limitation: Both the LSLCB and the OIG have said this is not best practice and would increase the likeliness of fraud and improper permitting working conditions. The Department of Safety and Permits will continue with current practice.*
- Recommendation: Eliminate the requirement for onsite inspection of home office businesses and consider eliminating the requirement for most other businesses.
    - *Limitation: This is not a practice within the Zoning Division; Zoning only inspects places of assembly and transient lodging.*

City Of New Orleans' Housing Ecosystem Plan

Completed in August of 2024, the City Of New Orleans' Housing Ecosystem Plan delves into the stability, affordability, and quality of housing in New Orleans' real estate market. Prepared by the Thomas Consulting Group, the goal of the Housing Ecosystem Plan is to address the complex affordable housing challenges in New Orleans through a comprehensive and collaborative approach. Through the avenues of land use reform, affordability investment, and the strengthening of the housing ecosystem, the Plan suggests several policy, partnership and financial reformations.

The table below identifies the Plan's land-use recommendations and each recommendation's implementation status. As the scope of the Land Use Barriers Study is specific to land use challenges, recommendations for partnership and financial reformation have been omitted.

Table 6: Housing Ecosystem Plan Recommendation Implementation Status

Housing Ecosystem Plan Implementation				
Recommendations	**Fully Implemented**	**Partially Implemented**	**Not Yet Implemented**	**Unable to Implement**
Implement flexible parking policies			X	
Eliminate minimum lot size requirements			X	
Permit accessory dwelling units (ADUs) citywide			X	

City Services Coalition - Roadmap: Enhancing Delivery of City Services in New Orleans

The City Services Coalition *Roadmap: Enhancing Delivery of City Services in New Orleans* (2025) is New Orleans' most recent analysis of government structure, City services, and the obstacles and opportunities found within. The goal of the Coalition is to rework government using a combination of structural changes and management improvements. Broken into five sections, the

Coalition categorizes 'City Services' as: street and infrastructure maintenance; drainage and water management; permitting; public safety and justice; and trash and clean public spaces.

For the purposes of the Land Use Barriers Study, only the permitting section of the City Services Coalition report will be discussed. The Coalition garners conclusions and recommendations utilizing intervention methodologies and the Matrix Consulting Group's 2024 in-depth review of the Department of Safety and Permits.

As the City Services Coalition and the Matrix Consulting Group both examine the City's permitting process, several of the Coalition's recommendations are informed by the Matrix's work, which primarily identify challenges with permitting and the land use process itself. Overall, the Coalition's recommendations generally fit into one of three categories: streamlining, capacity, and quality control. Streamlining refers to expediting permit reviews such as removing unnecessary requirements or interdepartmental reviews, enhancing technology and assembling an internal taskforce to overhaul the permitting process. Capacity refers to improving customer service and decreasing the time involved in reviewing a permit, both of which necessitate additional staff. Lastly, quality control refers to ensuring permit applications are complete before they're filed and regular oversight of third-party inspectors. The table below identifies the Coalition's primary recommendations and provides each recommendation's implementation status:

Table 7. City Services Coalition Recommendation Implementation Status

City Services Coalition – Roadmap: Enhancing Delivery of City Services in New Orleans Implementation				
Recommendations	Fully Implemented	Partially Implemented	Not Yet Implemented	Unable to Implement
Provide an online checklist to help applicants complete the required submissions on their first try		X		
Enhance technology (dashboards, data visualization charts, interactive maps)		X		
Streamline application review processes		X		
Improve customer service experience		X		
Eliminate unnecessary requirements or reviews		X		
Assure completeness of the application before it is filed				X
Implement stricter oversight and regular audits of third-party inspectors	X			

Create a task force of departmental personnel and developers to identify choke points in the permitting process and devise solutions		X		
Assign a single staff person to oversee a permit's progress from start to finish				X
Establish an online real-time permit tracking tool that enables applicants to apply online and follow their permit through the process		X		
Update and enforce Safety and Permits' policies and procedures		X		

For recommendations marked 'Unable to Implement', staff in the City's permitting agencies have identified impediments to implementation in addition to providing alternatives or best practices as shown below:

- Recommendation: Assure completeness of the application before it is filed
  - *Limitation: Full rejection of an application is not the intended practice. Instead, Safety and Permits allows incomplete applications to sit idly in 'permit intake' until an applicant provides all needed materials. The makes the process easier for applicants, who are not required to resubmit all application materials, just those that were missing from the initial submittal.*
- Recommendation: Assign a single staff person to oversee a permit's progress from start to finish
  - *Limitation: It is not best practice to have one person responsible for answering questions for all divisions. Because of the very technical nature of each division's work, it is not possible for one person to manage the entire permit review. Alternatively, a dedicated employee within each division can assist applicants, providing comments and status updates for their respective review.*

Implementation Status of Prior Recommendations

Staff compiled recommendations from each of the studies into "Fully Implemented," "Partially Implemented," and "Not Yet Implemented" categories. The tables below detail each recommendation and its current implementation status.

Table 8: Analysis of Fully Implemented Recommendations

Fully Implemented Recommendations	
Bureau of Governmental Research Emerging Issues	
Recommendations	**Status**

Create a Master Plan	The current Master Plan was adopted in 2010
Create a zoning ordinance with allowable uses and designations consistent with the Master Plan	The current Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (CZO) was adopted in 2015 after the 2010 adoption of the Master Plan.
Create the Master Plan and give it the force of law	The Land Use Chapter of the Master Plan holds the force of law.
Include language in the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance requiring that it conform to the Master Plan or at least to the land use section of the Master Plan	Amended Article 4 of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (CZO) to ensure land use decisions and recommendation are consistent with the Master Plan. Additionally, the City Charter now includes language requiring land use actions to be consistent with the land use section of the Master Plan.
Ensure that the Master Plan could not be altered except on a biennial or less frequent basis	The Home Rule Charter states that the Master Plan shall be considered for amendments "at least once every five years, but not more often than once per calendar year, and at any time in response to a disaster or other declared emergency, the Commission shall review the Master Plan and shall determine, after one or more public hearings, whether the plan requires amendment or comprehensive revision."
Strengthen protections against the practice of spot zoning by specific, though broad-based criteria for the City Planning Commission to determine whether a zoning request constitutes a spot zone	A spot zoning policy is imbedded in the City Planning Commission's Rules, Policies and Procedures.
Develop a program to integrate neighborhoods into the beginning of the planning process with neighborhood liaisons to government.	The Neighborhood Participation Program (NPP) has been established as a pre-application requirement. It mandates that applicants engage with neighborhood organizations prior to filing a land use application to the City Planning Commission.
Change the language of the City Charter, specifically stating that any ordinance passed henceforth must conform to the Master Plan.	All land-use decisions are required to conform to the Master Plan, specifically Chapter 13 of the Master Plan which holds the force of law.
Matrix Report	
Recommendations	**Status**
Develop clear reports to track timelines involved in scheduling and completion of inspections	The Zoning Division has created an internal tool that allows them to track timelines for efficiency and reporting.
The applicant should be provided with clear instructions regarding how to resubmit their application. All comments should be addressed prior to resubmission and submitted as a single resubmittal	DSP has implemented this recommendation as of March 2025.
Create capacity and time slots for planners to meet with applicants or potential applicants to conduct pre-plan reviews and answer zoning questions. These can be through online meetings that could be scheduled electronically.	There is a staff member available for walk-in questions and guidance.

Hire or secure outside consultants equivalent to 4.25 Building plans examiners, one mechanical plans examiner, and 2.5 electrical plans examiners.	Contractors have been hired for these tasks on a need basis.
City Services Coalition – Roadmap: Enhancing Delivery of City Services in New Orleans	
Recommendations	**Status**
Implement stricter oversight and regular audits of third-party inspectors	Each division in the Department of Safety and Permits: (1) has email tracking to keep up with interactions; (2) informs and educates on which violations have occurred or what is missing; (3) reports incidents to licensing boards, contractors, and third-parties

Partially Implemented Recommendations

Plan for Generational Economic Transformation	
Recommendations	**Status**
Develop proposals that support affordable housing production and preservation	Small Multi-Family Affordable Use has contributed to affordable housing production, but more policy and zoning changes are necessary to truly meet affordable housing goals
Develop housing plans, community development strategies, and zoning policies that encourage access to affordable (multifamily or mixed-use) housing	Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning and Voluntary Inclusionary Zoning were created to allow for and incentivize affordable housing options.
Permitting Task Force	
Recommendations	Status
Improve enforcement of building violations (I.e., hiring of more inspectors and/or utilizing Union Reps to help inspect)	More inspectors have been hired, more needed
Create a standard for excellent customer service (i.e., timeliness of email replies, phone call returns, a guide for all S&P customer service expectations, and other basic communications)	Open houses, customer service training, social media presence
Implement systems to bring more transparency in the permitting process (i.e., 'how to' and 'next steps' guides; visual cues; the timelines	Standard Operating Procedures are being created for the Zoning Division
Dramatically improve internal communication between City departments	Recurring zoning meetings between the City Planning Commission staff and Zoning Division; internal Safety and Permits divisional meetings
Improve enforcement of land use violations (I.e., hiring of more inspectors and/or utilizing Union Reps to help inspect)	More inspectors have been hired, more needed

Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing Grant Application	
Recommendations	**Status**
Modified the zoning ordinance to reduce the lot area per dwelling unit to match the minimum lot width and lot depth requirements, so a lot which conforms to the minimums could be developed with a two-family development without waivers or exceptions	In 2022, Article 25, Section 25.5 of the comprehensive zoning ordinance (CZO) was updated to permit the development of two-family residences on existing substandard lots if located within a zoning district that permits two-family development. However, changes to zoning districts' bulk and yard regulations still need to occur to account for lot width and depth requirements that do not equal the required lot area; and further reductions to lot area per dwelling unit for many zoning districts are also needed so additional housing units can be constructed.
Ensure there are a variety of housing types to accommodate different sizes and configurations of households	New housing types have been established over the past several years, such as Established Multi-Family and Small Multi-Family Affordable. In addition, small multi-family housing is now permitted in certain zoning districts where it was previously prohibited. Other housing types such as cottage-style housing, co-ops, accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and single-room occupancies (SROs) have not yet been authorized. If authorized, they would fill a large housing typology gap.
Matrix Report	
Recommendations	**Status**
Develop public-facing reports to provide current information regarding the performance of the city's permitting systems (i.e. 'we currently have 33 structural permit applications'; 'applications are generally processed in XX days')	The Zoning Division has accomplished this, however DSP as a whole is still a work in progress.
Allow a fast-track (same day or instant) process for permitting of new roof, minor renovations, and replacement structures under certain size. These permits would be subject to inspection.	This was approved by City Council in February 2025; DSP is awaiting the signed ordinance to allow for full implementation.
Establish a list of building permit types that do not require zoning review and do not route these applications to zoning.	Residential solar and roof permits have been removed from zoning review; continuing to research and streamline best practices.
City Services Coalition – Roadmap: Enhancing Delivery of City Services in New Orleans	
Recommendations	**Status**
Provide an online checklist to help applicants complete the required submissions on their first try	Checklists for each permit application are available on nola.gov for reference.
Enhance technology (dashboards, data visualization charts, interactive maps)	(1) Short Term Rental (STR) locator and enforcement dashboard created; (2) Beta testing web-based permit technology; (3) Cross-comparing permitting software with surrounding parishes for improvement
Streamline application review processes	Each permit type is being reviewed to eliminate unnecessary reviews – such as mechanical and generator permits.

Improve customer service experience	Recent improvements include open houses, customer service training, and social media presence
Create a task force of departmental personnel and developers to identify choke points in the permitting process and devise solutions	Zoning has a dashboard; Completed several times with multiple permit studies
Eliminate unnecessary requirements or reviews	Each permit type is being reviewed to eliminate unnecessary reviews and/or streamline to one permit.
Establish an online real-time permit tracking tool that enables applicants to apply online and follow their permit through the process	Real-time tracking is currently enabled with existing technology; however, it could be improved to have consistent language for all software/application types and a glossary or flow charts for reference.
Update and enforce Safety and Permits policies and procedures	(1) Clear internal policies are implemented; (2) Standard Operating Procedures, public facing guides and instructional videos are in progress

Not Yet Implemented Recommendations

Bureau of Governmental Research Emerging Issues	
Recommendations	**Status**
Substantially reduce the number of conditional uses	Conditional uses that are commonly approved will be analyzed as part of the Land-Use Barriers Study with recommendations to permit these uses by-right.
Shift decision-making authority on matters such as conditional uses from the Council to the City Planning Commission.	This will be reviewed in the Land-Use Barriers Study.
Conditional use requests could be approved or denied at the administrative level	This will be reviewed in the Land-Use Barriers Study.
Permitting Task Force	
Recommendations	Status
Limit the use of Interim Zoning Districts	Interim Zoning Districts are regularly used and are at the discretion of City Council.
Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing Grant Application	
Recommendations	**Status**
Review the 'family' household definition	The current definition of 'family' restricts more than four unrelated individuals from living in a single household. This will be reviewed as part of the Land-Use Barriers Study related to alternative housing.
Matrix Report	
Recommendations	**Status**
All review comments should be made directly on the plans and memorialized in the permitting software system.	This is a work in progress that was geared to be completed in 2025's Q2; DSP is continuing to explore ways to improve the permitting experience.
Provide instant scheduling of inspections through LAMA or a dedicated phone line with a staff	DSP needs more information to determine if this is a feasible idea.

person who has access to a calendar of available slots	
Establish a maximum timeframe of no longer than three business days within which a Letter of Zoning Determination must be sent and ensure adequate staffing to achieve this.	The Chief Zoning Official needs to verify the outcome and enforcement of this prior to implementation.
Create a standard operating procedures manual that provides oversight of the City's code enforcement responsibilities and assignments.	These documents still need to be created.
Reframe One Stop Shop personnel to focus more on permit facilitation and response to questions from the public. Ensure staff are empowered and knowledgeable to provide answers to the most frequent questions that arise. (i.e., personnel should be able to provide knowledgeable responses to applicant questions)	This is a work in progress that was geared to be completed in 2025's Q2.
Transition to Certified Permit Technicians to staff the One Stop Shop and give them broader responsibility for facilitating permit review (i.e., personnel should be able to provide technical responses to applicant questions)	This is a work in progress that was geared to be completed in 2025's Q2.
Limit the use of Interim Zoning Districts	Interim Zoning Districts are regularly used and are at the discretion of City Council.
Housing Ecosystem Plan	
Recommendations	**Status**
Implement flexible parking policies	In 2015 a reduction of off-street parking requirements throughout the City was adopted with the current zoning ordinance and subsequent amendments to reduce parking requirements have been minimal. This will be reviewed in the Land-Use Barriers Study.
Eliminate minimum lot size requirements	Changes to zoning districts' bulk and yard regulations still need to occur to account for lot width and depth requirements that do not equal the required lot area. Further reductions to lot area per dwelling unit should also be considered so additional housing units can be constructed. This will be reviewed in the Land-Use Barriers Study.
Permit accessory dwelling units (ADUs) citywide	In 2022, the City Planning Commission considered an amendment to the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance to permit accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in several zoning districts across the city. Although the Commission transmitted its recommendations to the City Council, the proposal was deferred beyond its deadline, effectively halting the initiative. This will be reviewed in the Land-Use Barriers Study.

Many of the findings and recommendations in this study echo those identified in the previous studies analyzed in this section. The repetition of similar recommendations across multiple studies underscores their significance and points to important departmental changes that are vital to improving the customer experience for land use and permitting processes.

Many recommendations focus on improving communication between the Department of Safety and Permits staff and the public. Proposed solutions include dedicating staff members to act as the liaison between specific divisions and the public. Relatedly, the reports acknowledge the lack of communication may be linked to staffing shortages.

Moreover, the reports specifically indicate a need to reduce permitting timelines. Hiring additional staff - specifically more zoning and building inspectors – was cited as a way to decrease the current timelines. Several reports also indicated the overreliance on Interim Zoning Districts creates uncertainty and confusion for both applicants and staff within the Department of Safety and Permits.

Barriers within the Zoning Administration Subset of the Zoning Division within the Department of Safety and Permits

The previous studies draw the common conclusion that the permitting process administered by the Department of Safety and Permits is too lengthy and the process itself is not transparent. Because this study focuses on land-use and land-use entitlements, it will address the permit review process from the perspective of the Zoning Division within the Department of Safety and Permits.

The City of New Orleans' Zoning Administration subset of the Zoning Division, located within the Department of Safety and Permits, is tasked with enforcing the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance to ensure orderly land use, protect neighborhoods, and enforce land use regulations. The Zoning Administration reviews permit applications for zoning compliance and works closely with the City Planning Commission staff to interpret ambiguities within the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Administration determines whether permit applications necessitate conditional use approval, a zoning change, text amendment, design review, subdivision or variance. If triggered, those projects are then sent to the City Planning Commission.

The Zoning Division's responsibilities are numerous and include overseeing of the City's Short Term Rental and Healthy Homes Program. However, this study will specifically focus on the Zoning Administration subset of the Zoning Division that reviews permit plans for zoning compliance, issues zoning determinations/verifications, established multi-family (EMF) and non-conforming use determinations. The Administration also reviews and approves licenses such as alcoholic beverage sales, sidewalk permits, live entertainment, parklet applications, and new occupational licenses.

In addition to these duties, the Zoning Administration stewards all affordable housing compliance related to Affordable Housing Planned Developments, Mandatory and Voluntary Inclusionary Zoning, and Small Multi-Family Dwellings. A dedicated Inclusionary Zoning Administrator ensures all program requirements, including affordability compliance, are met.

Occasionally, the Chief Zoning Official makes formal interpretations of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance. Though the Zoning Ordinance is detailed and extensive, interpretations are necessary to address situations where the Ordinance may not have an express pronouncement.

The Zoning Administration has zoning inspectors who verify compliance with approved variances, conditional use provisos, and general zoning regulations. If inspectors find violations, they create a violation case. Zoning staff presents these matters before an administrative hearing officer. If the violations are sustained, the hearing officer assesses fines and any other remedial measures as appropriate. The staff manage adjudications, assess fines and administer hearings.

Of the above-mentioned duties and responsibilities for the Zoning Administration subset of the Zoning Division, there are currently twenty-one staff members, including: one Chief Zoning Officer; one Zoning Administrator; one Short-Term Rental Manager; one Healthy Homes Manager; three Assistant Zoning Administrators; one Office Assistant; one Zoning Inspector Supervisor; five Zoning Inspectors; two Plan Reviewers; one Management Development Specialist II; and four Management Development Specialist I.

The Zoning Administration reviews all permit applications for zoning compliance except for solar and roof permits. In 2024 alone, the Zoning Administration reviewed nearly 7,000 building permit applications, inspected 845 reported zoning violations, and processed 4,424 zoning licenses which include ABOs, sidewalk use, and new parklets.

Staffing and Technological Limitations Affecting the Zoning Division

The Zoning Administration subset of the Zoning Division faces several significant barriers that hinder the ability to operate more efficiently and meet public service goals – foremost among these is staffing and retention. High turnover is a consistent problem as starting salaries are not competitive with market demand. Staff must pay out-of-pocket for professional certifications, such as the International Code Council (ICC) or the Zoning Inspector Certification for Zoning Plans Examiners. Moreover, new hires often face a steep learning curve due to the intricacies of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance and require a year or more to become confident and proficient in their roles; by the time staff have had sufficient training, they often accept a higher-paying position elsewhere.

Technology is another recurring issue consistently brought up among City staff and stakeholders that further complicate operations. For instance, not all staff have access to necessary software, like Bluebeam, that would allow digital mark ups and measurements and overall simplify the plan review process. LAMA – the permit tracking system and the City's internal database - doesn't interface well with its public-facing counterpart – the OneStop App. The OneStop App is typically the first website an applicant accesses to submit a permit application. Additionally, improvements to the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance that allow staff and the public to view text amendment changes or zoning interpretations via hyperlinks would help transparency and assist permitting review.

Once an application is submitted on the OneStop App, it allows for permit review via LAMA. Individual divisions within the Department of Safety and Permits can review permit applications concurrently; however, an automated notification is not triggered when there is a new permit application to review. Staff must instead complete a manual query periodically to ensure applications are not lingering in LAMA purgatory. An automated system embedded in LAMA to make assignments would remedy this issue.

Once divisions have reviewed a request, applicants have difficulty knowing when their plans require additional documents or corrections. The OneStop App provides applicants review comments from the respective divisions, but the applicant must go to the OneStop App to review comments; they are not automatically sent to the applicant. The applicant only receives an e-mail twice in the process, once when the application is filed and again once the permit is issued. The applicant must then know where to look for the review comments which are filed under "print summary" exacerbating an already confusing process by creating navigational difficulties. Once corrected plans are uploaded, it is the applicant's responsibility to notify City staff that there are new documents to review.

Both internal and external communication are another significant barrier. There is not a dedicated staff member to answer the DSP's main phone line, resulting in missed calls and delayed responses to the public's questions and concerns. Internally, plan reviewers are stretched thin by splitting time between technical reviews and front desk duties.

Recommendations

To effectively address the challenges the Zoning Administration faces, a multifaceted focus on staffing, training, technology, process flow, and communication is vital. Increasing staffing levels is a priority; there is currently a need to hire dedicated office support and at least three zoning plans examiners. Competitive pay is equally important; raising salaries for plans examiners and inspectors will help retain experienced staff and preserve institutional knowledge that can be shared with future hires. Funding for professional certifications and licenses would promote professional development and help reduce attrition. Licensing and permitting fees, such as non-conforming use determinations, should be revisited to ensure they accurately reflect the staff time and resources required for such reviews which could, in turn, support increased salaries and funding for professional development.

Importantly, upgrading technology and streamlining workflows is needed to keep up with the demand and growth of New Orleans. All relevant staff should be provided with access to essential software, including Bluebeam. The Department of Safety and Permits should also work with ITI and LAMA representatives to enhance system capabilities and provide training for staff to avoid common communication issues and delays. Additionally, publicly offering pre-development meetings with applicable city department representatives present will help surface potential zoning and permitting hurdles early, which could allow for minimal conflicts and delays down the road.

By investing in these improvements, the Zoning Administration will be better equipped to handle its complex and expanding workload, reduce review timelines, and improve service delivery for residents, businesses, and developers.

Collaboration Between the Department of Safety and Permits and Other Reviewing Agencies

The Department of Safety and Permits (DSP) is typically the first and last stop in the permitting process. Applicants start the permitting process with DSP and if additional reviews are required, DSP coordinates with the relevant agencies and the applicant. To ensure smoother transitions, there is a need for clear communication regarding the role of each reviewing agency, their specific responsibilities and expected timelines.

Stakeholders have reported difficulty in reaching the Department of Safety and Permits by phone and noted responses tend to be slow. The communication inefficiencies extend permitting timelines, increase project costs, and in some cases, jeopardize project feasibility.

Additionally, technology and limited staffing are major impediments to efficient reviews. Lack of automated processes default to an overreliance on human memory and manual tracking, increasing the risk of delays and errors. Even small technological improvements could significantly improve efficiency.

Management and Administration

The OneStop Shop was created under the Landrieu Administration in 2013 to provide a centralized point for applicants to submit and track permits. This effort was later reenvisioned as the Office of Business and External Services (OBES) in 2020 with an emphasis on inter-departmental collaboration. However, the structure was never fully transferred to OBES leading to only partial implementation. The Department of Safety and Permits relocated to the 8th floor of 1340 Poydras Street, while the City Planning Commission remained on the 7th floor of City Hall – across the street from 1340 Poydras Street. While members of the public can meet with both departments at 1340 Poydras Street, the two departments operate differently from one another. The Department of Safety and Permits only receives applications digitally through the OneStop App, while the City Planning Commission receives applications through e-mail or in-person only. There is no public-facing document that explains the relationship between the City Planning Commission and the Department of Safety and Permits.

The staff recommends the use of consistent wording and the re-branding of the OneStop Shop. This would include a cross-cutting mission statement that emphasizes collaboration of all departments related to permitting activities, enhanced transparency between the reviewing departments through regular meetings and trainings, and the creation of a public-facing flow chart explaining reviews between agencies. A dedicated graphic designer who can create clear and efficient public-facing materials is a position desperately needed within the OneStop Shop.

Technology and Communication

OneStop App

Technological limitations are an issue that the Department of Safety and Permits and stakeholders have both identified as a barrier to the permitting process. As aforementioned, applications that require City Planning Commission review must be submitted either via e-mail or in-person. In contrast, applications and corresponding documents for the Department of Safety and Permits review must be uploaded to the OneStop App. The difference between the submittal process is inherently confusing and necessitates duplicative document submittal between the two departments. The utilization of the OneStop App by the City Planning Commission is an easy remedy to this issue. The OneStop App could then be enhanced to help applicants understand where their permit or application is in the review process helping with transparency and reducing confusion when seeking information on their permit's status.

Property Viewer

One of the most utilized public facing websites for both the public and city staff is Property Viewer. Property Viewer provides a wealth of information related to a specific property, including the owner's (or LLC's) name, site characteristics, the zoning district, the future land use map (FLUM) designation and any applicable overlays or interim zoning districts (IZDs) related to the property. Although it is an extremely useful website, there are important ways it could be improved. For instance, there is no way to see individual zoning districts, overlays or IZDs on the map. Instead, the map on Property Viewer shows all at once. Working with the Office of Information Technology and Innovation (ITI), the site could be improved to help applicants and the public better understand where specific zoning districts are located and the applicable boundaries for zoning, overlay and interim zoning districts.

City Department Webpages

The city's websites could be more user friendly to help the public answer simple questions, such as in what zoning districts can a specific use be located. This could be through a public-facing document that consolidates all of the use tables in the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance. In conjunction with additional public-facing documents, the websites could include a question-and-answer area that utilizes AI to help the public find answers to their questions.

The City's websites could include advanced methods for customer service through chat functions where dedicated customer service representatives can help the public navigate the website and answer questions. The City's current vendor, Cisco, may already have this technology readily available for implementation.

Public Comment

The City Planning Commission currently accepts all written comment by e-mail (although in-person submittals, slow mail and faxes are also accepted) to the CPCinfo@nola.gov account. Each public comment must be converted into a PDF, named, uploaded to the internal database and manually combined into the attachments for its respective staff report. This arduous process is ripe for human error. For projects that generate a lot of public comment, where dozens, or even hundreds of comments are received via e-mail, the process can take an inordinate amount of staff time to complete. There has been discussion - but no action - to streamline this process by accepting public comments through the CPC website where the consolidation of public comments is automated, ensuring all public comments are part of the staff report and reducing staff time dedicated to this process.

Processes

Providing clear and comprehensive application requirements at the front end of a proposal could significantly reduce the amount of time to receive a permit, particularly for proposals that require the sequencing of multiple reviews. This could be through the creation of flow charts and check lists that clearly show how the City Planning Commission relates to the Department of Safety and Permits and/or the Historic District Landmarks Commission.

Additionally, public education is necessary to inform applicants about the purpose of review processes. One identified issue leading to greater review time is the quality of applications and their corresponding plans could delay approval timelines as staff works with the applicant to provide compliant plans. The Historic District Landmarks Commission hosts quarterly presentations with stakeholders like the Preservation Resource Center, the American Institute of Architects advocacy committee, or the New Orleans Metropolitan Association of Realtors. Public education of review requirements could result in better submissions that respond to design guidelines, thus reducing timelines. The CPC staff could implement similar quarterly meetings with relevant stakeholders and hold public educational meetings such as lunch-and-learns.

Staffing

The City Planning Commission and the Department of Safety and Permits regularly interface with the public for development projects. However, the inability to readily reach the Department of Safety and Permits indicates a need for better customer service. This could be achieved through many of the suggestions already mentioned regarding technology and process. However, these do not fully address the need for knowledgeable staff dedicated to the public. Each division within the Department of Safety and Permits, for instance, could be tasked with discussing their respective division's review of permit applications with the public. Moreover, there needs to be someone dedicated to answering the phone for all of the Department of Safety and Permits' divisions who can accurately transfer calls to the necessary division or department. Above all, staff

must be trained and paid enough to retain institutional knowledge so that the public is hearing consistent information from one employee to the next.

City Planning Commission Ongoing Process Initiatives

Permits that necessitate review by the City Planning Commission must happen before the Department of Safety and Permits can begin reviewing the permit application (with the exception of subdivisions). Reducing time in which to review these projects within the City Planning Commission reduces the overall timeline to receive a permit. Moreover, reducing the need for City Planning Commission Review at the outset can reduce the overall permit timeline by up to a year or more. Therefore, reducing regulations barriers within the City Planning Commission inherently expedites the permit review process.

Over the past several years, the City Planning Commission (CPC) staff have made meaningful progress in modernizing and adapting New Orleans' land use systems to better support housing, development, and investment. Recent amendments to the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance have resulted in a range of common-sense zoning reforms. These efforts reflect a broader commitment to making the city's land use framework more predictable.

New Orleans adopted an entirely new Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance in 2015, replacing the former zoning ordinance that had been in effect since 1970 - nearly 45 years – that was still rooted in the idea that suburbia and the automobile reigned supreme. The newly implemented CZO sought to rectify this anachronistic zoning ordinance by removing and/or reducing some parking minimums and homogeneous land-use patterns by promoting the vernacular housing typology that characterizes New Orleans' historic neighborhoods. The Ordinance adopted in 2015 rezoned the entirety of the city, significantly bringing the city's zoning regulations into the modern era.

While the new Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance greatly removed barriers to the production and preservation of housing and economic development opportunities, several text amendments to the newly adopted CZO were needed to begin addressing unintended obstacles, which are described in this section. These reforms, albeit significant, are only a small portion of the identified barriers found in the zoning ordinance; important amendments are still needed for the CZO to truly meet the housing demands and development opportunities in the city.

In addition to this work, several other initiatives are currently underway. A comprehensive review of Articles 1 through 4 of the CZO - focusing on City Planning Commission processes - is being conducted alongside this study. CPC staff also maintains a list of technical amendments to the CZO, called the "Omnibus list", which includes clarifications and recommendations to resolve ambiguities in the zoning code. One proposed change in the text amendment for Articles 1-4 would mandate that the City Planning Commission advances the Omnibus List annually to ensure the list never gets too long. Lastly, the department is working toward proposed changes to the sections of the City's Home Rule Charter that pertain to the City Planning Commission.

The CPC regards zoning regulations and planning procedures as living documents - tools that must evolve alongside the city itself. This perspective allows staff to critically examine the code and current CPC procedures with nuance.

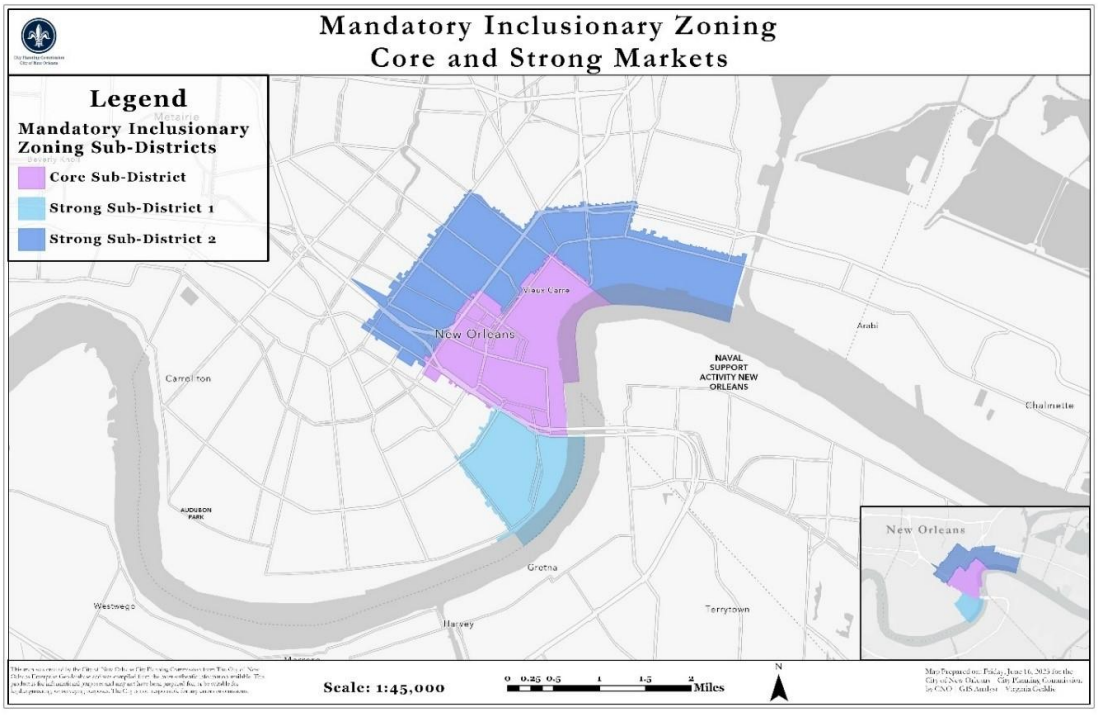
The following section explores the details of each ongoing or completed initiative.

Mandatory and Voluntary Inclusionary Zoning

New Orleans introduced a Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning (MIZ) and Voluntary Inclusionary Zoning (VIZ) program in 2018 after the City Planning Commission conducted a Smart Housing Mix Ordinance Study and an advisory consulting team completed a market analysis. Consequently, a "core" and a "strong" mandatory inclusionary zoning submarket were created utilizing the market analysis to determine which neighborhoods in the city could support this policy. The policy resulted in different required set-asides for affordable rental units. Core submarkets, or developments with ten or more for-rent dwelling units located in the Vieux Carre (French Quarter) or the Central Business District (CBD), are required to set-aside 10% of the units for families earning no more than 60% of the area medium income (AMI) for a period of at least 99 years. Strong submarkets, or developments with ten or more rental units located in neighborhoods adjacent to the Vieux Carre and Central Business Districts, are required to set-aside 5% of units for families earning no more than 60% AMI for a period of no less than 99 years.

It's been over six years since the implementation of this program. The City is currently working with the same consultant who conducted the original market analysis to determine if the current market can support the MIZ regulations, or if changes are needed.

Figure 1: Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning Core and Strong Submarkets



Concurrently, a Voluntary Inclusionary Zoning (VIZ) program was adopted for the areas outside of the MIZ submarkets, permitting developers to utilize the MIZ zoning incentives when creating

multi-family rental dwellings with a set-aside of at least 5% of units at sixty percent (60%) AMI. Should developers choose to provide this set-aside, a 30% lot area per dwelling unit reduction and a 10%-30% off-street parking reduction can be applied to the entire development.

When the MIZ and VIZ policies were adopted, it was with the understanding that consideration of regulations to support affordable *homeownership* developments would be studied and implemented in the subsequent years. As of September 1, 2023, new regulations to support voluntary affordable homeownership development opportunities were implemented in the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance. These regulations can apply to housing developments containing fewer than ten for-sale units that voluntarily set aside at least one unit OR developments containing ten or more for-sale dwelling units that set aside at least ten percent (10%) of units up to 120% AMI. These regulations, in contrast to the MIZ and VIZ regulations for affordable *rental* units, are not limited to developments with ten or more units. Developments with only one unit are eligible to utilize these zoning incentives, capturing many of the smaller affordable housing developer projects throughout the city. The zoning incentives include a by-right density bonus of 30%, a 30% reduction in the lot width requirements and a 30% floor area ratio (FAR) where applicable. Eligible developments can also utilize a 50% parking reduction, eliminating the need for off-street parking for single-family developments that meet the VIZ homeownership requirements.

Small Multi-Family Affordable

In January 2022, the city adopted a new residential use in the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance known as the Small Multi-Family Affordable Dwelling (SMFA). Prior to its adoption, the CZO lacked standards or incentives addressing smaller residential developments with less than ten units. The absence of regulation effectively excluded many small-scale non-profit affordable housing developers in New Orleans. The SMFA use allows up to four dwelling units using the form and massing of a two-family home. It is permitted in numerous zoning districts across the city, including the HU-RD2 Historic Urban Two-Family Residential District - the largest residential zoning district in New Orleans, located near amenities and job opportunities. The SMFA regulations were intentionally designed to ensure compatibility with surrounding neighborhood character, maintaining appropriate scale and aesthetics.

In exchange for one unit set-aside for families earning no more than 80% AMI for a period of no less than 15 years, this use is exempt from all lot area per dwelling requirements and all off-street parking requirements. At the same time the SMFA was adopted, the city council also adopted legislation permitting 3-4 unit market-rate developments in the HU-B1A and HU-B1 Historic Urban Neighborhood Business Districts. These districts are often found either on a parcel containing a historic corner store or along neighborhood commercial corridors. Single- and two-family residential uses are permitted in these zoning districts, but multi-family developments were only permitted as a dwelling above the ground floor. This amendment now allows small multi-

family in these two zoning districts by-right, although they must meet the applicable lot area per dwelling regulations and off-street parking requirements.

The SMFA use is one effort to promote the "missing middle" housing typology. By permitting additional housing opportunities at this scale, the value of land and cost of maintenance can be distributed across more than one tenant, and financially attainable housing options can be more equitably distributed across the city.

Affordable Housing Planned Development (AHPD)

The Affordable Housing Planned Development (AHPD) was a new use introduced in 2019 for the construction of affordable housing units as a portion of new, adaptive reuse, and adaptive reuse expansion of developments. This new use is the city's most significant contributor to affordable housing units, in large part because it permits multi-family developments in areas of the city that otherwise prohibit it.

All AHPDs require Council approval and are required to have ten or more rental housing units that must include a 10% set-aside of units up to the 60% AMI level for at least 99 years. AHPDs are permitted to receive a 30% reduction in the lot area per dwelling unit requirement for planned developments and a 50% reduction of the off-street parking requirements if located 600 feet of a transit stop. Prior to the implementation of the AHPD, larger affordable housing developments located in the residential historic core and urban districts had to be in an existing structure utilizing the planned development process. Unlike a typical planned development, an AHPD permits the expansion of an adaptive reuse and - more impactfully - the construction of a new building, even if located within a zoning district that typically only permits single- or two-family residential.

Residential Developments on Substandard Lots

Concurrently with the adoption of the Small Multi-Family Affordable use, a smaller but significant amendment to the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance was adopted. The amendment allows two-family dwellings by-right on substandard lots - if located in a zoning district that permits two-family development within the Historic Core, Historic Urban and most Suburban neighborhood residential districts. Prior to this amendment, this exemption only applied to two-family developments in Historic Urban Neighborhood residential districts. The amendment expanded the zoning districts where the exemption could apply resulting in an incentive to create two-family developments and helping to eliminate a barrier to their creation - the need for a variance.

Emergency Shelters/Domestic Protection Shelters

In 2023, an Ordinance to expand use permissions for Emergency Shelters and Domestic Protection Shelters was adopted (Zoning Docket 063-23). This text amendment creates more opportunities for intermediate housing for the unhoused and victims of domestic violence by aligning zoning permissions for "domestic protection shelters" and "emergency shelters" with that of multi-family

dwellings and large group homes. While domestic protection shelters and emergency shelters were permitted prior to the adoption of this text amendment, they were extremely limited in the zoning districts where they were allowed and typically permitted only through the conditional use process. This text amendment both greatly expands the locations in which they're permitted and allows them as a by-right use.

Established Multi-Family Developments

In March 2021, an amendment to the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance was codified allowing established two-family and multi-family as permitted uses in certain cases, thereby granting the legal right to be maintained and leased as rental housing, even where new development of two-family or multi-family housing are not permitted in the zoning district. Prior to the adoption of this amendment, two-family and multi-family structures that had not maintained legal nonconforming use (defined as continual use of the property with no longer than a 6-month lapse) were required to obtain conditional use approval from the City Planning Commission and City Council if located in most zoning districts that did not permit these uses by-right. The adopted amendment modified the CZO to allow two-family and up to a four-unit established multi-family structure as a permitted use, regardless of the structure's occupancy history.

Previously, the process to reestablish nonconforming multi-family structures was a deterrent to their redevelopment, leaving many vacant throughout the city, relics of a time when higher residential density was permitted.

RDO-1 Diversity Overlay Expansion

In 2024, the City Council adopted an amendment to the RDO-1 Residential Diversity Overlay District, expanding its boundaries to include the entirety of the Lower Ninth Ward and the area bounded by Saint Bernard Avenue, North Broad Street, Florida Avenue, the Industrial Canal, Saint Claude Avenue, Elysian Fields Avenue, and North Claiborne Avenue. The RDO-1 Overlay allows limited, low-intensity commercial uses in buildings that have certain historic commercial or architectural characteristics, regardless of the underlying base zoning. This provision facilitates economic development opportunities for small business owners by enabling the adaptive reuse of historically commercial structures.

The expanded area includes parts of New Orleans lacking neighborhood-scale commercial amenities - likely due in part to restrictive zoning regulations. By expanding the RDO-1 Overlay District, the City aims to support the reactivation of historic commercial buildings for small-scale commercial uses by-right, fostering walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods. The expansion builds on the demonstrated success of the existing RDO-1 Overlay in revitalizing underutilized buildings and removing regulatory barriers that have historically prevented their reuse.

Dwellings above the ground floor as a permitted by-right use

Prior to 2024, dwellings above the ground floor in the SB-1 Suburban Business District, SB-2 Suburban Pedestrian-Oriented Corridor Business District, C-1 General Commercial District, C-2 Auto-Oriented Commercial District and C-3 Heavy Commercial District required conditional use approval. This text amendments now permits dwellings above the ground floor as a by-right use in most parts of the city. The conditional use approval was an impediment to the development of mixed-use structures and the adaptive reuse of certain existing structures. Removing the regulatory barrier of the conditional use process aids not only in economic development opportunities but also may increase the overall housing supply. Council District D and E were carved out of this text amendment; dwellings above the ground floor in the aforementioned zoning districts that are within the Council District D and E boundaries still require conditional use approval.

Text Amendment to Clarify CPC Processes within Articles 1-4 of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance

Councilmember Giarrusso has initiated a text amendment to revise parts of Articles 1-4 in the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance. These articles outline the City Planning Commission's administrative processes. Proposed changes will address ambiguities, extend certain deadlines and ensure consistency between Articles 1–4 and recent amendments to the City's Home Rule Charter.

In addition to clarifying existing language, the proposed amendment will create clear guidelines for certain processes that can be confusing to both staff and the public. For instance, certain projects requiring City Planning Commission review may also require review from the Historic District Landmarks Commissions (HDLC) if located in certain historic areas of the City. These projects require building review from HDLC but site review from CPC prior to obtaining a permit from the Department of Safety and Permits. One aspect of this text amendment is to clarify to what extent site plan and design review are required for developments that necessitate review by both HDLC and CPC.

Omnibus

The current Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (CZO) was adopted in 2015. Since then, City Planning Commission (CPC) staff has maintained a running list of minor corrections, clarifications, and inconsistencies within the CZO text. These items are non-substantive in nature but reflect the need for ongoing maintenance of the ordinance as a living document that must evolve to respond to changing conditions.

Historically, these corrections have been bundled into an "Omnibus" text amendment, which requires a City Council-sponsored motion to initiate. Because there can be several years between Omnibus amendments, minor issues often persist in the CZO for extended periods before being

addressed. As part of the proposed updates to Articles 1 through 4 (detailed in the section above), staff recommended a new process allowing the City Planning Commission to initiate the Omnibus amendment through its own motion on an annual basis, eliminating the current dependency on City Council action to begin the process. This change would ensure regular updates to the CZO while preserving a separate pathway for addressing more substantive or controversial issues.

Since the last Omnibus amendment in 2022, staff has added over 100 items to the current list. Items related to Articles 1–4 will be handled through the ongoing Article 1–4 amendment process, leaving more than 60 remaining items to be addressed in a future Omnibus amendment.

Streamline the Zoning Entitlement Process

The City Planning Commission staff, in conjunction with stakeholder meeting input, have identified a significant number of reforms within the CPC processes and the CZO that are still needed. As New Orleans continues to evolve, so too must the regulatory systems that shape its neighborhoods and guide development.

The staff recommends reviewing the Conditional Use, Variance, Institutional Master Plan (IMP) and Design Advisory Committee (DAC) processes to improve consistency and efficiency, alongside necessary updates to the CPC's own Rules and Regulations and the City's Home Rule Charter.

This ongoing work is part of a long-term effort to build more adaptive land-use policies that reflect the lived realities of residents and needs of an evolving city.

Facilitating the Conditional Use Process

There are several aspects to the conditional use process that may be a deterrent to development: particularly as they relate to the cost, timeframe and uncertainty of the approval process. This section identifies ways in which to ease the conditional use process itself.

Accelerating the Conditional Use Timeline

The length of time involved in processing conditional use requests is often perceived as a barrier to development. Approximately six months to a year lapse from the first step - engaging with the City Planning Commission staff to begin the Neighborhood Participation Program meeting - to the final step, when the applicant can record approved plans and proceed with permitting. The timeline is greatly affected by state or local notice requirements and the time necessary for staff from different departments to write staff reports and ordinances.

The conditional use process starts with a meeting with the City Planning Commission staff to receive the Neighborhood Participation Program meeting materials. The City Planning Commission staff typically issues these materials within a few days of request. The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance requires that applicants mail out their NPP invitation at least 15 days, and no more than 30 days, in advance of their NPP meeting. Applicants can submit their application to the City Planning Commission staff immediately after holding their NPP meeting if the remaining required documents are compiled and ready.

The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance requires the Planning Commission staff to conduct a completeness review of the application within 10 days of receipt. If the application is complete, it is docketed to the last CPC hearing available within 50 days of docketing. The 50-day window is required by the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, accounts for several public notice requirements and provides for the necessary staff time to draft a report and recommendation.

The City Planning Commission must make a recommendation at its public hearing within a maximum of 60 days of the first public hearing date, allowing for deferrals when deemed necessary.

The recommendation from the City Planning Commission is then transmitted to the City Council within nine days or 16 days of the Planning Commission hearing, depending on what week the Council hearing is scheduled.

Once the City Council receives the transmittal from the City Planning Commission, City Council has up to 60 days to adopt a motion. Typically, this occurs within two weeks of when the Council receives the requests. The City Charter contains a notice requirement that imposes a 20-day layover between the introduction of an ordinance by the City Council and the adoption of that ordinance. An amendment of the City Charter would be necessary to reduce that minimum requirement. After 20 days, the ordinance can be adopted by the City Council. The City Council has a maximum of 90 days from the adoption of the motion to adopt the ordinance. Most ordinances are adopted within approximately six weeks from the adoption of the Motion.

Figure 2: Conditional Use Process Timeline



Steps	Timeframe		
	Minimum	Maximum	Typical
Applicant sends NPP invitations			
	15 days	30 days	15-30 days
Applicants holds NPP meeting			
	none	6 months	A few days
Applicant submits application			
	none	10 days	10 days
CPC Staff dockets application			
	40 days	50 days	50 days
CPC holds public hearing			
	9 days	16 days	9 or 16 days
CPC transmits recommendation to Council			
	none	60 days	14 days
Council holds public hearing			
Council forwards motion to Law Department			
			14 days
Council introduces Ordinance			
	20 days	90 days	42 days
Council adopts Ordinance and submit to Mayor			
	none	10 days	10 days
Mayor approves Ordinance			
	none		
Applicant submits final plans to CPC staff			
	none	15 days	15 days
CPC staff reviews and stamps final plans			
Applicant records approved plans			

Initiating a motion prior to an ordinance allows the necessary time for the law department to draft the ordinance. Collapsing the motion and ordinance phases into one could reduce the approval time by 20 days; however, this would require an amendment to the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance and could be a burden to draft the Ordinance with less time. In consultation with the City Planning Commission staff, the Law Department voiced concerns about adopting both motions and ordinances at the same time for conditional uses because motions can convey information that is complex and could potentially involve amendments to the provisos from the Motion phase to the Ordinance phase.

Uncertainty of the Process/Administrative review

The Bureau of Governmental Research issued a report in October 2003 analyzing issues around the land use decision making in New Orleans. The report underlined that New Orleans was "plagued by unclear ground rules, unpredictable process, unbridled City Council discretion, and an unhealthy lack of mechanisms for citizen participation."[1] Since then, the City of New Orleans made significant changes to its land use decision making process, which included the creation of its first Master Plan, a new zoning ordinance, the creation of the Neighborhood Participation Program, and gave the Land use Plan the force of law.

While the Master Plan and Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance have created a more streamlined system for adopting land use decisions, some of the recommendations that stemmed from that report have not been implemented and could be considered to further remove land use barriers. The Bureau of Governmental Research noted in its report that the City Council deference and discretion were both at the center of public criticism of the planning procedure. "Deference connotes the longstanding tradition among council members to cast their votes with the council member whose district contains a matter at hand. […] Such an arrangement tends to subvert consensus- and standard-driven planning decisions by placing ultimate control in the hands of one person. Discretion refers to the degree to which the City Council controls land use decisions. Some discretion is clearly necessary. For example, adjustments may be necessary to accommodate special needs that evolve in particular areas of town. Occasionally, projects proposed in contradiction to zoning rules may serve a greater good. The problem arises when discretion is too broad or misused." The report also noted that land use decisions constitute between 30 percent to 50 percent of the Council's time, at the expense of other important areas of concern. The Bureau of Governmental Research recommended to transfer the authority to approve zoning dockets from the City Council to an administrative body with urban planning expertise and with less political motives.

The City Council could consider, alternatively, keeping the authority to approve conditional uses above a specific threshold, and transferring that authority to the City Planning Commission for conditional uses that are least impactful.

Updating Variances Procedures

The City Planning Commission staff manages applications for variances from Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance requirements. The Board of Zoning Adjustments (BZA), a board made up of citizens appointed by the Mayor and approved by City Council, hears and makes final decisions

[1] Bureau of Governmental Research. *Runaway Discretion. Land Use Decision Making in New Orleans*. Emerging Issues. October 2003.

on such requests. The variance process exists to provide a mechanism for applicants to seek relief from zoning requirements. Per Article 4, Section 4.6.A of the CZO.

City Planning Commission staff intake variance applications and ensure that all application requirements are satisfied. Following application receipt, BZA staff conduct a completeness review to identify any deficiencies.

Some applications do not proceed beyond this stage for various reasons, including decisions on the applicant's end to bring their proposal into compliance to more quickly obtain a building permit or not to proceed with the project at all. Additionally, certain variance application requirements, such as providing a land survey showing the current conditions of the site or conducting a Neighborhood Participation Program, might pose challenges for applicants for financial or other reasons. Applications that do proceed are docketed for the corresponding public hearing.

During the time preceding the hearing, CPC staff must provide notice of the application to the public, which includes publishing a public hearing notice and mailing postcards to surrounding property owners and occupants. Article 3, Section 3.3.A requires publication of a public hearing notice once a week for three consecutive weeks in the official journal of record and no less than 20 days prior to the hearing. This provision also requires mailings to surrounding property owners and residents at least 15 days prior to the hearing.

In addition, staff researches the request and writes a report analyzing whether it meets the approval standards for variances.

To allow for the required notice and the researching, writing, and editing required for staff reports, there is typically five weeks between the application filing deadline and the corresponding public hearing. Further, even when the Board hears a request, they may ask the applicant for additional information to aid in their decision, which could require deferral of the application to a subsequent hearing and further extend the process. Lastly, approved cases cannot receive final approval until after the disposition notice is filed, which occurs within 10 days of the public hearing, and the applicant satisfies all provisos, as evidenced by the BZA stamp on final plans.

The Department of Safety and Permits should not issue building permits until and unless the Board of Zoning Adjustments approves the variance request and BZA staff stamps final plans. Due to this, the variance process adds - at minimum - about a month and a half to the permitting process. In practice, however, that timeline is typically much lengthier. Particularly for applicants with a true hardship and no other viable alternative for their proposal, this is significant.

To streamline the permitting process, CPC staff recommends reducing the number of variances applications and the variance process length.

According to data from the past five years, the number of docketed variance applications ranges from approximately 60 to 100 per year.

Table 9: Docketed Variance Applications (2021-Present)[2]

Year	Applications Docketed
2021	66
2022	78
2023	94
2024	62
2025 (as of August 4 hearing)	53

Administrative Reviews

Pursuant to Louisiana Revised Statutes 33:4727, Louisiana state law requires that a board of adjustment hear all variance requests at a public hearing. In other words, administrative variance reviews are not currently permitted under Louisiana state law.

Some municipalities in the United States, including Seattle, Austin, and Minneapolis, can administratively grant certain types of zoning variances; however, the scope is generally limited.

According to staff research, the Louisiana state legislature could enact a law specific to Orleans Parish to allow for administrative variance approvals. This would require the City to propose legislation at the state level. If approved, the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance and the BZA Rules would both require amendment to reflect this.

Like other municipalities, not all variance requests should be eligible for administrative review. Any proposed law should clearly define the types of variances eligible; for example, only lot size requests for waivers of 10% or less of the requirement or parking requests for waivers of no more than a 25% reduction of the requirement. Further, to ensure due process, an appeals process should be made available to applicants.

Administrative reviews of variance requests could reduce barriers to applicants by shortening the review time and simplifying the process.

Create Limits for Deferrals

Unlike the City Planning Commission, which must act on items such as conditional uses within a maximum of 60 days of the first public hearing date, the Board of Zoning Adjustments is bound by no such rules. At present, the Board may indefinitely defer items, with some applications deferred for a year or longer.[3]

[2] Per City permitting database, LAMA, and BZA meeting records
[3] BZA014-17 and BZA008-24

Indefinite deferrals place increased administrative burdens on staff. Examples of these increased burdens include tracking deferred items for inclusion on public hearing notices and agendas, updating LAMA events and managing case files, communicating with applicants and other interested parties, compiling public comment, updating and reviewing staff reports, running lengthier public meetings, and more.

Associated burdens also fall on applicants. Notably, they may need to take off additional time from work to attend meetings, retain an attorney or consultant for longer, and generally experience delays that may lead to loss of funding or additional expenditures.

Notably, there is a text amendment currently under review that would set maximum deferral time limitations for BZA items.[4] If approved, these updates would result in a reduced process length and help mitigate administrative duties that constantly deferred items exacerbate.

Expand Period of Validity for Approved Variances

Approved variance cases expire "one (1) year from the date of approval unless a building permit is obtained within such period and substantial construction is started or the use is commenced within such period."[5] However, the CPC Executive Director "may extend the time for expiration of a variance for a period not to exceed one (1) year…" while the Board may grant extensions of no more than two additional years.

Despite the possibility of extensions, expirations are not unheard of. If expiration occurs, the applicant must redo the entire variance process to proceed with permitting. For all requests except single-family and two-family projects, applicants would likely need to repeat the Neighborhood Participation Program (NPP), as its validity lasts only 180 days. Ultimately, expirations can add unnecessary cost burdens for applicants and time burdens for both applicants and staff.

The same text amendment referenced in the above section contemplates extending the validity period for variance approvals. If approved, this update would allow applicants a lengthier window of time to finalize their variance approval without the risk of accidental expiration and the need to repeat the variance process.

Simplify the Design Review Process

The City Planning Commission conducts an architecture and site planning review of construction projects along major corridors to ensure that they are well designed. This benefits the people of New Orleans by creating streetscapes that are beautiful, walkable, and well-landscaped. However, because this design review is in addition to the normal building permit review process, it can delay receiving a permit. To balance the public benefits of the design review process with its costs to

[4] This may include Safety and Permits Decision appeals in addition to variances.
[5] Article 4.6.G

the developer in review time, the design review process should be used judiciously, affecting only projects where it adds value.

Limit the number of projects that require design review

The design review process should be limited to a subset of projects that most benefit from additional review. These projects should be highly visible (such as development on major corridors and large developments over certain size thresholds). The review should be limited to projects where the scope of work is large enough that design recommendations can positively affect the end product. For example, a new-construction development on a major street should undergo design review because the scope of work is so great that the development will impact the design character of the corridor, either for the positive or the negative. Thus, review comments affecting the building's architecture and site design can have a major impact on the quality of the development.

In contrast, a minor renovation to a building on the same major street should not require design review, as the limited scope of a renovation will not affect the overall design of the development. Thus, the additional time required for a design review is not well spent.

The City Planning Commission staff has made several efforts in recent years to limit the projects requiring review to only those where the review is beneficial. The CPC has recommended updates to zoning regulations to eliminate unnecessary reviews of signage and parking lot design, as baseline zoning requirements address the common concerns with those types of development, so a supplemental review is unnecessary. The City Council agreed with the CPC's recommendations for those changes and adopted legislation to put them into effect. The CPC continues this work of eliminating unnecessary reviews and is in the process of drafting new design review regulations that will clarify ambiguities in existing regulations as to what projects are subject to design review and which are not.

Rethink the Design Advisory Committee (DAC)

A major component of the CPC's design review is the project review conducted by the Design Advisory Committee (DAC). The committee is composed of representatives of several City departments and reviews both public and private development projects. Historically, it existed only to recommend design decisions for public projects. Starting in 2015, its work expanded to include the review of private development over certain size thresholds and in certain corridors. In reviewing private development, it is tasked with evaluating the quality of architecture and effectiveness in accomplishing urban design objectives set forth in the zoning ordinance.

Over time, it has been unclear which public projects require DAC review. This creates uncertainty by project managers as to what the overall permitting timeline will be and how much DAC review - if required - might impact it. The uncertainty results from the fact that DAC is required to review public construction projects under two CAO memos, as well as by the City Planning Commission's

rules. These memos and rules are unclear (such as not defining what type of work constitutes a construction project), are contradictory to each other in places, and are old, containing outdated references to processes, agencies, and funding sources, among other failings.

Overall, the purpose of DAC review should be reconsidered. Instead of reviewing public and private projects for different reasons and under different authorities, the reviews should be consistent and governed by a single set of rules.

In conjunction with rethinking the purpose of DAC, it is also important to consider revising its membership. For as long as it has existed, City staff has formed the committee's membership, drawing from representatives of CPC, the Capital Projects Administration, HDLC, the Department of Parks and Parkways, and others. This composition aligned with DAC's original role of providing Capital Projects with guidance affecting construction projects it was managing for public facilities. As DAC's role has shifted in recent years and now primarily focuses on private development projects, this membership no longer aligns with its work. Some, but not all, of the City staff that serve on DAC have the architectural and urban design training needed to evaluate a project's design. Such evaluation would be better done by professional architects, who have the academic training and professional experience to understand the project architect's constraints and the credibility to make recommendations that will be well received by architects and their clients.

In order to change the purpose and membership composition of the DAC, the City Planning Commission's Rules, Policies & Procedures document will need to be updated. Additionally, the CAO memorandums about DAC will need to be revised or rescinded.

Simplify the Demolition Review Process

The demolition process can be difficult for people to navigate because it varies by neighborhood, with each review type having different review procedures and criteria. Within Local Historic Districts, the Historic District Landmarks Commission (HDLC) and Vieux Carré Commission (VCC) have demolition control. The HDLC evaluates demolition proposals based on the historic or architectural significance of the building, its importance to the district, the difficulty of reproducing a building because of its design, materials, or other physical factors, and the future use of the site. The HDLC's decision can be appealed to the City Council. Similarly, the VCC considers demolition applications with reference to its guidelines, making a decision that can be appealed to the Council.

In portions of the CBD that are not within local historic districts, CPC must review demolition applications and make recommendations to City Council. This demolition review considers the historic and architectural importance of the structure but also evaluates the redevelopment proposal, with the objective of disallowing surface parking lots. This concern is outdated, as zoning regulations no longer allow surface parking lots in the CBD.

Within National Register Historic Districts (and outside of Local Historic Districts), a demolition application is made directly to Council and evaluated in a report prepared by the Council Research Office (CRO). The CRO report addresses the condition of the structure, the reason for demolition, the architectural and historic significance of the structure and the effect of its demolition on the surroundings and the redevelopment plans, if any.

There is no demolition control process for properties located outside of Local Historic Districts and National Register Historic Districts.

One way of simplifying this process is to eliminate the City Planning Commission's review of demolitions in the CBD by amending the City's Code of Ordinances. The City Code of Ordinances, specifically Section 26-4, could be amended to require that any demolition within the CBD must be considered by City Council. This creates the same outcome as the existing process but with a clearer set of regulations.

Simplify the Institutional Master Plan

Since 2015, when the current zoning ordinance was adopted, universities and hospitals within the EC Educational Campus District and the MC Medical Campus District have been required to submit an institutional master plan (IMP) for their campuses. These Institutional Master Plans are intended to outline long-term development plans for the campuses, including existing and new building development, traffic circulation and traffic impact plans, landscape plans, stormwater management plans, signage plans, and design standards. The IMPs are to capture the institution's long-term development goals and create a zoning entitlement process to accommodate it.

In meetings with university stakeholders, the stakeholders expressed frustration with the Institutional Master Plan process. They expressed that it is too burdensome, especially in the restrictions it puts on development that is already permitted by-right in the zoning district.

Eliminate the permitted IMP process while retaining the conditional IMP process

For permitted IMPs, which contain only uses and development of scale allowed in the underlying zoning district, adding the IMP process does not create a benefit to the university, just more zoning obstacles. It also does not have a meaningful benefit to neighbors, because while they are given the ability to engage with universities about their long-term development visions, they aren't able to alter what can be built by-right.

This can be addressed by eliminating the "permitted IMP" variant while retaining the "conditional IMP" version. The conditional IMP version allows universities to fundamentally alter the underlying zoning - essentially customizing height, setback, and use requirements to reflect the university's long-term vision. The City Planning Commission and City Council have the discretion to approve, deny, or modify these proposals after accounting for community input, among other factors. Therefore, the conditional IMP version should have a robust public engagement process.

Allow for a Greater Range of Plan Changes to be Approved at Staff Level

Once an IMP is approved, the university or medical campus is bound to that IMP, based on the expectation that the institution will gradually develop all of the facilities exactly in the manner shown in the plan. This does not mesh with the reality of the university's development process. Instead of having a set long-term development schedule, which is ultimately a function of funding availability and university priorities, which change over time in a way that is not predictable at the outset of an IMP process.

To account for this unpredictability, the university stakeholders expressed a desire that a greater range of changes to an IMP be approvable at the CPC staff level. Currently, the staff can only approve very minor changes to approved IMPs, including new structures under 2,500 square feet, additions under 30% of existing floor area (up to 10,000 square feet, whichever is less), and changes to building designs. This is very limiting to universities because they often seek to alter their plans in ways that are otherwise allowed by zoning but are outside of what the staff is allowed to approve, requiring a full IMP revision process that takes multiple months.

Subdivision Process

The subdivision regulations were recently updated and codified in September of 2024, after years of refinement and modification. In working with the regulations, the staff has identified additional amendments that would help remove time and regulatory burden for applicants.

Identified Barriers within the Subdivision Regulations

Administratively Approve up to 10 lots as Allowed by State Law

The subdivision regulations define subdivisions that create up to 5 lots as "minor" subdivisions, which are eligible for administrative approval if they meet all the requirements of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations. Subdivisions that create more than 5 lots automatically fall under the "major" subdivisions category that require review by the City Planning Commission as well as a Neighborhood Participation Program (NPP) meeting. Louisiana State Law regarding subdivisions states that subdivisions that create up to 10 lots should be eligible for administrative approval. Staff recommends aligning the subdivision regulations to Louisiana State Law regulations, which would facilitate the review process for smaller, compliant subdivisions creating ten or fewer lots to go through the NPP and public hearing process.

Extend Expiration of Approvals

The Subdivision Regulations impose a one-year deadline for the applicant to submit all required materials from the date of tentative approval and before final approval. The deadline can be difficult for some applicants to meet. The staff recommends extending it from one year to three years. This would be consistent with a similar change that the staff recommends for zoning entitlement deadlines.

Eliminate the NPP requirement for major subdivisions that only shift existing lot lines without creating additional lots

The Subdivision Regulations require Major Subdivisions to go through the Neighborhood Participation Program (NPP) prior to application submittal. Major subdivisions are defined as subdivisions creating at least six lots, containing an area of more than two acres, or include a site of at least 11 lots. While the impacts that some major subdivisions have on surrounding development warrant the NPP process, staff occasionally come across major subdivisions requests that do not result in any impacts on adjacent properties. Notably, major subdivisions that are not creating any new lots or removing any lot lines but are only shifting existing lot lines between existing lots in a way that doesn't result in any major changes in building areas. The staff believe these should be exempt of the NPP requirement. As a major subdivision, it would still be required to be heard at a Planning Commission public hearing.

From a more technical standpoint, Section 3.2.2 of the Subdivision Regulations should be amended to remove language that could be interpreted to conflict with the definition of Major Subdivisions. The language in parenthesis below infers that it's only the creation of more than 5 lots that triggers the NPP, while Section 2.4.2 defines major subdivisions as either those proposing more than 5 lots, those including a site over 2 acres or those including a site formed of at least 11 lots.

> "All applications for major subdivisions (creation of more than 5 lots) shall include a Project Neighborhood Participation Program (Project NPP). A Project NPP is not required for any minor subdivision (creation of 5 lots or less)."

In addition, the existing language regulating appeals of approved subdivisions lacks clarity. A technical amendment is needed to Section 3.4 of the Subdivision Regulations to remediate the issue by clarifying that subdivision requests that are compliant with zoning are permitted by-right as implied by state law. The only aspect of this kind of subdivision that can be appealed is regarding the decision that they were eligible for administrative approval. However, an approval of an administrative subdivision cannot be appealed.

Increase the Department of Real Estate and Records Division Staffing

As part of the subdivision process, copies of the plan submitted to the City Planning Commission are sent to various city agencies for review to ensure the proposed subdivision meets all applicable regulations. The Department of Property Management, Division of Real Estate and Records, is one of those agencies. They ensure that subdivision surveys align with the City's historic records and address any issues with the proposed subdivision survey. However, the Division of Real Estate and Records has only one staff person responsible for reviewing subdivision applications, affecting the overall review timeline. The City Planning Commission staff cannot approve a resubdivision survey until the Division of Real Estate and Records has cleared any lot and parcel record inconsistencies, prolonging the review process while the one staff member works to clear their backlog.

Following approval of a subdivision either administratively or by the City Planning Commission, applicants are then required to submit stamped, approved plans to the Department of Property Management, Division of Real Estate and Records to sign a Declaration of Title Change. This Declaration of Title Change is a required accompaniment to the certified survey in order to record it with the Land Records Division of the Clerk of Court. The length of time to complete this step is also prolonged due to the lack of staff in the Division of Real Estate and records.

To remediate the overall subdivision review timeline issue, staff suggests reinforcing staffing within the Real Estate and Records Division, so the department is better equipped to process both resubdivision survey reviews and Declaration of Title Changes.

Recommended Changes to the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance

Procedural updates are an important component of streamlining the overarching regulations that govern how applications are reviewed, and the level of which City Planning Commission oversight is necessary. Procedural improvements are only one component of a broader framework in which the City Planning Commission operates. Meaningful changes also require updates to the regulations within the City's Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance. The CZO is the foundation of land use decisions; the document dictates where uses can be located, how they can be built, and what they look like.

This section outlines a series of recommended reforms to the zoning code including reducing off-street parking requirements, enabling a broader range of housing types in more locations, removing conditional use requirements where they create unnecessary barriers, and to allow additional uses in districts where they are currently prohibited but appropriate. Staff is also analyzing the bulk and yard regulations to ensure they align with both historic development patterns and contemporary needs.

Eliminate Unnecessary Conditional Use Requirements

In each zoning district, there are three classes of land uses permissions - permitted, prohibited, and conditional. Permitted uses are allowed by-right, assuming all building size, setback, parking, landscape, and other requirements are met. Prohibited uses are not permitted at all within the district. Establishing clear rules for permitted and prohibited uses within each zoning district enhances transparency and predictability, ensuring that developers, neighbors, and the broader community have a shared understanding of what can be built in a particular location.

The third category of land use permissions is conditional use approval. These uses may be approved or denied at the discretion of the City Council. When the City Council approves applications, conditions in the form of provisos are typically imposed that may determine how the development is designed or operated. This ability to exercise discretion in approving development can be beneficial to the neighborhood, as it allows for land use impacts such as activity, noise, traffic, parking, and neighbor concerns to be addressed as a condition of approval. However, this happens at the cost of predictability to the developer and neighbors, as the approval or denial of a project is not guaranteed at the outset. This uncertainty, combined with the several-month timeline of the conditional use process, discourages development.

Over time, the conditional use process has been used with increasing frequency, and it is arguably overused. The CPC staff has noted that several conditional use types are approved with such regularity that their continued requirement to go through the conditional use process may warrant reevaluation. These uses, which include standard restaurants, retail ABOs, small businesses, and others, are discussed at length below. For these uses, requiring conditional use approval is likely an unnecessary process that creates unpredictability and delays for developers and neighbors. The City Council could consider converting some of these uses from conditional

uses to permitted uses. If reclassified as permitted uses, they could still be required to adhere to design and operational requirements to ensure their compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood.

Eliminate Conditional Use Requirements for Standard Restaurants

The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance requires conditional use approval in some commercial districts for standard restaurants or for the sale of alcohol in standard restaurants. Table 1 in Appendix B lists all conditional use requests for standard restaurants or for the sale of alcoholic beverages for on-premises consumption in standard restaurants since 2016. Out of 55 requests, only two requests were denied, and two requests were withdrawn by applicants. Ninety-three percent of the requests were approved by the City Council. This suggests that restaurants are appropriate uses in the zoning districts where they are classified as conditional uses. As such, they should be reclassified as permitted uses, subject to standard operational requirements.

The vast majority of the conditional use requirements is not due to the base zoning district, but to an overlay district that trigger the conditional use process for standard restaurants, such as the Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District.

Restaurant Restrictions in the Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District

One district that may warrant modification is the Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District. The overlay was established in response to concerns about the perceived overconcentration of restaurants, particularly within the Garden District segment of Magazine Street. In response, the overlay requires new restaurants or existing restaurants that seek to serve alcohol to go through the conditional use process. Standard restaurants are, by definition, allowed to serve alcohol so long as the monthly revenue from alcohol sales does not exceed that of the food and non-alcohol sales revenue.

Although this Overlay District was created to address concerns specific to the Garden District, the overlay's boundaries extend well beyond this area, spanning from Race Street to Philip Street and between Washington Avenue and Henry Clay Avenue, unnecessarily hindering economic activity along a major commercial corridor.

The majority of Magazine Street is zoned HU-B1 Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District, a zoning designation intended to serve the needs of nearby residential neighborhoods. Magazine Street is a bustling commercial thoroughfare that is known for its eccentric stores and diverse restaurant options. Magazine Street is a natural location for standard restaurants. Requiring a conditional use approval in this context is counter to the purpose of the HU-B1 District. Allowing standard restaurants by-right aligns with the corridor’s known identity and supports its vitality.

Restaurant Restrictions in the CBD-5 District

Another district where restaurant permissions could be expanded is the CBD-5 Urban Core Neighborhood Lower Intensity Mixed-Use District. The CBD-5 District, which includes Lafayette Square and surrounding parts of the Central Business District, limits restaurants of all types. On each block, only one restaurant of any type (standard, specialty, fast food, carry out) is permitted per block. This is a substantial restriction given the commercial zoning of the CBD-5 District, the number of storefronts that exist within the district and its location in a prime urban mixed-use downtown area. While the CBD-5 District is intended to accommodate a lower concentration of commercial uses than other Central Business Districts because of its residential character, there should not be any commercial use restriction on ground floor storefronts. Facilitating the growth of residential units within the CBD-5 District can only be done by concurrently supporting the development of ground floor businesses that will serve those residences. The staff's recommendation is to remove the restaurants spacing limitations of Section 17.3.B.4 of the CZO.

Conditional Use Requirements for Fast Food Restaurants

Fast-food restaurants require conditional use approval in many zoning districts where standard restaurants are otherwise permitted by right, even though fast-food restaurants are prohibited from serving alcohol. A reasonable assumption why fast-food restaurants would require additional scrutiny is that they are often built with auto-centric characteristics, featuring drive-through services with drive-through lanes that wrap around the building. That type of design can be incompatible with historic urban development. However, In the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, a drive-through component of any use (whether for a fast-food restaurant, a bank or an establishment that dispenses medical products) is considered a principal use and has its own use permissions. Drive-throughs are prohibited in the Historic Urban Non-Residential Districts except in limited cases where pharmaceutical products are dispensed. Drive-throughs are outright prohibited in the Historic Core Neighborhoods Non-Residential Districts. Therefore, the autocentric nature of fast-food restaurants is limited only to certain districts and restricted in the areas that are higher in density and are intended to promote walkability.

Although, the operation of fast-food restaurants differs from standard restaurants (table service, food preparation, food order at counter), the current distinction between fast-food restaurants and standard restaurants relies on nebulous, debatable criteria around the restaurant's method of operation. Those distinct methods of operation do not have any land use impact differences, and therefore, are not addressed in the conditional use review. From a land use perspective, a fast-food restaurant operating without a drive-through or the sale of alcohol, in a structure located on a historic urban commercial corridor would have similar impacts to a standard restaurant. For that reason, the conditional use process for fast food restaurants is not justified as the drive through component is evaluated separately.

Therefore, fast-food restaurants should have similar use permissions as standard restaurants, particularly in the Historic Urban Non-Residential Districts and the Central Business Districts.

Reduce Conditional Use Requirements for the Retail Sale of Packaged Alcohol

The retail sale of packaged alcoholic beverages is a conditional use in nearly all commercial districts. This is premised on the notion that businesses that sell alcohol for off-site consumption are often problematic. The potential negative impacts on adjacent properties resulting from the retail sale of alcoholic beverages for off-premises consumption varies in the quality of the management of those establishments. When properly managed, the retail sale of alcoholic beverages can be no more offensive than the sale of any non-alcoholic product as customers purchase alcohol at the establishment but consume it at home or elsewhere. Only if the management does not control the activity of its customers can customers loiter outside, consume alcoholic beverages on-site, and produce noise, litter, and otherwise engage in behavior that could be harmful or obnoxious to other customers and occupants of nearby residences.

The record of conditional use approvals, shown in Appendix B, indicates that the City Council has generally agreed with this, approving about 90% of conditional use applications for the retail sale of packaged alcohol since 2018. This indicates that the City Council should consider making the retail sale of packaged alcoholic beverages permitted in more commercial districts, especially the higher-intensity districts.

Retail sale of packaged alcoholic beverages is a matter of sound management than land use impacts. Zoning approval analysis can review the type of business selling the alcohol, such as grocery stores, convenience stores or big box stores, but not who operates it. Thus, the zoning approval process cannot address the issues of poor management that typically characterize problematic businesses that sell alcohol for off-site consumption. Additionally, zoning approvals can only create a permission for new retail sales of packages alcohol; zoning cannot be used to stop or penalize bad actors.

Instead of using the conditional use process as a mechanism to vet individual applications before they begin operation, zoning regulations should support small businesses by creating reasonable permissions for the retail sale of packages alcohol. This would ensure that good operators do not have to bear the time and cost of the conditional use process leaving potentially needed enforcement to the ABO Board.

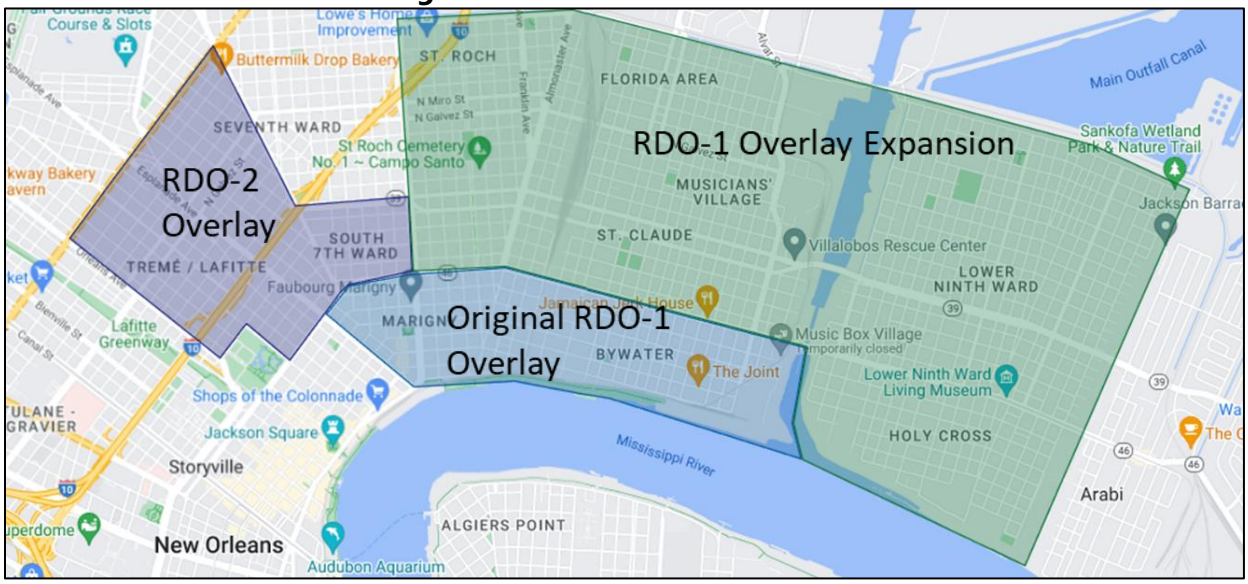
Incentivize Neighborhood-Friendly Small Businesses in Historic Commercial Buildings

The zoning ordinance contains regulations that allow for historic commercial buildings to be reused for commercial purposes even when they are residentially zoned. These uses are defined in the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance as "neighborhood commercial establishments." A Neighborhood Commercial Establishment is a low impact commercial use within a residential neighborhood that is located in a non-residential structure. These structures are often historic

corner stores prevalent throughout the historic neighborhoods of New Orleans but are typically residentially zoned. Neighborhood Commercial Establishments are subject to the use standards of Article 20, Section 20.3.NN of the CZO which limit their hours of operation and square footage - to ensure they remain compatible with adjacent residential uses. Neighborhood commercial establishments are generally granted by a conditional use except when located in an RDO Residential Diversity Overlay District.

The RDO-1 Residential Diversity Overlay District permits by-right limited low-intensity commercial use in buildings having certain historic commercial and architectural characteristics, facilitating economic development opportunities for small business owners. It was established in 2002 to help the compatible reuse of existing non-residential and mixed-use structures in residential areas to prevent the use of spot zones to authorize commercial uses. It was first applied to the Marigny and Bywater areas, but the success of the overlay led to the establishment of the RDO-2 Overlay District in 2010, which covers portions of the Treme, St. Roch, and Seventh Ward areas, and later led to an expansion of the RDO-1 overlay to the entirety of the Lower Ninth Ward and Holy Cross areas.

Figure 3: Current RDO boundaries



Outside of the areas shown in blue, purple, and green on the above map, neighborhood commercial establishments are required to go through the conditional use process. The table in Appendix B lists all neighborhood commercial established conditional use requests submitted since 2018. Analysis of Council actions on these requests shows that 86 percent of the requests submitted to the City Council were granted approval.

The burden of regulatory barriers to entrepreneurship is felt most profoundly by financially disadvantaged, first-time business owners; minimizing these barriers is key to encouraging a local small business base. A further expansion of the RDO Overlay in all historic urban districts in the

city would allow for the re-establishment of neighborhood-scale commercial uses by-right in historic commercial buildings. This would remove barriers to entrepreneurship, encourage walkable neighborhoods and promote a positive mix of uses, which would be appropriate in the historic parts of the city where small corner commercial uses historically served surrounding neighborhoods. A non-residential use in any of the two RDO Overlay Districts (RDO-1 and RDO-2)[6] is already subject to the standards in Section 18.7 and 18.8 of the CZO. Those standards, which were crafted to ensure limited impacts of each commercial use on adjacent residential neighborhood, notably include limitations on square footage, hours of operation and architectural commercial features.

Alternatively, since neighborhood commercial establishments are already subject to use standards that mitigate the impact of any possible incompatibility, they could be classified as permitted uses in all zoning districts. The purpose of a conditional use is to allow uses that are not typical for the zoning district with standards that can be imposed to allow them to fit the zoning district. The existing use standards already greatly restrict neighborhood commercial establishments to ensure they do not negatively impact surrounding development. Requiring a conditional use process adds an unnecessary barrier to facilitate reuse of existing non-residential structures in residential areas.

Revise Commercial Use Floor Area Limits

The Historic Urban Neighborhood Districts regulations place limitations on the floor area of commercial uses. These limitations are intended to maintain compatibility between residential and commercial uses within pedestrian oriented historic districts where commercial uses are directly adjacent to residential districts. Article 12, Section 12.2.B.1 of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance states that conditional use approval is required for any commercial use of 5,000 square feet of floor area or more apart from grocery stores, which are permitted by right up to 10,000 square feet in area. Any new structure for commercial use over 10,000 square feet is prohibited, except for grocery stores which are conditional uses. Other commercial uses that locate within an existing structure that is over 10,000 square feet require conditional use approval.

Similarly, two of the Historic Core commercial districts, the HMC-1 and HMC-2 Historic Marigny/Tremé/Bywater Commercial Districts also restrict the floor area of commercial uses. The HMC-1 District allows commercial uses to 3,000 square feet by-right, up to 5,000 square feet with a conditional use, and prohibits commercial uses over 5,000 square feet in new construction except if located in an existing structure where it is allowed through conditional use approval. In the HMC-2 District, any non-residential use of more than 10,000 square feet is a conditional use.

[6] The only difference between the RDO-1 and RDO-2 overlay districts is that RDO-1 does not allow standard restaurants while RDO-2 allows standard restaurants without the sale of alcohol for on premise consumption.

The existing square footage restrictions constitute a barrier to occupancy and reuse of vacant commercial structures over 3,000 or 5,000 square feet, respectively.

The HU-MU Historic Urban Mixed-Use District is the least restrictive of the three historic urban non-residential districts. It is found typically along commercial corridors adjacent to residential districts, such as Saint Claude Avenue. This district, more than the HU-B1 and HU-B1A Historic Urban Neighborhood Commercial Districts, often features large sites with existing structures over 5,000 square feet. Allowing the reuse of existing commercial structures by right, regardless of square footage, would remove a land use barrier that currently prevents vacant structures from being brought back into commerce.

Cultural Facilities

Cultural facilities are currently granted through conditional use approval in all historic urban commercial districts and in all suburban commercial districts. Both of these place designations are found in close proximity to residential neighborhoods and are intended for small scale commercial areas that serve and maintain compatibility with nearby residential uses. Cultural Facilities also require conditional use approval in historic urban residential districts, suburban residential districts, and most historic core residential districts but subject to limited hours of operation for events. They are only permitted by-right in Commercial Centers Districts, which are designed to accommodate a higher intensity and concentration of commercial uses, along major corridors, and most historic core commercial districts.

Cultural facilities are defined in the CZO as a use that is open to the public and provides cultural services and facilities including: libraries, museums, aquariums, zoos, botanical gardens, and historical societies. Cultural facilities may have ancillary retail uses that offer items related to the facility for sale, and ancillary restaurants, which are only open during the hours of operation of the facility. A cultural facility may hold special events and receptions on-site, including events that take place after closing hours. One of the most impactful aspects that can be associated with cultural facilities and could be a prejudice to nearby residential uses is live entertainment. However, according to the definition and use standards regulating cultural facilities, live entertainment-secondary use and outdoor live entertainment-secondary use are separate principal uses and subject to separate approval. Additionally, cultural facilities must remain open while any live entertainment takes place.

Two of the policies listed in Volume 2 Chapter 6 of the Master Plan (Cultural Resources Management and Historic Preservation) are aimed at supporting and developing cultural heritage destinations in less-travelled areas of the city and protecting important cultural sites, activities and traditions. Staff believes that cultural facilities should be permitted by-right in more zoning districts, particularly those in the historic urban commercial districts which would help promote the goals outlined in the City's Master plan.

Community Centers

Community centers are currently a conditional use in all suburban commercial districts and the French Quarter while they are permitted by-right in two of the historic urban commercial districts. Both historic urban commercial districts and suburban commercial districts are typically located at the edge of residential neighborhood and contain restrictions that allow commercial uses to serve those residential areas while remaining compatible with them. A community center is defined in the CZO as a facility used as a place of meeting, recreation or social activity, and not operated for profit, which is open to the public. Staff believe districts that already allow by-right uses such as health clubs, retail good establishments, restaurants or offices, should allow community centers by-right as well, since the types of land use impacts associated with those uses are essentially the same.

Parking Reforms

Outdated and overly rigid required off-street parking regulations are among the most frequently cited barriers to housing production and economic development in New Orleans. Research and stakeholder feedback consistently identify parking minimums as a major deterrent, especially in dense or historic neighborhoods, due to their impact on development costs, buildable area, and overall project feasibility.

In New Orleans, this challenge is amplified by a historic urban fabric that predates the automobile. Narrow lots and minimal setbacks offer little space for parking. While the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (CZO) exempts much of the Historic Core from parking requirements, many areas within the Historic Urban neighborhoods are still subject to suburban-style standards incompatible with traditional development patterns. These requirements not only raise costs but can constrain architectural design and limit the adaptive reuse of existing structures.

Off-street parking costs are typically borne by renters or homebuyers, regardless of whether they own a vehicle. In response, cities nationwide are eliminating or reducing parking minimums - or even implementing maximums - to support housing production, reduce development costs, and encourage more efficient land use.

New Orleans has made incremental but important progress in reducing off-street parking requirements. The 2015 CZO replaced the city's car-centric 1970s-era code with more flexible standards, including reduced requirements in historic neighborhoods. From 2005 to 2014, the Board of Zoning Adjustments approved 90% of requested waivers, underscoring how frequently developments were unable to comply with former requirements. Despite the parking reforms, most residential uses still require one off-street space per unit, although the CZO does allow for certain exceptions. The Central Business District and most of the Historic Core neighborhoods are exempt from off-street parking requirements. Single- and two-family developments in the Historic Urban District situated on lots that are 30 feet or narrower in lot width are exempt from off-street parking. They're also exempt in situations where 40% of the dwellings along the block face do not

provide off-street parking. Additionally, the first 3,000-5,000 square feet of commercial uses are exempt from parking requirements in several non-residential districts.

While these reforms are a step forward, further modernization is needed to meet evolving and development needs. Importantly, reducing or eliminating parking minimums does not eliminate off-street parking altogether, it simply allows market demand to determine what is appropriate. Even modest parking reforms to the CZO could have a meaningful impact on housing feasibility and economic development opportunities. CPC staff offers a range of potential reforms that may be adopted individually or as part of a larger overhaul.

EV Charging Stations

Required electrical vehicle (EV) charging stations were codified in the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance in 2023. Although the regulations have only been in effect for two years, stakeholders have suggested that the adopted EV requirements already require amendments and are overly cost prohibitive. Additionally, many small-scale developments may not have the site layout or resources to accommodate these systems, suggesting these requirements were prematurely added to the zoning code and necessitate further review.

Narrow Lots in the Historic Urban Neighborhoods

In acknowledgement of the difficulty in developing narrow lots, the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance provides parking exemptions for single- and two-family developments in the Historic Urban Neighborhood Districts situated on lots with 30 feet or less of lot width. This exemption provides the necessary relief for the narrow lots in the Historic Urban areas. However, lots between 31 and 45 feet in width in the Historic Urban Neighborhoods remain constrained by inflexible parking mandates. Side yard setbacks and parking pad design standards often make compliance with parking requirements nearly impossible without sacrificing buildable area or architectural integrity.

Most Historic Urban Neighborhoods Districts require single- and two-family developments to provide interior side yards of at least three feet. Prior to considering off-street parking, this reduces the allowable building width by six feet for interior lots. Additionally, off-street parking pads must measure a minimum of eight and a half feet in width and be located at least one foot from an interior side lot line.

More than 40% of all parcels in the Historic Urban Neighborhood Districts fall between 31 and 45 feet in width, and over 2,500 of them are vacant. Reducing or eliminating parking requirements for these lots could have a significant impact on new construction viability, while preserving historic neighborhood character and avoiding the need for variances.

Parking Exemptions in the Historic Core Neighborhoods

All Historic Core zoning districts are relieved from providing any off-street parking except for the HMC-2 Historic Marigny/Tremé/Bywater Commercial District and the HM-MU Historic Marigny/Tremé/Bywater Mixed-Use District. The HMC-2 District is found typically fronting major traffic arteries such as St. Claude Avenue and St. Bernard Avenue. The HM-MU District encompasses larger lots that often contain warehouse-style structures such as those on the eastern side of Homer Plessy Way.

The HMC-2 District permits a parking exemption for the first 3,000 square feet of commercial use; however, there are no parking exemptions for residential uses – a use permitted in the HMC-2 District. The HMC-2 District contains lots characteristic of the Historic Core Neighborhoods – small and narrow. Without any parking exceptions for residential uses, new residential construction often requires parking variances.

As aforementioned, the HM-MU District contains larger lots that are developed with warehouse style structures both in-use and vacant. The district also contains smaller, residential-scale lots. The HM-MU District is the only historic core district that doesn't have any parking exemptions whatsoever. In contrast, the mixed-use counterpart in the Historic Urban neighborhoods, the HU-MU Historic Urban Neighborhood Mixed-Use District, provides a parking exemption for the first 5,000 square feet of commercial use and allows on-street parking to apply to the required parking. Establishing parking exemptions for the HM-MU District would not only create consistency between similar zoning districts but would help facilitate the reuse of vacant warehouses in this district, which may encompass the entirety of the lot on which they're located.

Parking Off-Site

Currently, all required off-street parking spaces for residential developments must be on the same lot as the residential use. Commercial uses have more parking flexibility than residential uses, allowing a commercial use to provide off-street parking on a lot within 300 feet of the site.

Allowing parking within 300 feet and shared arrangements with non-residential uses (like churches or offices) mirrors existing rules for commercial uses and reflects a more flexible approach to residential development.

Reduce or eliminate parking requirements if the housing development is located with 600 feet of transit

Certain affordable housing developments are granted a reduction of required off-street parking spaces if located near a transit stop. Affordable Housing Plan Developments (AHPDs), for example, may reduce their parking requirement by 50% if located within 600 feet of a transit stop. This radius should be expanded to 1,000 feet and could be applied to all affordable housing

developments regardless of the number of units. The details could be analyzed in a future text amendment delving into the specifics of affordable housing percentage and AMI.

On-Street Parking

Only one zoning district in the historic core and historic urban zoning districts can utilize on-street parking to count toward their commercial parking requirement; residential developments are excluded from this exemption. These exemptions could be expanded to more historic core and urban districts - the areas of the city where it is most difficult to accommodate off-street parking due to the size of the lots. All multi-family residential development with five or more units in historic urban districts should be able to utilize on-street parking as part of their parking requirement.

Reevaluating Parking Requirements by Use

A comprehensive evaluation of parking requirements per use is needed to determine if the current parking requirements are appropriate. It is evident that certain uses have parking requirements grossly incongruent with their parking need. For example, medical and dental clinics require 1.5 off-street parking spaces per exam room, cultural facilities require 1 off-street parking space per 300sf gross floor area and community centers require 4 spaces + 1 per 300sf GFA over the first 1,000 square feet.

Uses and Use Permissions

The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance is a living document, but updates are relatively infrequent given the scope of the CZO. Changes to the CZO are called "text amendments" that can be initiated by the City Council or by the public. Typically, updates to use permissions happen in a piecemeal fashion in response to one proposed development rather than through a comprehensive review. Every three to five years, the City Planning Commission staff should conduct a comprehensive review of the permissions to ensure they remain relevant and continue to respond to the City's evolving needs and development trends. Until a regulatory standard is codified to ensure continual review of the zoning ordinance's uses, the CPC staff, in conjunction with stakeholders, have identified several zoning districts that require updates to their use permissions.

Housing Typologies and Use Permissions

Reviewing use permissions also includes identifying uses that may not exist within the zoning ordinance but would fulfill a certain need if added. For example, artists' lofts, or co-living situations, have become popular over the past several years as housing costs have continued to increase but wages have largely remained the same. These types of living arrangements share common amenities and living spaces such as kitchens and bathrooms but retain individual

bedrooms. Co-living has become more desirable for young professionals and working adults to save money and share resources. In addition to the rising cost of housing, other factors like increasing student loan debt, low wages for people employed in the gig economy and hospitality industry and decreases in marriage among millennials also contribute to the rise in co-living as a practical solution for young adults and singles.

Flexible housing typologies may also help convert vacant non-residential structures into residential structures - particularly in areas with a high concentration of vacant office structures. Vacant office structures are notoriously difficult and expensive to convert into dwelling units. Having different housing types that require less kitchens and bathrooms, could help create feasible conversion projects.

In the S-B1 Suburban Business District and the S-B2 Suburban Pedestrian-Oriented Corridor Business District, single- and two-family residences are prohibited, but should be permitted. These areas often contain underutilized commercial lots that could be reused for housing without impacting neighborhood character. The only residential use permitted in these zoning districts is dwelling above the ground floor. This Euclidean style of planning, even in suburban areas, creates an overreliance on the automobile rather than promoting walkable areas where both residential and commercial can coincide.

Similarly, in the HU-B1 Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District multi-family up to four units and dwellings above the ground floor are permitted by-right but a stand-alone multi-family dwelling over four units is prohibited. Allowing this use expands the potential for housing along corridors and mixed-use centers, aligning with walkability goals. Unlocking this potential could support infill development and help meet the housing demand of New Orleans.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), also known as mother-in-law suites or casitas, are another housing use typology that many cities in the country have readily adopted resulting in additional low-impact housing. Permitting ADUs represents one of the most accessible, affordable and flexible strategies for addressing New Orleans' housing needs without significantly altering neighborhood character.

ADUs can serve a wide range of housing needs by providing additional housing units in neighborhoods near jobs and amenities, supporting multigenerational living, and serve as an opportunity for homeowners to make additional income to support home maintenance, weatherization or retrofitting needs.

Currently, detached accessory structures are prohibited from being utilized as a dwelling unit in New Orleans, in accordance with Article 21, Section 21.6.A.10 of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, which states "no detached structure may be used for habitation." This restriction limits the ability to build on underutilized land, further contributing to the city's constrained housing supply. One reason New Orleans experiences a housing shortage is due to the restrictive nature

of the current Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, which permits multi-family development in only 12% of the City.

In 2022, the City Planning Commission staff proposed thoughtful zoning code recommendations to codify use permissions, use standards and parking requirements for ADUs (Zoning Docket 012/22 under Motion M-21-435 initiated by Councilmember Palmer by-request). However, the proposal encountered vociferous opposition which ultimately led to the initiative stalling once it was transmitted to the City Council.

The City Planning Commission staff continues to view ADUs as a pragmatic zoning reform, adding an essential tool in the city's housing toolbox.

Allow AHPDs for Developments with One or More Affordable Units

The Affordable Housing Planning Development was established in 2019 as a new housing typology and has since established hundreds of affordable housing units in the city. The success of this new use underscores the significance of updating the zoning ordinance to reflect the current needs of the city. AHPDs are required to have ten or more rental housing units that must include a 10% set-aside of units up to the 60% AMI level for at least 99 years. The City Planning Commission staff believe this use can go further and create even more housing units if the minimum number of dwelling units is removed completely. As long as a development provides one affordable housing unit, or 10% of the dwelling units - whichever is more. The development could still go through the conditional use process for approval and feedback while aiding the construction of small-scale multi-family housing with an affordable component.

Central Business District Use Permissions

The Central Business District (CBD) has experienced some of largest shifts from the pre- to post-covid era. Located in New Orleans' downtown and capturing the vast majority of the city's office space, the CBD – like many downtowns throughout the country – must now creatively reimagine its role in the City. The first quarter of 2025 showed a 19.6 percent vacancy rate in Class A office buildings. With hybrid and remote work increasingly becoming the norm, the need to repurpose these empty spaces is urgent, and the need for different types of uses to fill these spaces will prove instrumental in aiding their conversion.

The post-Covid era changes extend beyond the vacant office space and underscore the need for a comprehensive reevaluation of the use permissions within the downtown area. The CBD consists of seven zoning districts, each intended to support a diversity of functions that mix employment, shopping, residential and entertainment activities in an intense, high density, primarily pedestrian environment. Characteristics of the CBD include cultural and entertainment destinations such as museums and theaters and street level activity with retail and restaurants.

The most restrictive CBD District is the CBD-5 Urban Core Neighborhood Mixed-Use District. It is designed to provide a neighborhood environment through a mix of housing types and supporting commercial services. Despite its intended purpose, the CBD-5 District imposes overly restrictive limitations on restaurant uses, as previously mentioned. Currently, no more than one restaurant of any kind - whether a standard restaurant or a specialty restaurant like a coffee or ice cream shop - is allowed per block face, undermining the district's potential for neighborhood-serving commercial uses.

Other use permissions need to be reevaluated to determine their appropriateness in each CBD District. Research and Development, for example, is only allowed in three of the CBD Districts and recording studios are only permitted in four of the CBD districts, despite their low impact nature. Community centers and cultural facilities are prohibited in the CBD-7 Bio Science District and Movie studios are completely absent from the use tables in Article 17 of the CZO. Furthermore, wine shops are only permitted through conditional use approval in the CBD-5 District but prohibited in the rest of the CBD Districts. Reassessing the current and future goals of the CBD is important to adapt to the post-pandemic realities while supporting a wider range of uses.

Bulk and Yard Regulations

Bulk and yard regulations are the rules that dictate the size, placement and shape of buildings on lots of record. Together these rules create the massing of a structure, or how large and tall a structure can be, how it's positioned on the lot and how much open space is left on the lot. In the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, the components of massing are broken down into required yard setbacks, height limits, open and permeable open space minimums and lot area, width and depth requirements. Each zoning district has a unique set of regulations that are aligned with the historic nature and the intended use of these districts.

In New Orleans, where a large portion of the city was built prior to vehicles or subdivision and zoning regulations, the bulk and yard regulations attempt to mimic the existing characteristics of the built environment. However, sometimes the regulations are overly rigid or out-of-scale with the surrounding areas, preventing context-sensitive development.

The current zoning ordinance became effective on August 12, 2015. Since then, the Board of Zoning Adjustments has heard approximately 1,000 variance applications. Approximately 40% of these have been for low-density residential uses in the Historic Urban Neighborhoods Residential Districts. Of these, roughly 230 requests were for waivers of bulk and yard regulations for single-family or two-family dwellings. The most common requests have been for lot area, lot width, lot depth, front, interior and rear yard setbacks.

Relaxing these requirements can help encourage infill and adaptive reuse for irregularly shaped and small lots, which are common in the older areas of the City. Tailoring regulations to actual site conditions, especially those that don't fit within the mold of the surrounding area, can improve development feasibility and attract investment to underutilized sites.

Bulk and yard regulations are a fundamental tool to create compatible structures within a specific built environment. If not calibrated carefully, they can inadvertently stifle growth and investment. The City Planning Commission staff has identified numerous needed revisions within the bulk and yard standards that can make better use of land, support more housing and support smaller-scale development.

The following recommended changes are broken into their respective categories:

Lot Area Per Dwelling Unit

Lot area per dwelling unit requirements determine the residential density permitted within a zoning district. These regulations establish the minimum amount of land required for each dwelling unit. For example, a requirement of 1,000 square feet per dwelling unit means a lot must be at least 1,000 square feet to accommodate one unit and 2,000 square feet for two units.

Zoning districts in the Historic Core and Historic Urban neighborhoods generally allow for higher residential densities compared to those in suburban areas. For instance, the HU-RD2 Historic Urban Two-Family Residential District requires 1,800 square feet of lot area per unit in two-family homes - meaning a total of 3,600 square feet is needed for two units. In contrast, the S-RD Suburban Two-Family Residential District requires 2,500 square feet per unit, or 5,000 square feet for a two-family residence.

In the S-RM2 Suburban Multi-Family Residential District, the district has different requirements for a three- and four unit dwelling (1,500 square feet per dwelling unit and 1,200 square feet per dwelling unit, respectively) and increases dramatically if the development has 5 of more dwelling units (2,722 square feet per dwelling unit), which is a barrier for multi-family development over five units.

While lot area per dwelling unit standards regulate the number of housing units allowed on a lot, they do not directly control a building's massing. Massing is instead governed by other zoning controls, such as height limits and required yard setbacks. Importantly, the number of units does not always correlate with the number of people living on a lot. A large single-family home permitted on one lot may house six people, while a triplex on a similar lot might house the same number of residents spread across three smaller units.

In many cases, lot area per dwelling unit requirements limit flexibility, especially on infill lots. Building form is already dictated by the setback, height and open space requirements. The lot area per dwelling unit requirement is another unnecessary layer without providing tangible benefits.

Height

Small tweaks and modest increases to building height limitations can improve project viability and maximize land value, especially when the ground floor must be of a certain height for commercial

use. Increasing the allowable height in the Historic Urban Non-Residential Districts from 40 feet to 45 feet and from three stories to four, for example, supports mixed-use development without compromising neighborhood scale.

Additionally, height standards should be standardized for multi-family uses in the Historic Urban Neighborhood Districts. Currently, Multi-family uses are inconsistently grouped with either single- or two-family in the HU-B1A Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District, grouped with non-residential uses in the HU-MU Historic Urban Neighborhood Mixed-Use District and aren't accounted for at all in the HU-B1 Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District. Multi-family developments should be permitted 45 feet of height across all three zoning districts.

Yard Setbacks

Yard setbacks determine how far buildings must be placed from lot lines establishing the buildable envelope of a lot. Yard setbacks allow for more permeable open space, light and air between structures, and help properties meet fire code regulations. However, there are setbacks established in the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance that are ambiguous, excessive or misaligned with the surrounding development context. Updating setback requirements can offer greater design flexibility to respond to unique lot configurations, potentially avoiding unnecessary variances and delays.

For instance, in the MU-1 Medium Intensity Mixed-Use District and MU-2 High Intensity Mixed-Use District, the rear yard setback for residential uses is 20 feet, compared to 0 feet for non-residential and mixed-use buildings. This discrepancy not only exceeds the 15-foot standard common in many other parts of the city but also creates an unintended disincentive for residential development by restricting its buildable area more severely than commercial uses.

Similarly, the C-2 Auto-Oriented Commercial District and the C-3 Heavy Commercial District have a rear yard setback requirement of 25 feet regardless of the type of use, a requirement that exceeds that of the C-1 General Commercial District, and the MU-1 and MU-2 Districts. The setback requirements assume all lots within these zoning districts are large and can accommodate larger setbacks without affecting the feasibility of developing lots within these zoning districts. The reality is that lots of all sizes are included in the C-2 and C-3 Districts; the smaller lots may have undue difficulty in developing their lots with a 25 foot rear yard setback. Altering the rear yard setback requirement to match that of the C-1, MU-1 and MU-2 Districts – which requires none for commercial uses and 20' if abutting a residential use – protects neighboring residential use and aligns standards where appropriate.

Certain yard setbacks within the CZO are also unnecessarily ambiguous. The Historic Urban and Commercial/Mixed-Use districts, have front yard setback requirements that necessitate interpretation by the Zoning Division in the Department of Safety and Permits. A straightforward range of 0 to 10 feet for Historic Urban and 0-20 feet for the Commercial/Mixed-Use Districts would better reflect the existing urban fabric while providing concrete information to architects

and developers. Similarly, other zoning districts that rely on ambiguous front and corner side yard setback requirements should be amended to include a setback range.

Lastly, current regulations assume conventional lot types, either interior or corner lots, and do not address through lots or larger lots that comprise an entire block. In such cases, rigid definitions of "front" and "rear" yards often result in impractical design constraints. Updating the CZO to allow for the designation of a "primary street" frontage, rather than relying strictly on dimensional lot orientation, would provide clarity and allow staff greater flexibility in applying setback standards to these sites.

Open Space

Open space requirements fall into two categories – permeable open space and open space. Permeable open space is the permeable area of a lot that is open and unobstructed at grade level upward and allow water to infiltrate the ground. Permeable open space helps manage stormwater and water runoff. Open space, in contrast, is the area of a lot open and unobstructed at grade level upward but is not necessarily permeable. Its primary purpose is to provide usable space for occupants to utilize, such as courtyards, patios or balconies. The main difference between permeable open space and open space is that permeable open space is simply the percentage of the lot that is permeable, regardless of its use, while open space is tied to occupant access and usability.

Some zoning districts have a minimum open space ratio, such as the Historic Core Residential Districts, while others have a minimum permeable open space percentage, such as the Historic Urban Neighborhood Residential Districts.

New Orleans is a city that floods frequently so it is important to incorporate permeable open space regulations, especially for those zoning districts that do not have any required yard setbacks. Despite the importance of these standards, current regulations are inconsistent across districts and may not align with urban development patterns. For example, in the Historic Urban Neighborhood Residential Districts, the required permeable open space is 30% of the lot area. In the Historic Urban Neighborhood Non-residential Districts, the required permeable open space is 10% of the lot area, regardless of use, signifying that open space ratios should be reevaluated throughout the City.

Similarly, open space requirements should be reevaluated. In the Central Business Districts, multi-family developments are required to provide at least 120 square feet of usable on-site open space per dwelling unit. This standard is triggered for both new construction and when an existing structure is repurposed for residential use. It has been cited as an impediment to design and feasibility of projects, especially for reconstruction when the structure was originally designed for a different use. Bulk and yard flexibility for renovations is an important consideration in the Central Business District, where options to convert vacant office buildings to residential use are needed.

The Impact of Community Engagement and Participation on Land Use Development

Community engagement in land use planning recognizes residents as valuable stakeholders in various land use processes. In New Orleans, there are numerous community engagement tools to support public participation in land use decisions. They include online notification systems, the ability to submit public comments electronically to the City Planning Commission and City Council, provide oral comments in-person at the public hearings, or by participation in the Neighborhood Participation Program (NPP). It is important for municipalities - specifically land governing bodies - to regularly review public engagement strategies so that they respond to shifts in community needs and concerns in real time. Due to a limited staff capacity, CPC has not always been able to proactively respond to all these shifts or broaden engagement efforts to ensure more equity in the community engagement process.

Residents, developers and business owners in New Orleans have shared that CPC's current community engagement practices can both encourage and hinder land use development. The following sections provide a preliminary analysis of CPC's current community engagement practices and their impact on land use development.

Online Data and Notification Tools

The City Planning Commission utilizes several data sources to help notify constituents of proposed land-use projects and help educate the public on basic zoning regulations. The Noticeme interface provides an avenue for interested residents to be notified of land use applications that occur within a specific geographic boundary. There are also notice regulations for land-use applications that require various newspapers to post about the project and its corresponding public hearing. They're also posted on the CPC's website and the department's social media pages.

Residents can also utilize the Property Viewer, the OneStopApp and the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance to learn about zoning, and specific land use applications. Though extremely beneficial, these tools are also limited in that all residents are not computer literate or own smart devices, so they are unable to utilize this interface.

The CPC should revamp its notification methods to ensure that a broader spectrum of interested parties are invited to engage in the development review process. This includes initiatives to more effectively use both digital and non-digital forms of communication and engagement.

Neighborhood Participation Program (NPP)

The Neighborhood Participation Program (NPP) was implemented into the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance in 2012 and updated in 2015. It is designed to provide early notice of land use applications and improve communication between applicants, neighbors and interested parties.

Proposed zoning changes, conditional uses, planned developments, major subdivision and variances[7] are "land use actions" that are subject to the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance NPP requirements.

The NPP requires land use applicants to host a community meeting about their proposal. Property owners and renters within either a 300- or 600-foot radius of the proposed land use action are invited as well as any affected neighborhood associations and the respective City Council Member. Applicants are required to put notification signs on their property stating the site is under land use review. As part of the required documents needed for the intended land use application, the applicants must provide a summary of this meeting, which includes attendance, comments and lists questions and their answers. While the program has been largely successful in promoting community engagement and transparency for land use projects, it has also, at times, created unintended barriers to development. Additionally, the cost of mailings can be burdensome – particularly when public meetings are poorly attended despite outreach efforts.

Benefits

The NPP provides early notice to nearby residents and property owners on potential land use applications that they otherwise may not know about. It can also provide opportunities for an applicant to garner community support for their land development proposal.

Negative Impacts/Barriers

The NPP process can create negative externalities, where residents may air out personal grievances against applicants that are unrelated to the proposal or any potential impacts. These comments may unfairly present to the City Planning Commission or City Council that there is more opposition to a project than exists. For example, as mentioned in the Stakeholder section of this Study, representatives from Tulane University stated that residents often come to their NPP meetings and oppose various proposals due to grievances about off campus housing, which is regulated by private landowners, and not the University. This opposition could potentially stall development projects until the opposition is vetted or resolved.

Often, when members of the public present concerns that are not directly related to a specific proposal, it is because they do not believe they have any other way of communicating with government. This can be because they are not aware of other avenues for engagement, or because they have tried other avenues, but have found them to be unhelpful. Accordingly, while individuals may have legitimate concerns, they are bringing them up in the wrong place. This results in increased frustration for members of the public. It also unnecessarily bogs down the development review process.

[7] Variance requests for single and two-family residential developments are exempt from NPP requirements.

City agencies as a whole should significantly improve their customer service approach to ensure that the public has adequate information about how and where to get concerns addressed. Doing so will not only improve public perception of City government, but will lessen the chances that frustrated members of the public will engage in the development review process to air unrelated concerns. The CPC should also significantly improve its public education efforts, to ensure that the public is fully informed about how to most effectively engage in the development review process.

A second drawback of the current NPP process is the fact that it focuses only on engaging neighborhood associations. A discussion on neighborhood associations is below, but the fact that only neighborhood associations are reached through the NPP process means that it leaves out numerous other stakeholders, thereby limiting the scope of participants, and skewing the viewpoints that are presented to decisionmakers. For example, the NPP does not reach subject-matter advocacy groups, such as housing or preservation advocates, business or trade associations, or social services providers. It does not reach potential users, such as potential occupants of proposed residential developments, or potential tenants of proposed commercial developments.

The reach of the NPP process should be significantly expanded to include as broad an array of interested stakeholders as possible.

Neighborhood Associations

Neighborhood Associations are organizations that pool resources to encourage local governing bodies to vote for or against certain policies that may impact their neighborhood.[8] Neighborhood associations can consist of one or many residents, and more than one can operate within the same geographic boundary. There are currently 190 Neighborhood Associations in New Orleans, with most of them representing Uptown neighborhoods, according to the City's self-reporting neighborhood association database.

Benefits

Neighborhood Associations can work together toward a common goal for their communities. These self-governed organizations can mobilize to show support or opposition to a particular land use development through the NPP process. They can also draft recommendations and development proposals that are specific to their neighborhoods as their collective voice can have a great impact on land use decisions.

[8] Scheller, Daniel S, and Anaid Yerena. 2018. "Neighborhood Concerns and Mobilization Patterns of Homeowners and Neighborhood Associations." Digital Scholarship @ Texas Southern University. 2018. https://digitalscholarship.tsu.edu/jpmsp/vol24/iss2/5/

Barriers

In the aggregate, the memberships of neighborhood organizations are not representative of the demographics of the City as a whole. Often, they are not even representative of the neighborhoods they represent. As of 2020, there were at least 852 association members, comprised of 60% White residents, 35% Black residents, .7% Latinx residents, .4% Asian residents and 4% residents of other ethnicities.[9] As a comparison, according to the 2020 Census, the City of New Orleans consisted of approximately 33% White residents, 54% Black residents, 8% Latinx residents, 3% Asian residents, and 3% residents of other ethnicities. [10] Moreover, homeowners are generally overrepresented within membership of neighborhood associations. This is demonstrated in the fact that renters make up approximately 49.5% of all households in New Orleans but only comprise 30% of the membership of neighborhood associations.[11]

Given the clear discrepancy between the demographic makeup of neighborhood associations versus the City as a whole, the reliance on neighborhood associations to provide the "public perspective" in the development review process is misplaced. Of particular concern is the fact that historically marginalized populations – people of color, renters, lower income groups, immigrants, etc. - are the populations that are most underrepresented in the neighborhood association demographics. Additionally, these are the populations that are least likely to be able to take time off of work, attend public meetings, or afford professional consultants. As a result, these populations – which are most often in need of government attention – are least able to have their perspectives heard.

One example of how this disparity has acted as a barrier to potentially beneficial land use decision making in New Orleans is the Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU). ADUs have been recognized in hundreds of communities across the country as one of the most effective and minimally-impactful ways of integrating affordable housing options into the existing neighborhood fabric. They create opportunity in two ways – they create smaller dwelling units that may be more in alignment with the housing needs of today's demographics, and they provide opportunities for struggling homeowners to make additional income to avoid displacement.

In 2021, Council motion M-21-435 tasked the City Planning Commission to consider updating the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance to allow for ADUs, and to research ways that ADUs could improve available housing stock in the City. Staff considered the amendment under Zoning Docket 12-22 and recommended modified approval so that ADUs would be allowed by-right in any

[9] "Neighborhood Associations Lead the Charge against Affordable Housing and Perpetuate Segregation in New Orleans." n.d. Accessed December 12, 2023. https://lafairhousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Delayed_Until_Downsized_or_Denied_report_FINAL_21.10.7-1.pdf.

[10] Ibid

[11] Ibid

district that allowed single-family residences.[12] An overwhelming amount of opposition from specific neighborhood associations was received in response to staff's recommendation, expressing concern about how ADUs could harm their specific neighborhoods. As a result of this opposition - and the lack of input from other stakeholders - the entire concept was dropped. Not reduced in scope, not exempted in those specific neighborhoods, dropped in its entirety. This is not to say that the neighborhood groups involved did not have legitimate concerns, but those concerns dominated the public debate in a way that precluded any consideration of whether ADUs could have been a benefit to other neighborhoods.

To be clear, input from neighborhood associations is critically important. However, it should not be treated as the only view of the public's interest in a development. It is imperative for the City to creatively expand engagement efforts to increase participation from underrepresented communities. As mentioned earlier, CPC staff has historically not had the capacity to respond to community engagement needs and changes as they occur in real time. A holistic and equitable approach is vital to improve citizens' trust and participation with land use processes. Recently, CPC has formalized the creation of a Community Engagement Planner to assess current engagement practices and chart a progressive path forward.

[12] Council motion 21-435 tasked the City Planning Commission to consider updating the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, to amend the definition of ADUs, include any applicable use standards, and to research ways that ADUs could improve available housing stock in the City. Staff considered the amendment under ZD012-22.

Public Input and Stakeholder Feedback

Staff scheduled 15 stakeholder meetings from May through June 2025 to discuss this study and seek stakeholder input. Individuals and departments were selected based on several factors, including those with extensive experience working with the Department of Safety and Permits and the City Planning Commission, who have internal expertise in the existing processes or who have conducted their own studies and research to reduce regulatory barriers within the departments. The meetings were divided into the following categories:

1. Internal Stakeholders I (Various City Departments)
2. Internal Stakeholders II (City Council)
3. Universities
4. For Profit Developers
5. Non-Profit Developers
6. Permitting Consultants
7. Legal Consultants
8. City Services Coalition
9. Design Professionals
10. Neighborhood Associations (Downtown)[13]
11. Neighborhood Associations (Uptown & Westbank)
12. City Council Permitting Task Force
13. Regional Transit Authority (RTA)
14. Nutrition & Food Policy
15. Downtown Development District (DDD)

Fourteen of those meetings were successfully conducted. The "For Profit" stakeholder meeting was not conducted, as none of the invitees attended virtually nor in person. Each of these meetings were held either in person at City Hall, virtually, or as a hybrid meeting. These meetings were generally 30-60 minutes in duration. Questions for each meeting were tailored based on the stakeholders who were in attendance.[14] Summaries of each meeting and proposed recommendations are provided below.

[13] To achieve comprehensive, inclusive, and accurate engagement of neighborhood leaders, staff compiled both publicly available lists of self-reported neighborhood organizations. One list was older, but more extensive and the other was recently updated, but not as exhaustive. Due to the substantial number of entries (259 in total, including some duplicates), staff organized two virtual neighborhood meetings. Canal Street was used as the traditional bisect, with neighborhoods split across both sides and those on the Westbank added to the "Uptown" list.

[14] A full list of stakeholder meetings is provided in Appendix B

Internal Stakeholders I (*Various City Departments)*

These City stakeholders included representatives from the Department of Safety and Permits (DSP), the Historic District Landmarks Commission (HDLC), the Vieux Carre Commission (VCC), the Chief Administrative Office (CAO), the office of Economic Development, the Office of Community Assets and Investment (OCAI) and the Department of Real Estate and Records.

The conversations with these stakeholders centered around public education, staffing and general policies. The internal stakeholders agreed that additional education opportunities are needed to assist the public with interacting with various City departments. Additional staff would support this effort. The stakeholders also stated that additional staffing in DSP would help clear bottleneck conditions. To retain staff, attract new staff, and reduce turnover, compensation needs to be increased, and the workload needs to be better managed.

These stakeholders argued that new "well-intentioned" polices, often puts an unintentional strain on staffing resources. One example was the "rapid Certificate of Occupancy" that placed the onus of permit recission on the Department of Safety and Permits. Rather than ensuring compliance before a permit is issued, a business is allowed to begin operating after completing their application. DSP must then take additional measures to bring the business into compliance on the back end or revoke the privilege once it is already in place. Another example is the Healthy Homes Ordinance, which accomplished an important goal, but required the use of records that are still retained on microfiche. Although staff noted this issue during the crafting of the policy, solutions were not in place when the policy was implemented.

Internal Stakeholders II (Council Stakeholder Meeting)

This stakeholder group included representatives from each of the City Council Districts and the At-Large Councilmembers. These stakeholders noted that the length of time from the creation of the Council Motion to Ordinance causes unnecessary permitting delays. Some representatives indicated that they would like to increase the number of uses that can be permitted by-right without requiring a conditional use stating Council sees repetitive conditional use requests of the same low or moderate use types, such as art galleries and coffee shops, that often receive little or no community opposition. For these use types, a conditional use may place unnecessary permitting, financial and time burdens on applicants. They would also like to evaluate the types of land use requests that take the longest amount of time to complete. Others in this group stated that their constituents would like more uses to require conditional use approval, so residents can voice any concerns before certain proposals are approved.

Lastly, these stakeholders stated that more interdepartmental collaboration can be done to shorten the completion time for land use requests, and to improve transparency of the process for the public.

Universities

The university stakeholder group included representatives from Xavier, Loyola and Tulane Universities. They were familiar with specific land use processes, including the creation and maintenance of Institutional Master Plans. These stakeholders cited a need for greater flexibility when updating IMPs, such as minor increases in the lot area or overall footprint of the university. They also stated that there is a lack of communication/integration within different City departments about what is required or has been approved to move forward with various permitting aspects of the IMP.

The IMP requires neighborhood engagement via a Neighborhood Participation Program (NPP) meeting. Representatives stated this process can often stall projects because a lot of community input is related to concerns outside the scope of the proposed projects. For example, Tulane's public engagement meetings about institutional expansion are often filled with complaints from residents about student housing, which are not owned or operated by the university.

Non-Profit Developers

This stakeholder group included local non-profit developers with experience navigating specialized permitting processes for many affordable and community-driven developments. They shared insights and recommendations based on recurring challenges in the zoning and permitting realm.

There was consensus among these stakeholders that the zoning regulations should allow lower intensive uses in residential zoning districts - such as office spaces - without requiring conditional use approval, removing barriers for uses that have minimal to no impact on the community.

These participants also expressed frustration with the Neighborhood Participations Program process. They described the process and both costly and largely ineffective, noting that mailed notices often are returned undeliverable. They also felt the City Council to be held to the same standard and must complete the NPP process for Council-sponsored Motions to ensure consistency and transparency.

Several stakeholders recommended better integration of the Noticeme tool into the broader land use and permitting process. For example, notifications could be sent to applicants through Noticeme when additional documentation or reviews are required. They called also called for improves response times from CPC's staff, expressing dissatisfaction with the automated reply from the "CPCinfo" email address, which states that inquiries will be processed in 2 to 3 business days.

There was discussion around another technological tool, Property Viewer, which was acknowledged as helpful but with limitations to its usability. Specifically, applicants are unable to run queries to determine which zoning districts allow certain uses. Instead, they must manually review each district's permitted use tables via the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, which is

laborious and can be confusing, especially to prospective applicants who have never utilized the CZO.

Another concern raised was the sale of properties at public auctions by City agencies or quasi-City adjacent agencies, such as the Department of Property Management, HANO or NORA. The stakeholders noted these properties often do not meet zoning and or bulk/yard requirements for development and necessitate rezoning or variances to develop. They would like these properties to be able to be developed by-right, or, at a minimum, that zoning compliance information is available at the time of sale.

Finally, stakeholders indicated that a 60-90 day wait for occupational licenses or zoning verifications can stall or cause development projects to lose financing and permanently derail development altogether. To address this, they recommended more automated processes, which could include placing more aspects of zoning processes under CPC review.

Permitting Professionals

"Permitting Professionals" are representatives from permit consulting firms throughout the City. They have ushered applicants through myriad processes with City Planning, Safety and Permits, and City Council. In their experience working with the Department of Safety and Permits, they noted a lack of education among DSP staff regarding which types of reviews a permit application necessitates to receive approval. For example, when applicants apply for building permits, they may not be initially informed that their request will require conditional use approval or review by the Design Advisory Committee.

When an application requires Design Advisory Committee review, the process often yields various comments from the committee that can be confusing and costly to address, leading to delays for applicants, and in some circumstances, an inability to continue with the proposed development. One example cited is when an applicant is asked to create a health or traffic impact analysis for a proposed residential development. As this is not required for most developments, the applicant may not have the capacity or resources to complete the request, which may lead to abandoning the development altogether.

When an application requires conditional use approval, these stakeholders stated the required NPP process may yield negative comments from the public, which may contribute to application denial from City Council. As a requisite of a conditional use application, the City Council ultimately approves or denies the request. These stakeholders stated that the amount of time from the creation of Council Motion to Ordinance at the City Council phase of approval causes unnecessary permitting delays.

Lastly, Stakeholders argued that their clients encounter a lack of communication and transparency from DSP regarding their permit status and next steps. Though the status of permitting reviews is logged in the OneStop App portal, comments and reviews do not provide *real time* updates and

the applicant does not receive e-mails when comments are logged by reviews, putting the onus on the applicant to check its status. A "concierge" staff member to guide them through the permitting process and automated e-mails with comment reviews was a suggested remedy to this issue.

Legal Consultants

The legal consultants who comprised this stakeholder meeting represented numerous clients who have applied for land use entitlements. These stakeholders expressed frustration with the amount of time between when land use requests are heard before the City Planning Commission and when they're heard at City Council, which increases the length of time for permits to be issued. They would like Council Motions and Ordinances to be introduced at the same Council meeting to decrease the length of time.

Similarly, reducing the number of uses that require conditional use approval removes the entirety of the time associated with such land-use entitlements. Conditional use applications can take up to a year to receive final approval, and sometimes more time depending on the extent of the request. All conditional uses require an NPP meeting prior to the submittal of the application. The stakeholders in this meeting felt there was an "epidemic of mistrust" in the community and that it appears a small handful of neighbors often makes decisions on behalf of larger communities. They also recommended more frequent updates to the Future Land Use Maps (FLUM) to reflect the ever-changing city landscape. They further noted that if CPC had more resources, Master Plan updates could be done more quickly.

These stakeholders stated that the zoning verification process is extremely time consuming and results in unnecessary project delays, albeit their time reference was before the Zoning Division hired additional staff. They noted additional staff in DSP would help decrease the amount of time to receive a permit and another Chief Building Examiner was needed.

There was significant discussion on what were legally required permitting requirements by both state and local law. Staff noted that some of the lie-over periods were mandated. One stakeholder insisted that CZO Section 1.4.G, which requires that the more restrictive regulation be applied in the case of a conflict, should not be amended to say the "least restrictive" interpretation should prevail. Another suggestion was made that BZA variances should be separated into major and minor categories, with minor variances evaluated administratively. Although state law specifically prevents this, perhaps they could be considered as part of a consent agenda.

City Services Coalition (CSC)

The City Services Coalition stakeholder meeting consisted of individuals who helped craft the report, "Roadmap: Enhancing Delivery of City Services in New Orleans," in March of 2025. Two of the stakeholders contributed to the Permitting section of the report.

Stakeholders discussed the results of the Matrix report and supported many of those recommendations. They emphasized the need for project managers (someone to usher people through the permitting process) as well as detailed and transparent checklists that are updated in real time for the public. The consensus was that communication, both among departments and with applicants, was lacking.

One stakeholder suggested that the City outsource positions from DSP and other departments to third parties that can offer a higher salary, which may yield better work performance and increased overall efficiency. There was also discussion of well-documented self-certification, citing the examples of Los Angeles after the wildfires.

Financial and market considerations were also explored. Ideas included a freelancer marketplace where the City would establish what people could charge for licensed inspectors, charging a la carte for enhanced services, various forms of contracting, and even structuring DSP more like the Office of Police Secondary Employment. They suggested that departments justify increased budgets by further quantifying the value of their work.

This group understood that staff was stretched thin in many departments and that recruitment/hiring was difficult. They noted that new mandates and regulations are passed while salaries remain low and departments are understaffed. One stakeholder added that, "some automation doesn't replace the response to the public that needs to happen."

Stakeholders stated that conditional use requirements should be eliminated for uses that are routinely approved, and that overlay districts are overused and should be replaced with proper zoning enforcement, citing citizens' lack of trust in the City to enforce regulations once new policy is approved.

They also advocated for more regular updates to the Future Land Use Map (FLUM), noting gaps and lack of opportunities in areas like New Orleans East and Algiers. There was a specific example of a much-needed retirement community in Algiers that was not allowed by right, necessitating a lengthy zoning change process.

Design Professionals

The Design Professionals stakeholder meeting consisted of architects with extensive background working with the City of New Orleans for both permitting and City Planning Commission projects. They provided technical and constructive feedback as experts in design and through their experience as an applicant.

An issue the architects mentioned was a lack of specific contact info for DSP staff, such as contact info in their email signatures. They stated they often didn't know who or how to contact the individuals reviewing their permits. Moreover, stakeholders were frustrated with having to submit the same information to multiple agencies when it was all going into the same system (LAMA).

Stakeholders discussed confusion as to the purview and purpose of the Design Advisory Committee (DAC) particularly when it's triggered and how to respond to feedback. Similar concerns regarding feedback arose in discussing the HDLC's Architectural Review Committee. Technological issues in the meetings themselves, as old projectors, can make visual submittals difficult to properly analyze in these meetings.

Stakeholders who have worked in other municipalities noted that pre-meetings are required in Detroit, Austin, and Chattanooga. Jefferson Parish triggers a pre-meeting during the initial application submittal. This also triggered discussion about permit expediters. Staff noted that this position was in the works.

There was significant discussion surrounding the public facing tools architects interact with daily, such as Property Viewer, which is not tabular and does not allow users to create specific queries. They stated that this tool could also be improved with additional ArcGIS integration.

Neighborhood Associations (Downtown)

The "Downtown" Neighborhood Associations stakeholder meeting included associations from areas downriver of Canal Street, which is a traditional mid-line through the City. These areas include, but are not limited to, the French Quarter, Gentilly, Marigny, Bywater, New Orleans East, as well as the Upper and Lower 9th Ward.

Residents stated that applicants do not provide clear communication and transparency about their proposals and shared that NPP invitations are costly to send out, are often received with little or no advanced notice, and are held at inconvenient times and locations. They stated that applicants may apply for different uses than were mentioned in their NPP meetings, and do not always follow up about residents' concerns.

Stakeholders stated, as others did previously, that the CZO only allows residents to view zoning permissions from the perspective of the uses, rather than the districts. Online tables list uses and reference which districts allow them. Residents saw value in outlining the uses that are allowed in each zoning district.

These stakeholders also indicated that public comments are due eight days before public hearings, and staff reports are generally released five to seven days before these hearings. This structure prevents residents from responding to staff recommendations because they are not posted before the public comment deadline. Stakeholders also indicated that conditional uses are too easily granted, and provisos and use standards are not updated to respond to changes and evolving needs in neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Associations (Uptown & Westbank)

The "Uptown" and Westbank stakeholder meeting included neighborhood associations representing areas both upriver of Canal Street and across the Mississippi River, as well as those

neighborhoods that straddle Canal Street. These include, but were not limited to, the Central Business District, parts of Mid-City, much of Lakeview, Central City, Touro-Bouligny, Carrollton, and Algiers.

Participants in this meeting expressed concerns that permits are too easily granted and that many developers operate without permits, with little to no repercussions. They advocated for stronger enforcement measures, such as the imposition of fines and disconnecting utilities for non-compliant developments – to deter unscrupulous developments in the future.

These stakeholders reported that many developers misrepresent themselves and their projects during the NPP process and often update or modify their proposals after the NPP meeting without public notice or engagement.

Access to information was another concern. Some of these stakeholders indicated that they are no longer able to access files in LAMA that are tagged with a red flag and must file a public records request to receive that information.

These stakeholders reported conditional uses are also granted too easily. They recommended that each conditional use be vetted to provide an actual "public need," and that developments responding to that need show meaningful efforts in community engagement and plan design. They also wanted additional clarity as to when variances can be approved through the conditional use process.

In contract, other stakeholders suggested that certain common conditional uses such as standard restaurants, which are often approved, should be permitted by-right in additional zoning districts to reduce unnecessary procedural burdens.

There was also interest in updating the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance to incorporate new and emerging uses. For example, stakeholders stated that they would like to see additional definitions and use standards for new retail uses such as marijuana dispensaries, which are not currently defined in the CZO, and generally classified as a retail goods establishment.

Lastly, several stakeholders acknowledged a general lack of knowledge about the zoning process and uncertainty around who to contact for various neighborhood concerns such as trash, noise, and illegal short-term rentals. They expressed the need for improved public education and clear points on contact within City departments.

City Council Permitting Task Force

The City Council Permitting Tast Force stakeholder group included two representatives from the City Council's "Permitting Task Force," which was originally assembled by Council District C Councilmember Freddie King. They produced a report that was presented to City Council in October of 2024, with recommendations provided to help streamline the permitting process.

Stakeholders in this meeting suggested stringent enforcement for non-compliant applicants which could incentivize compliance in the application process. Levying fines against problematic developers or revoking occupational licenses could encourage applicants to comply with necessary regulations and instill trust within the community.

They also stated that the understaffing and limited approval power in the Department of Safety and Permits can lead to "bottleneck" conditions as applicants await occupational licenses, zoning verifications and the issuance of permits. These stakeholders expressed frustration that DSP is often required to wait for review completion from other departments before permit issuance, and that multiple departmental reviews for things such as safety and appropriateness can create redundancy.

A significant portion of this discussion focused on the struggles businesses face while trying to open or otherwise comply with permitting regulations. The general suggestion was to "solve for the 90% of people who are doing it right." They argued that the timeline for opening a new business is critical, and even small delays can end the business before it even opens. The idea of an "interregnum," - i.e. a period of time for a business to operate while waiting on permits to finalize - was central to the conversation.

Stakeholders emphasized the importance of creating more permitted by-right uses and a significant decrease in the uses that require conditional approval. They were also emphatic that accessory dwelling units (ADUs) should be permitted.

Lastly, these stakeholders believe the public requires more education around the permitting process. Specifically, they stated that educational materials during the homebuying process would help people have agency to do their due diligence and navigate City departments more efficiently.

Regional Transit Authority (RTA) Stakeholders

The Regional Transit Authority (RTA) representatives spoke through their complete street initiatives lens. They stated that RTA is partly funded through sales tax and wants to encourage smart, transit/pedestrian friendly development. Specifically, the RTA representatives want to improve/increase available housing stock and streamline parking requirements throughout the City. They stated that existing off-street parking requirements curtail a lot of development for applicants who are unable to fulfil the requirements either financially and or spatially.

Similar to other stakeholder groups, they mentioned that both DSP and CPC are understaffed, which leads to delays in permitting and review processes.

Nutrition & Food Policy

The stakeholders in this meeting included representatives from food policy organizations such as Sprout Nola, NOLA Food Policy and Louisiana Food Policy. Their work includes decreasing food security in Louisiana as well as supporting small, local farmers across the region. These

stakeholders support a letter regarding Urban Agriculture in New Orleans, submitted by the Office of Resilience and Sustainability, which is included in the attachments to this Study.

These stakeholders expressed frustration that food entrepreneurs – such as food truck operators – are met with many barriers, stating that permitting in Orleans Parish has not been updated to meet innovations in the "urban agriculture" business. Farmers find it generally easier and less expensive to do business in Jefferson Parish. For example, Second Harvest wants to launch a mobile market, but because of the "number of axels" on their cart, they are unable to operate.[15]

Additionally, these stakeholders also stated that Code Enforcement needs education around what is considered a crop cover as they hear from constituents who are fined stating Code Enforcement conflates crop cover with weeds and overgrowth.

Downtown Development District (DDD)

This stakeholder group was comprised of representatives from the Downtown Development District (DDD), which is an economic development organization supporting the Central Business Districts and Canal Street.

As their interest is within the Central Business District (CBD), their comments largely focused on the use permissions within the CBD boundaries. They believe more flexibility in the types of uses allowed in the CBD would promote vibrancy and enhance the experience of the for both tourists and residents in this area, noting the CBD landscape has changed post COVID19 and the regulations must reflect the on-ground realities of this area. They also mentioned that loosening restrictive design and open space requirements would help promote residential and mixed-use development.

Summary

Several recurring land use barriers emerged during stakeholder meetings, primarily centered around permitting inefficiencies and procedural complexity.

Limited staffing was a major theme within the Department of Safety and Permits causing inconsistent communication between the Department and the applicant and creating bottlenecks in the permit review process. Another frequently cited frustration is the "lie-over" period between a Council Motion and the adoption of an Ordinance for land-use entitlements like conditional uses or zoning changes, which can significantly delay the issuance of permits.

[15] The department of Revenue requires food truck to be completely mobile and operate on two axels. Second Harvest's food truck initially had one axel, which doesn't comply with current regulations. View New Orleans' food truck guidelines here. Services - Permits & Licenses - Business - Food Truck Permit - City of New Orleans

The Development Advisory Committee (DAC) process was also identified as a barrier. While intended to facilitate cross-departmental review, the DAC can yield unclear feedback, leading to confusion and frustration for the applicant.

The Neighborhood Participation Program (NPP), though acknowledged as a valuable community engagement tool, was also cited as a barrier. Stakeholders expressed concerns about the high cost of mailing notices and the potential for public opposition to delay or derail projects. As referenced throughout the Study, the NPP process will be re-evaluated in response to Council Motion M-25-380.

Enforcement challenges were also raised. Some stakeholders perceive that increasingly restrictive zoning - such as conditional use requirements and overlay districts - are responses to bad actors in the development community. They argue that stronger enforcement measures, including revocation of occupational licenses and financial penalties, could serve as more effective deterrents than additional zoning restrictions.

Another frequently mentioned barrier was the lack of education and communication throughout the land use and permitting processes. Stakeholders advocated for improved guidance from city departments, including the potential creation of a "permitting concierge" to help applicants navigate the process. Multiple groups also recommended enhanced public education tools, such as departmental flowcharts, simplified guidelines, and updates to interfaces like Property Viewer. Continued training for departmental staff was also encouraged.

As detailed further in the Community Engagement section of this report, the City Planning Commission (CPC) has formalized the creation of a Community Engagement Planner role. This position will assess current engagement practices, identify what is and is not working, and help chart a more effective and inclusive path forward.

Recommendations

The City Planning Commission staff, in conjunction with the Zoning Division of the Department of Safey and permits, the Council Land Use Officer and stakeholder meeting input, have identified a significant number of reforms within the CPC processes and the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance that are needed to streamline, clarify and improve the zoning regulations that govern New Orleans and the systems in place to create land-use entitlements.

The recommendations in this section are drawn from CPC staff's expertise working within the confines of the CZO, the City's Home Rule Charter, the City's Code of Ordinances and CPC's own Rules and Regulations. In discussions with stakeholders, the Zoning Division in DSP and the Council Land Use Officer, additional recommendations were added, particularly concerning transparency, improved communication and the need for public education in both the City Planning Commission and the Department of Safety and Permits.

Recommendations specifically related to permitting are found in the "Prior Studies and Research" and "Stakeholder Recommendations" portion of the Table below. These recommendations are included despite not being the focus of this study.

The bulk of the recommendations relate to the CPC processes and zoning code. These recommendations are in recognition that zoning code requirements that necessitate conditional use approval, zoning changes, or variances are in and of themselves a barrier to the creation of housing, economic development and the promotion of small businesses. Small changes to the CZO are necessary to ensure the regulations are consistent, clear and logical.

The City Planning Commission cannot, at this time, initiate its own text amendments. Instead, the CPC staff rely on an ongoing "Omnibus List" that chronicles non-substantive inconsistencies and ambiguities staff interface with daily as they relate to the CZO. However, the text amendment to codify the changes within the Omnibus list happens inconsistently and doesn't address larger, substantive changes.

Moreover, because the CPC cannot initiate its own text amendments, changes to the CZO typically come from the City Council by-request to specifically address one development. This leads to piecemeal legislation rather than comprehensive changes. The recommended changes posed in this Study stem from a comprehensive overview of the CZO. To effectuate any changes to the CZO, a subsequent text amendment(s) would be needed with a City Planning Commission and City Council public hearing.

As New Orleans continues to evolve, so too must the regulatory systems that shape its neighborhoods and guide development. The identified reforms include updates to the zoning ordinance to remove conditional use requirements where they create unnecessary barriers, and to allow additional uses in districts where they are currently prohibited but appropriate, such as

new housing typologies. Staff is also reviewing the Institutional Master Plan and Design Advisory Committee processes to improve consistency and efficiency.

Additional reforms under consideration include expanding administrative approvals for certain minor variances and subdivision requests, reducing off-street parking requirements, and ensuring the bulk and yard regulations align with both historic development patterns and contemporary needs.

Lastly, there is a common thread between discussions with representatives from the Department of Safety and Permits, the Stakeholder meetings and the past reports reviewed as part of this Study. Significant resources must be allocated to hiring qualified staff and to retain them once they're trained. Not only are there simply not enough staff within the Department of Safety and Permits and the City Planning Commission, but the wages are not competitive and the incentives to stay are minimal. The turnover this creates is to the detriment of the public who receive inconsistent information and slow responses. Hiring qualified staff is only part of the equation to increase public transparency. Educational opportunities are needed as well as clear public-facing documents and flow charts to help inform the public of what is needed before they start the permitting process. Empowering developers and small business owners to invest in the City is critical to New Orleans' future success.

This ongoing work is part of a long-term effort to build more adaptive land-use policies that reflect the lived realities of residents and needs of an evolving city.

Table 10: Consolidated Recommendations

Recommendations	
Topic	**Recommendations**
Administrative and Organizational	Remove all branding associated with OBES
Staffing	Create a position to shepherd applicants through the permitting process and ensure each division has dedicated staff responsible for assisting the public.
	Hire additional staff, particularly zoning and building inspectors, to reduce backlogs.
	Increase pay, training, and professional development opportunities to retain staff and their institutional knowledge
	Hire one additional staff member to review subdivisons in the Department of Property Management, Division of Real Estate and Records
	Hire a graphic designer to create flowcharts and public information pamphlets
Procedural Improvements	Reduce permitting timelines, ensuring a more predictable review process.
	Eliminate permitted Institutional Master Plans (IMP) but retain the "conditional IMP" version.
	Permit more IMP changes administratively.
	Remove the City Planning Commission review of demolitions in the CBD and replace it by City Council review by amending Section 26-4.
	Create limits for the number of variance deferrals so one request cannot be deferred indefinitely.
	Expand variance validity from one year to three years.
	Allow certain minimal variances to be approved administratively (lot size or parking up to a defined threshold).
	City Council could keep authority for large conditional uses and delegate smaller ones to CPC.
	Reform the DAC process by clarifying triggers, consolidating the DAC procedural documents into one document, ensure the membership has a design background and eliminate unnecessary reviews.
	Administratively approve subdivisions with 10 or fewer lots.
	Extend expiration of tentative subdivisions from one year to three years.
	Eliminate NPP requirement for subdivisions that only shift lot lines without creating additional lots.

	Clarify that compliant subdivision requests are permitted by-right.
	Create a standard operating procedures manual for DSP staff.
Technology	Ensure all staff have access to necessary software to help review plans (e.g., Bluebeam).
	Standardize and automate the OneStop App across departments. Automate assignments to appropriate staff and automatically send OneStop App review comments by e-mail and notify the reviewer when updates are uploaded.
	Add hyperlinks or graphics in the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance to relevant ordinances/interpretations or to help explain terms such as Floor Area Ratio (FAR).
	Improve Property Viewer to display individual layers (e.g., zoning districts) and create a chart that shows every zoning district where a use is permitted.
	Update department webpages to include chat functions or AI assistance.
	Automate the written public comment process.
	Offer pre-development meetings for larger projects.
	Work with the Information Technology and Innovation Office as well as the Office of Neighborhood Engagement to ensure the self-reported neighborhood association database stays updated.
Transparency, Public Communications and Education	Develop public-friendly materials (flowcharts, graphics, pamphlets) to explain permitting processes and processes necessitating review by multiple agencies.
	Enhance public education opportunities for architects, developers, business owners, realtors, architects and contractors.
	Reevaluate CPC's stakeholder engagement procedures to ensure a fair and equitable process.
	Expand the role of the Community Engagement Planner position to: • Examine best practices from comparable cities • Launch CPC 101 series • Upgrade outreach methods, tools, and tutorials • Update public interfaces • Update NPP Regulations
	Include contact information in all employee email signatures.
	Remove the restaurant block face limitation in the CBD-5 Urban Core Neighborhood Mixed-Use District.
	Limit the use of Interim Zoning Districts, which can create uncertainty and confusion.
	Comprehensively review use permissions within all zoning districts every few years in coordination with the Department of Economic Development.
	Make regulations context appropriate so that a developer does not need to seek a variance to develop a single- or two-family development in the Historic Urban Residential Districts.

Zoning and Land-Use Regulation	Permit single- and two-family residences in S-B1 and S-B2 Business Districts.
	Allow multi-family developments in HU-B1 districts (currently ground-floor dwellings already permitted).
	Revisit ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Units) as a permitted use in some districts.
	Eliminate Conditional Use approval for restaurants, package alcohol sales, community centers, cultural facilities, and neighborhood commercial establishments.
	Allow permitted uses in existing vacant structures regardless of square footage.
	Encourage flexible housing types such as co-living and SROs.
	Allow small affordable housing developments to qualify as AHPDs (under 10-unit threshold).
	Reevaluate lot area per dwelling requirements to reduce barriers for multi-family development (e.g., S-RM2 regulations).
	Increase allowable height in Historic Urban Non-Residential Districts (40 feet to 45 ft, and 3 to 4 stories).
	Create consistent maximum height across all Historic Urban Non-Residential districts for multi-family developments.
	Reduce overly restrictive yard setback requirements in the MU-1, MU-2, C-2, C-3 zoning districts.
	Replace ambiguous front and side yard setback requirements with clear ranges (0-10 feet in Historic Urban Districts, 0-20 feet in Commercial/Mixed-Use Districts).
	Establish clear front and rear yards for through lots with multiple street frontages.
	Re-evaluate open space requirements to ensure consistency across districts.
	Remove 120 sq ft usable open space per residential unit requirement in CBD to better enable conversions to housing.
	Evaluated uses that could potentially be permitted uses in some/all of the CBD Districts, including: Community Centers, Cultural Facilities, Educational Facilities, Movie Studios, Recording Studios, Research and Development, Auditorium, Wine Shop, Indoor Amusement Facilities, Manufacturing (light), Manufacturing (Artisan).
	Evaluate if certain ground floor design standards are necessary or if they simply add another regulatory burden for developments in the CBD.
	Introduce a text amendment to create a more expansive definition and use standards for various aspects of “urban agriculture” in the CZO. Examples include: Crop Cover, Bioswale, Farms, Mobile Food Truck (Fresh Food), Mobile Food Truck (Prepared Food).

Parking	Eliminate off-street parking requirements for lots 35 feet wide or smaller.
	Reduce two-family dwelling requirements to one off-street parking space if the lot is 45 feet in width or less.
	Add HMC-2 and HM-MU Districts to the districts that are parking exempt in the Historic Core Districts.
	Allow off-site parking within 300 ft, for multi-family developments with more than five units.
	Permit shared parking for residential uses with non-residential uses.
	Expand parking reduction radii near transit stop from 600 ft to 1,000 ft for AHPD and MIZ.
	Extend affordable housing parking incentives to all affordable housing developments.
	Allow on-street parking to count towards off-street parking requirements for multi-family and non-residential uses in Historic Core/Urban districts.
	Evaluate and recalibrate parking requirements by the use and actual demand.
	Allow payment-in-lieu option instead of EV installation for small projects.
	Limit EV requirements to new construction/large-scale developments and reevaluate applicability.
	Permit pre-wiring for EV future-proofing instead of a full build-out.

Next Steps

The Land Use Barriers Study, directed by City Council Motion M-25-225, will be presented to the City Planning Commission on September 23, 2025. The City Planning Commission can choose to forward the Study to the City Council with or without changes to the staff recommendations. If the CPC chooses to modify the recommendations, the staff will incorporate those recommendations and forward the revised Study to the City Council. The City Council may choose to hold its own public hearing on the Study, though it is not required.

Most of the recommendations within this report would require future text amendments to codify and effectuate the changes within the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance. Some of the recommendations could also include amendments to the City Code, City Charter and the City Planning Commission's Rules and Regulations.

If the Study is followed by a text amendment request, staff will docket the request and write a staff report with recommendations for specific zoning text changes. The zoning docket would require an additional public hearing before the City Planning Commission. The Commission may choose to recommend text changes to the City Council with or without modification of the staff recommendations, or they could recommend denial of the proposal. The City Council must hold a public hearing before considering adoption of zoning text changes. Finally, the Council may adopt, adopt with modifications, or deny the City Planning Commission's recommendations.

Appendices

Appendix A: Motion No. M-25-225

MOTION
(AS AMENDED)
NO. M-25-225

CITY HALL: April 10, 2025

BY: COUNCILMEMBER MORENO

SECONDED BY: COUNCILMEMBER MORRELL

WHEREAS, the City Council has been engaged in ongoing efforts to revise the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance to make it more workable for citizens; and

WHEREAS, drawing insight from neighboring Jefferson Parish President Cynthia Lee Sheng who announced a "deep dive" into the parish's process for issuing the sort of commercial and residential permits necessary to renovate or build a new structure, this Council looks to our City Planning Commission staff to identify and address ways to mitigate long approval timelines and confusion when filing permit applications; and

WHEREAS, the removal of barriers within the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance will provide clarity to applicants and neighbors, reduce the drain on City resources, and facilitate development where appropriate; and

WHEREAS, the identification of barriers which may be removed without the creation of negative externalities requires careful consideration with input from all stakeholders, including

City staff, residents, neighborhood associations, and developers; NOW THEREFORE

BE IT MOVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, That the City Planning Commission is directed to conduct a public hearing and identify barriers and hurdles in the land use

process which unnecessarily complicate and prolong the permitting and licensing process, as well as potential paths for removing these hurdles.

BE IT FURTHER MOVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, That the City Planning Commission is directed to work with the Council Land Use Officer and Department of Safety and Permits and to consult with governmental agencies, City departments, residents, neighborhood associations, developers, nonprofit sector experts, and private-sector experts as needed in order to fulfill the full scope of the study contemplated in this motion.

BE IT FURTHER MOVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, That the City Planning Commission should deliver this study report to the City Council no later than four months after the effective date of this motion.

BE IT FURTHER MOVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, That in the process of conducting a public hearing and study as provided herein, the City Planning Commission and staff are directed and granted the flexibility to expand the scope of the study and make any and all legal and appropriate recommendations deemed necessary in light of study, review and public testimony resulting from this motion.

THE FOREGOING MOTION WAS READ IN FULL, THE ROLL WAS CALLED ON THE ADOPTION THEREOF, AND RESULTED AS FOLLOWS:

YEAS: Giarrusso, Green, Harris, King, Moreno, Morrell, Thomas - 7

NAYS:

ABSENT: O

AND THE MOTION, AS AMENDED, WAS ADOPTED.

THE FOREGOING IS CERTIFIED TO BE A TRUE AND CORRECT COPY

Aisha Collier

ASSISTANT CLERK OF COUNCIL

CITY HALL: April 10, 2025

-HWX

BY: COUNCILMEMBER MORENO

SECONDED BY:

BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

An amendment to add "nonprofit sector experts" to the list of entities the City Planning Commission should consult when crafting recommendations pursuant to M-25-225.

ANTNDMENT:

1) On page 2, in the first BE IT FURTHER MOVED paragraph, insert the following language after the word "developers,".

"nonprofit sector experts,"

ROLL CALL VOTE:

YEAS:

NAYS:

ABSENT:

RECUSED:

AND AMENDMENT WAS ADOPTED.

ENGROSSED VERSION:

The following engrossed version shows how the proposed amendment would modify Motion No. M25-225, as originally introduced. Additions are underlined. Deletions are shown as strikethroughs.

WHEREAS, the City Council has been engaged in ongoing efforts to revise the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance to make it more workable for citizens; and

WHEREAS, drawing insight from neighboring Jefferson Parish President Cynthia Lee Sheng who announced a "deep dive" into the parish's process for issuing the sort of commercial and residential permits necessary to renovate or build a new structure, this Council looks to our City Planning Commission staff to identify and address ways to mitigate long approval timelines and confusion when filing permit applications; and

WHEREAS, the removal of barriers within the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance will provide clarity to applicants and neighbors, reduce the drain on City resources, and facilitate development where appropriate; and

WHEREAS, the identification of barriers which may be removed without the creation of negative externalities requires careful consideration with input from all stakeholders, including City staff, residents, neighborhood associations, and developers; NOW THEREFORE

BE IT MOVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, That the City Planning Commission is directed to conduct a public hearing and identify barriers and hurdles in the land use process which unnecessarily complicate and prolong the permitting and licensing process, as well as potential paths for removing these hurdles.

BE IT FURTHER MOVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, That the City Planning Commission is directed to work with the Council Land Use Officer and Department of Safety and Permits and to consult with governmental agencies, City departments, residents, neighborhood associations, developers, nonprofit sector experts. and private-sector experts as needed in order to fulfill the full scope of the study contemplated in this motion.

BE IT FURTHER MOVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, That the City Planning Commission should deliver this study report to the City Council no later than four months after the effective date of this motion.

BE IT FURTHER MOVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, That in the process of conducting a public hearing and study as provided herein, the City Planning Commission and staff are directed and granted the flexibility to expand the scope of the study and make any and all legal and appropriate recommendations deemed necessary in light of study, review and public testimony resulting from this motion.

Appendix B: Conditional Use Requests Data Approval

Table 1: City Council Action for Conditional Uses Request to Permit Standard Restaurants and Sale of Alcoholic Beverages for On-Premises Consumption at Standard Restaurants

Docket number	Description	Council action
ZD083-23	Conditional Use to permit a Standard restaurant in HU-B1 District and Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 29782 MCS
ZD008-18	Conditional Use to permit alcohol sales in a standard restaurant in SLB1 district	Approved 027736 MCS
ZD081-17	Zoning change from HU-RD2 to HU-B1A and conditional use to permit a standard restaurant in HU-B1A and Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 27602 MCS
ZD048-23	Conditional use to permit the extension of a standard restaurant's hours of operation in an MU-1 Medium Intensity Mixed-Use District	Approved 29644 MCS
ZD065-22	Conditional use to permit a standard restaurant in a HU-B1 District and the Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 29254 MCS
ZD094-18	Conditional use to permit a standard restaurant in an HU-B1 Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District, a Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 027912 MCS
ZD007-16	Conditional Use to permit the sale of alcohol in a standard restaurant in HU-B1 District and the Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 026943 MCS
ZD011-23	Conditional use to permit a standard restaurant in HU-B1 District and the Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 29449 MCS
ZD089-18	Conditional use to permit a standard restaurant in an HU-B1 District, and Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 027894 MCS
ZD040-24	Conditional use to permit alcoholic beverage sales in an existing standard restaurant in an HU-B1 Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District	Approved30061 MCS
ZD067-16	Amendment to Ordinance No. 20,698 MCS (Zoning Docket 100/01, which granted a Conditional Use to permit the sale of alcoholic beverages for consumption on-premises in a standard restaurant) to amend Proviso 8 to augment the hours of operation to comply with Article 20, Section 20.3.ZZ.6.a of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (Sunday through Wednesday from 6:00 am to 10:00 pm) and Article 20, Section 20.3.ZZ.6.b of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (Thursday through Saturday from 6:00 am to 12:00 am (midnight))	Approved 027109 MCS
ZD048-18	Conditional use to permit a standard restaurant with live entertainment (secondary use) and extended hours of operation (between 12 pm and 4 am on Thursdays through Saturdays;	Denied (Motion M-18-289)

	between 12 pm and 2 am on Sundays through Wednesdays) in an MU-1 Medium Intensity Mixed-Use District	
ZD089-24	Conditional use to permit alcohol beverage sales in an existing restaurant in an HU-B1 District	Approved 30185 MCS
ZD039-21	Conditional use to permit a restaurant with the sale of alcoholic beverages in an S-LB1 Suburban Lake Area Neighborhood Business District	Approved 28758 MCS
ZD002-19	Conditional use to permit the sale of alcoholic beverages in a standard restaurant in an S-LB1 Suburban Lake Area Neighborhood Business District	Approved 28026 MCS
ZD007-24	Conditional use to permit a standard restaurant in a HU-B1 District and the Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 29890 MCS
ZD092-17	Conditional use to permit a standard restaurant that sells alcoholic beverages in an S-LB1 Suburban Lake Area Neighborhood Business District	Approved 027664 MCS
ZD003-19	Conditional use to permit a standard restaurant in an HU-B1 District, and Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Withdrawn prior to CPC hearing
ZD008-25	Conditional use to permit the sale of alcoholic beverages in a specialty restaurant in HU-MU Historic Urban Neighborhood Mixed-Use District	Approved 30315 MCS
ZD063-19	Zoning change from HU-RD2 to HU-B1A District and conditional use to permit alcohol beverage sales in an existing standard restaurant in an HU-B1A District and the HU-B1A Use Restriction Overlay District	Denied (Motion M-19-394) due to the denial of the zoning change
ZD034-20	Amendment to Ordinance No. 27,600 MCS (Zoning Docket 074/17, which granted a conditional use to permit a standard restaurant) to now authorize the expansion of the restaurant, which is within an HU-B1A Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District, an HU-B1A Use Restriction Overlay District, and HUC Historic Urban Corridor Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 28482 MCS
ZD105-18	Zoning change from HU-RD2 to an HU-B1A District and conditional use to permit a standard restaurant in an HU-B1A Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 027937 MCS
ZD060-22	Conditional use to permit a standard restaurant in a HU-B1 District and the Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 29182 MCS
ZD098-17	Conditional use to permit alcohol beverages sales in an existing standard restaurant in an HU-B1 District and the Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 27684 MCS
ZD043-16	Conditional Use to permit a standard restaurant in a HU-B1A Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District and an HU-B1A Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 027010 MCS

ZD035-22	Conditional use to permit a standard restaurant in a HU-B1 Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District and the Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 29152 MCS
ZD001-21	Conditional use to permit a standard restaurant in an HU-B1 Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District and the Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 28628 MCS
ZD010-17	Conditional Use to permit a standard restaurant with the sale of alcoholic beverages in an HU-B1 Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District and the Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 27434 MCS
ZD070-22	Conditional use to permit a standard restaurant in a HU-B1 Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District and the Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 29291 MCS
ZD071-24	Zoning change from an HU-RD2 Historic Urban Two-Family Residential District and a conditional use to permit a standard restaurant in the HU-B1A Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 30166 MCS
ZD058-22	Conditional use to permit a standard restaurant in a HU-B1 Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District and the Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 29286 MCS
ZD014-22	Conditional use to permit a standard restaurant in an HU-B1 Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District and the Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 29001 MCS
ZD029-23	Conditional use to permit alcohol beverage sales in an existing standard restaurant in an HU-B1 Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District and the Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 29496 MCS
ZD048-22	Conditional use to permit a standard restaurant over 5,000 square feet in floor area in a HU-B1 Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District and the Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 29160 MCS
ZD052-18	Conditional use to permit a standard restaurant in an HU-B1 Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District and a Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 027842 MCS
ZD032-16	Conditional Use to permit the sale of alcoholic beverages for consumption on-premises in a standard restaurant in an HU-B1A Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District and HU-B1A Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 026961 MCS
ZD040-22	Conditional use to permit a standard restaurant in a HU-B1 Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District and the Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 29123 MCS
ZD022-23	Conditional use to permit a standard restaurant over 5,000 square feet in an HU-MU Historic Urban Neighborhood Mixed-Use District	Approved 29686 MCS
ZD029-18	Conditional use to permit a standard restaurant in an HU-B1 Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District and the Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 27779 MCS

ZD068-16	Conditional Use to permit a standard restaurant in an HU-B1 Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District and a Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 27076 MCS
ZD041-18	Conditional use to permit a standard restaurant in an HU-B1A Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District and an HU-B1A Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 027812 MCS
ZD022-19	Conditional uses to permit the expansion of an existing standard restaurant and to permit the sale of alcoholic beverages for on-premises consumption at the restaurant, in an S-LB1 Suburban Lake Area Neighborhood Business District and the Middle Harrison Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 28054 MCS
ZD116-16	Conditional Use to permit a standard restaurant with the sale of alcoholic beverages in an S-LB1 Lake Area Neighborhood Business District	Approved 027257 MCS
ZD041-21	Conditional use to permit a standard restaurant in an HU-B1 Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District and the Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 28763 MCS
ZD062-24	Conditional Use to amend Ordinance 25,022 MCS which permitted the sale of alcoholic beverages for consumption on-premises at a standard restaurant, to allow the expansion of a standard restaurant in a HU-B1 Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District and Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Withdrawn
ZD112-19	Conditional use to permit a multi-use facility with indoor amusement facility and standard restaurant components in the CBD-5 Urban Core Neighborhood Lower Intensity Mixed-Use District	Approved 28385 MCS
ZD114-15	Conditional Use to permit alcohol beverage sales in an existing standard restaurant in an HU-B1A Neighborhood Business District and the HU-B1A Use Restriction Overlay District,	Approved 026819 MCS
ZD042-21	Conditional use to permit a restaurant and micro-brewery over 5,000 square feet in floor area in an HU-MU Historic Urban Mixed-Use District	Approved 28759 MCS
ZD075-22	Conditional use to permit the expansion of an existing standard restaurant in an HU-B1A Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District and an HU-B1A Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 29290 MCS
ZD044-24	Conditional use to permit a standard restaurant over 5,000 square feet in floor area with the sale of alcoholic beverages in an S-LB1 Suburban Lake Area Neighborhood Business District	Approved 30160 MCS
ZD074-17	Conditional use to permit a standard restaurant in an HU-B1A Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District and an HU-B1A Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 27600 MCS
ZD089-17	Amendment to Ordinance No. 25,567 MCS (Zoning Docket 080/13) for a conditional use to permit a standard restaurant in an HU-B1 Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District and the Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 25567 MCS

ZD044-18	Conditional use to permit a standard restaurant in an HU-B1 Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District and a Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 27778 MCS
ZD018-17	Conditional Use to permit alcohol beverage sales in an existing standard restaurant in an HU-B1 Historic Urban Neighborhood Business District and the Magazine Street Use Restriction Overlay District	Approved 27380 MCS
ZD100-19	Conditional use to permit a standard restaurant with the sale of alcoholic beverages in an S-LB1 Suburban Lake Area Neighborhood Business District	Approved Motion (M-19-423) Ordinance Calendar Number 32,833

Table 2: City Council Actions on Conditional Uses Applications to Permit the Retail Sale of Packaged Alcoholic Beverages

Docket Number	Description	Council Action
ZD033-18	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 27776 MCS
ZD037-18	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 27780 MCS
ZD046-18	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 27802 MCS
ZD070-18	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 27845 MCS
ZD073-18	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 27880 MCS
ZD064-18	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 27844 MCS
ZD088-18	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 27911 MCS
ZD092-18	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 27940 MCS
ZD111-18	bar with live entertainment and retail sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	DENIED
ZD127-18	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 28017 MCS
ZD134-18	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages (French Quarter)	DENIED
ZD144-18	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 28075 MCS
ZD001-19	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 28049 MCS
ZD020-19	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 28086 MCS
ZD015-19	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 28084 MCS
ZD017-19	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 28085 MCS
ZD024-19	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 28096 MCS
ZD051-19	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 28168 MCS
ZD073-19	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 28284 MCS
ZD097-19	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 28202 MCS
ZD116-19	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 28308 MCS
ZD123-19	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 28326 MCS
ZD125-19	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	DENIED
ZD004-20	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 28348 MCS
ZD012-20	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 28415 MCS

ZD016-20	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	DENIED
ZD020-20	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED BY CPC
ZD054-20	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 28485
ZD061-20	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 28507
ZD002-21	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 28629 MCS
ZD013-21	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 28674 MCS
ZD039-21	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED - 28758 MCS
ZD040-21	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 28787 MCS
ZD090-21	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 28956 MCS
ZD010-22	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 29014 MCS
ZD029-22	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 29099MCS
ZD061-22	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	DENIED (no motion)
ZD069-22	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 29273 MCS
ZD067-22	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 29255 MCS
ZD074-22	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 29286 MCS
ZD004-23	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 29367 MCS
ZD028-23	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 29574 MCS
ZD043-23	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 29635 MCS
ZD054-23	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 29690 MCS
ZD070-23	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	DENIED
ZD030-24	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 29945 MCS
ZD044-24	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 30160 MCS
ZD047-24	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 30052 MCS
ZD078-24	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 30170 MCS
ZD008-25	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	APPROVED 30315 MCS
ZD028-25	sale of packaged alcoholic beverages	Pending

Table 3: Council Actions on Conditional Uses to Neighborhood Commercial Establishments

Case Number	Zoning District	Council Action
ZD010-18	HU-RD2	DENIED
ZD036-18	HU-RD2	APPROVED 27785 MCS
ZD043-18	HU-RD2	DENIED
ZD077-18	HU-RD2	DENIED
ZD081-18	HU-RD2	APPROVED 27884 MCS
ZD125-18	HU-RD2	DEFERRED PAST DEADLINE
ZD126-18	HU-RD2	APPROVED 27971 MCS
ZD129-18	HU-RD2	APPROVED 27977 MCS
ZD030-19	HU-RD2	APPROVED 28117 MCS

ZD033-19	HU-RD2	APPROVED 28119 MCS
ZD038-19	HU-RD2	APPROVED 28131 MCS
ZD043-19	HU-RD2	APPROVED 28144 MCS
ZD048-19	HU-RD2	APPROVED 28197 MCS
ZD008-20	HU-RD2	APPROVED 28350 MCS
ZD026-20	HU-RD2	APPROVED 28494 MCS
ZD027-20	HU-RD2	APPROVED 28414 MCS
ZD068-20	HU-RD2	APPROVAL 28562 MCS
ZD005-21	HU-RD2	APPROVED 28667 MCS
ZD054-21	HU-RD2	APPROVED 28859 MCS
ZD081-21	HU-RM1	APPROVED 28947 MCS
ZD100-21	HU-RD2	APPROVED 28941 MCS
ZD013-22	HU-RD2	APPROVED 29032 MCS
ZD018-22	HU-RD2	APPROVED 29054 MCS
ZD053-22	HU-RD2	APPROVED 29174 MCS
ZD054-22	HU-RD2	APPROVED 29175 MCS
ZD056-22	HU-RD1	DENIED
ZD066-22	HU-RD2	APPROVED 29545 MCS
ZD088-22	HU-RD2	APPROVED 29319 MCS
ZD064-23	HU-RM1	APPROVED 29703 MCS
ZD006-24	HU-RD2	APPROVED 29859 MCS
ZD001-24	HU-RD2	APPROVED 29855 MCS
ZD004-24	HU-RD1	APPROVED 29857 MCS
ZD059-24	HU-RD2	APPROVED 30077 MCS
ZD101-24	HU-RD2	APPROVED 30260 MCS
ZD006-25	HU-RD2	APPROVED 30263 MCS
ZD031-25	HU-RD2	pending
ZD032-25	HU-RD2	pending

Appendix C: Stakeholder List

Area of Interest	Name	Position/Role
Internal Stakeholders	Austin Wilty	Deputy CAO
Internal Stakeholders	Jay Dufour	Chief Building Examiner
Internal Stakeholders	Bryan Block	Ex. Director - VCC and HDLC
Internal Stakeholders	Eleanor Burke	Deputy Director - HDLC
Internal Stakeholders	Renee Bourgogne	VCC
Internal Stakeholders	Jeff Schwartz	Ex. Director Dept. of Economic Dev
Internal Stakeholders	Tyler Russell	Director OCAI
Internal Stakeholders	Toni Thompson	RER
Internal Stakeholders	A – Claire Byun	Land-Use for District A
Internal Stakeholders	B – Liz Holman	Land-Use for District B
Internal Stakeholders	C – Winston Fiore	Land-Use for District C
Internal Stakeholders	D – Monique Green	Land-Use for District D
Internal Stakeholders	E – Dominique Lang	Land-Use for District E
Internal Stakeholders	Morrell – Julia Zuckerman	Land-Use At Large
Internal Stakeholders	Moreno – Sayde Finkel	Land-Use At Large
Internal Stakeholders	Adam Swensek	Exec. Council
Internal Stakeholders	Shawn Lindsay	Dep. City Attorney
Universities	Todd James	Broadmoor
Universities	Lauren Jardell	Tulane
Universities	Sharonda Williams	Loyola
Universities	Todd Genardo	Xavier
Permitting Consultants	Nicole Webre	Webre Consulting
Permitting Consultants	Nick Kindel	Agenda for Children
Permitting Consultants	Ron Loesel	Zach Smith Consulting
Permitting Consultants	Rebecca Hurst Geiger	Sherman Strategies
Law	Mike Sherman	Sherman Strategies
Law	Chris Young	
Law	Chip Leyens	
Law	Jeff Good	
Law	Stephen Dwyer	
Law	David Halpern	
Law	Deborah Davis	

Law	Edward Suffern	
City Services Coalition - Permitting Subcommittee	Peter Gardner	Developer
City Services Coalition - Permitting Subcommittee	Tom Leonhard	HRI
City Services Coalition - Permitting Subcommittee	Erroll Williams	Orleans Parish Assessor
City Services Coalition - Other Committee Members	Richard Cortizas	Jones Walker
City Services Coalition - Other Committee Members	Henry Kinney	Kinney Law

City Services Coalition - Other Committee Members	Pres Kabacoff	HRI
City Services Coalition - Other Committee Members	Gary Solomon	Solomon Group
City Services Coalition - Other Committee Members	John Pourciau	LCMC Health
City Services Coalition - Other Committee Members	David Marcello	Sher Gardner
City Services Coalition - Other Committee Members	Sharonda Williams	Loyola
Architects/Engineers/Landscape Architects	Amanda Rivera	EDR
Architects/Engineers/Landscape Architects	Tracie Asche	Practis
Architects/Engineers/Landscape Architects	Angela Morton	Mathes Brierre
Architects/Engineers/Landscape Architects	Angela O'Byrne	Perez
Architects/Engineers/Landscape Architects	Charlie Ward	Rozas Ward
Architects/Engineers/Landscape Architects	Chip Verges	VergesRome
Architects/Engineers/Landscape Architects	Christopher Johnson	
Architects/Engineers/Landscape Architects	Jonathan Tate	

Architects/Engineers/Landscape Architects	Baharah Javardi	Concordia
For Profit Developers	Bill Hoffman	
For Profit Developers	Peter Aamodt	
For Profit Developers	Brian Gibbs	
For Profit Developers	Kim Burbank	
For Profit Developers	Chris Clement	HRI
For Profit Developers	Daniel Zangara	Zangara+Partners
For Profit Developers	Gordon Kolb	GHK Developments
Non-Profit Developers	Jonathan Leit	Alembic
Non-Profit Developers	Mike Grote	Alembic
Non-Profit Developers	Sandi Stroud	Urban Focus
Non-Profit Developers	Anna Labadie	GCHP
Non-Profit Developers	Emily May	Providence
Cm King Task Force Participants	Zach Smith	Zach Smith Consulting
Cm King Task Force Participants	Danielle del Sol (MaryNell Nolan)	Preservation Resource Center
Cm King Task Force Participants	Coleman Adler	Adler's
Cm King Task Force Participants	Maddie Charleston	
Cm King Task Force Participants	Frank Morse	
DDD	Rene Pastorek	
Neighborhood Associations	*lists pulled from Office of Neighborhood Engagement publicly available Self-Reported	