




**PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

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To: Coleman A. Young II, Council Member, Council Member at Large

From: Alexa Bush, Director, Planning & Development Department 

Date: April 30, 2025

Re: Responses to 2025-2026 PDD Budget Questions

Please find below responses to your questions sent on March 21, 2025, regarding the Fiscal Year 2026 Proposed Budget for the Planning & Development Department (PDD).

1. Zoning for Emerging Housing Models: Does the current zoning code allow for new, innovative housing types, or would modifications be needed to support cost-efficient, tech-integrated home construction?

The current zoning code does allow for certain innovative housing models, but there are opportunities for refinement.

Specifically, areas for improvement include:

- **Small Lot Development Standards:** Revisiting minimum lot sizes, setbacks, and coverage requirements can encourage more compact, affordable housing solutions. Allowing multiple units per lot by right in targeted R2 or R3 areas could encourage missing middle housing (e.g., triplexes, quadplexes, cottage courts)
- **Expanded By-Right Options:** Increasing the variety of housing types permitted by-right (e.g., duplexes, accessory dwelling units, co-housing models) in residential zones⁷ would remove barriers to innovative, low-cost development.
- **Increased Flexibility in R1 Zones:** Allowing multiple units per lot in targeted areas could enable two units to be built upon one parcel, creating a more cost-effective development site within target areas of R1 in Detroit.
- **Expedited Permitting for Strategic Projects:** Streamlining approvals for affordable, tech-integrated, or PILOT-funded projects helps reduce time and costs, encouraging innovative builders to invest in Detroit.
- **Zone Detroit:** Many of the above-mentioned improvements are already being addressed through the Zone Detroit initiative lead by the City Planning Commission (CPC). In collaboration with the Housing and Revitalization Department (HRD), the CPC has secured funding to complete this comprehensive zoning update. Zone Detroit may want to consider better defining prefabricated and modular housing construction; however, it should be noted that the zoning ordinance generally doesn't regulate types of home construction, so various construction types can be used, so as long as the uses, dimensions, etc. meet the ordinance. The building code which is governed by the state may also need to

address certain new construction types depending on what innovations are being pursued.

2. Neighborhood Framework Plans & Smart Infrastructure: As PDD develops long-term framework plans, how are smart infrastructure, energy efficiency, and housing affordability being incorporated?

Most of PDD's framework plans prioritize infrastructure improvements to enhance safety, mobility and environmental resilience. This includes redesigned street corridors, protected bike lanes, and expanded access to parks and greenways. Several plans, such as Eastern Market and Jefferson Chalmers, call for increased green stormwater infrastructure. While high-tech elements like sensors and IoT (Internet of Things) sensors are not widely deployed, the framework's focus on connectivity, walkability and resilience provides a strong foundation for smart infrastructure.

Energy-related initiatives are currently less prominent in the framework plans, and are often referenced indirectly, through infrastructure upgrades or housing rehabilitations. These types of improvements have been a focus for initiatives and projects involving solar energy with cross-sector partnerships created to deliver these improvements as a project outcome. Moving forward, there is an opportunity to embed energy efficiency more explicitly into future neighborhood frameworks.

Housing affordability is addressed consistently across the framework plans. Each plan includes elements to protect long-time residents from displacement, such as housing repair programs. Many framework plans advise that a percentage of new housing (typically 20% or more) be reserved as affordable, particularly when publicly owned land or other development subsidies are involved.

3. Fast-Tracking Housing Approvals: Are there existing city programs that allow for fast-tracked approval processes for housing models that emphasize sustainability and affordability?

We are unaware of such a program. However, the Housing and Revitalization Department may have information about this type of model.

The fast-track PILOT ordinance adopted in 2024 focuses on affordability. Additionally, there are 3 positions in the FY25-26 budget to implement this work.