

## **Frequently Asked Questions - Zoning Code and Unified Development Code**

### **Q: Why does Chillicothe need a new zoning code? What is wrong with our current code?**

A: The last update of the Chillicothe zoning code and other related codes occurred in 2011. Since then, many things have changed, such as applicable state and federal laws, economic dynamics, resident preferences, and city processes. The new code is a comprehensive rewrite that will address current conditions, protect property values, position Chillicothe for future investment, and will be easier for citizens, applicants, and City staff to understand and interpret.

### **Q: What is the difference between this project and the *Choose Chillicothe* comprehensive plan?**

A: The Choose Chillicothe Comprehensive Plan is the City's 20-year guidance document that makes recommendations for the City according to residents and other community stakeholders. The top recommendation from this plan was to update the City's Zoning Code to address concerns including affordable housing and ambiguities within the code. The zoning code update is an important step to achieving the vision outlined within the *Choose Chillicothe* plan.

### **Q: What is the difference between a zoning code and a Unified Development Code?**

A Unified Development Code (UDC) integrates a City's zoning code, subdivision regulations, sign code, and site development regulations into a singular set of regulations. A zoning code only applies to what land uses are permitted on a specific piece of property. A UDC, however, integrates all land use regulations into one document. Consolidating all land use codes streamlines the process for applicants and removes any conflicts that might exist between separate ordinances. Similar to the zoning code, the City's subdivision regulations and sign code all have issues that need to be addressed to comply with new state and federal laws along with changes in community preferences.

### **Q: Who is *American Structurepoint*? Why can't this project be done entirely by City staff?**

A: American Structurepoint is the consultant team hired to lead the code update process. A comprehensive code update is lengthy and very time-intensive for municipal staff to complete unaided in addition to City staff's core responsibilities and daily duties. The American Structurepoint code update team is made of seasoned professional code writers. Project manager David Baird, a land use attorney and AICP-certified planner, has helped communities across the country develop "right fit" regulations and processes

which help to both enhance community character and create economic viability. The code update team is supported by Structurepoint's in-house engineering, architecture, landscape architecture, planning, and economic development professionals.

**Q: Will this project be looking at the sign or building codes as well?**

A: Yes, this project will examine the signage and building codes where necessary to make the new UDC more cohesive and easier to understand. During the initial code audit portion of this process, it was discovered that certain provisions within the building code and sign code are more appropriate to be located within the City's zoning code. There will, however, still be a building code that is housed outside of the UDC. The new UDC will reference the building code when necessary.

**Q: How is a new code going to affect me as a resident?**

A: As a resident, the new code will be easier to understand with simpler language and will contain concept illustrations, graphics, and tables when appropriate. As it relates to your neighborhood, the new code will preserve the character of existing neighborhoods while welcoming new development and encouraging a wider range of attainable housing through zoning district and landscaping standards. At the end of this process there will be time for the public to review the final draft of the code prior to adoption.

**Q: How is a new code going to affect me as a business owner?**

A: As a business owner, time is money, and uncertainty is a risk to your business. The new code will clarify and streamline the development approval process so that you can confidently invest in your business. A large goal of this process is to remove the ambiguity which exists in the current code so that it is easier to understand specifically what a property owner is and is not permitted to do with their property.

**Q: What is an 'ADU'?**

A: 'ADU' stands for Accessory Dwelling Unit. These are smaller, separate residential spaces with their own kitchens, bathrooms, and living spaces located on the same lots as single-family homes. ADUs can take many forms, such as a mother-in-law suite, a finished basement, or a carriage house. ADUs are handy tools in making housing more abundant and affordable, both for homeowners and tenants. They also increase the housing options available. These units are particularly popular with both young people seeking an affordable space of their own or seniors looking to stay close to family. The current code does not support ADUs. City staff and American Structurepoint are carefully considering where and how Chillicothe can incorporate this useful option for property owners.

**Q: How is an ADU different from a duplex?**

A: A duplex is defined as two dwelling units that are approximately the same size on a single lot. An ADU is a secondary dwelling unit that is substantially smaller than the primary dwelling unit. Research throughout the country has shown that having a primary dwelling unit with a secondary dwelling unit on a single lot is more popular and better received by communities than an increase in duplex units. Because the number of dwelling unit increases in the same fashion, communities are turning to this idea as a means to provide affordable housing options to their residents.

**Q: Why does Chillicothe need more housing?**

A: Chillicothe is a growing city, and like many cities across the Ohio and the United States, rent has been increasing as demand for housing outpaces supply. High rents have negative impacts throughout a local economy but can be particularly difficult for young and low-income people. Additionally, Chillicothe has a particular need for different types of housing serving people in every stage of their lives—for a young person turning the key to their first apartment, to someone with limited mobility finding a fully accessible unit, to a senior citizen transitioning to a home with lower maintenance needs.

**Q: What is ‘mixed-use’ development?**

A: ‘Mixed-use’ is a zoning classification that indicates property can be used for more than one use; for example, apartments or offices above retail stores. Mixed-use zoning can create vibrant, walkable destinations for communities and visitors while encouraging property development. City staff and American Structurepoint are carefully considering locations in Chillicothe where this may be appropriate.

**Q: What is ‘infill’ development?**

A: Infill is the rededication of empty or blighted land for new construction. Currently, Chillicothe has dozens of properties sitting empty that could be used for new housing and business. A new zoning code that simplifies the development process and removes unpopular and/or unnecessary requirements will improve the likelihood that vacant land in Chillicothe will be put to use.

**Q: What is a ‘brownfield?’**

A: A ‘brownfield’ is a formerly industrial or heavy commercial site that may or may not be environmentally contaminated (old factories, former fill stations, etc). Brownfields are often poorly maintained, unsightly for surrounding residents, and missed opportunities for development. City staff and American Structurepoint are carefully considering how these

spaces in Chillicothe can be developed and used in the future. Although not part of this project, many cities have been successful in applying for grants to help to clean up brownfield sites such that development on the property can then occur.

**Q: Where and with whom can I share my comments or ideas?**

A: We absolutely welcome your comments. The easiest way to share is by contributing to the project page here on [engage.com](https://engage.com). You are also more than welcome to email us at [planning@chillicotheoh.gov](mailto:planning@chillicotheoh.gov) or call us at 740-773-9708.

**Commented [DB1]:** For this question, we would recommend having a city staff person as the primary contact.