



Zoning 101

What Does Zoning Have to Do with the Housing Crisis?

Dane County Housing Crisis

Dane County is experiencing a **severe housing crisis** caused by rapid job and household growth, and underproduction of new housing units to meet increased demand. Between 2010 and 2020, Dane County only permitted **34,000** new housing units, despite adding **42,000** new households. Decades of underproduction has created a county-wide housing shortage, leading to **significant increase** in all housing prices.

The **urgent need for a greater supply of housing, including a variety of housing types, must meet the needs of households at a range of income levels.**

How Does Zoning Contribute to the Housing Crisis?

Zoning restricts the **type of housing allowed to be built, as well as housing size, and location.**

IMPACT:

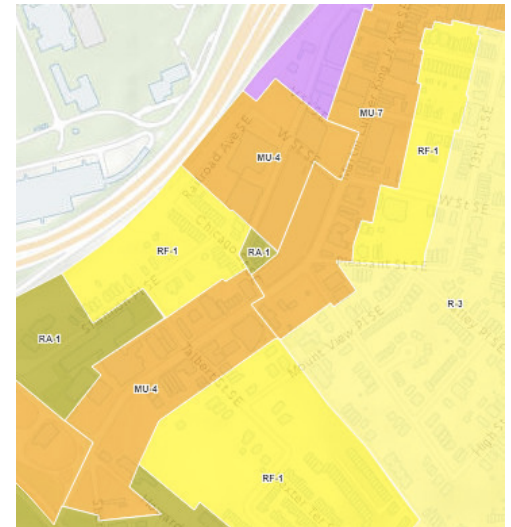
Prevents the construction of many in-demand types of owner- and renter occupied housing.

For example:

Single family districts **often restrict** townhomes, condominiums or small multi-family units. This type of "missing middle" housing can be more accessible for **first-time homebuyers.**

Lot size can restrict the **amount of units** being developed, and prevent smaller, lower cost homes from the market.

What is "Zoning?"



Each zoning district is color coded and defines what can be built.

- Legal tool used by municipalities to **regulate land use and private development** intended to protect the health, safety, and wellbeing of a community.
- Zoning codes **categorize land** into "districts" or "zones" to designate specific land uses and types of development allowed.

Districts or "Zones" establish standards determining, for example:

- **Building use** (residential, commercial, industrial or mixed-use, etc.)
- **Type of structures** allowed (single-family homes, scale of multifamily developments)
- **Lot size** and setback requirements
- **Density** - regulates the number of housing units allowed within an area of land

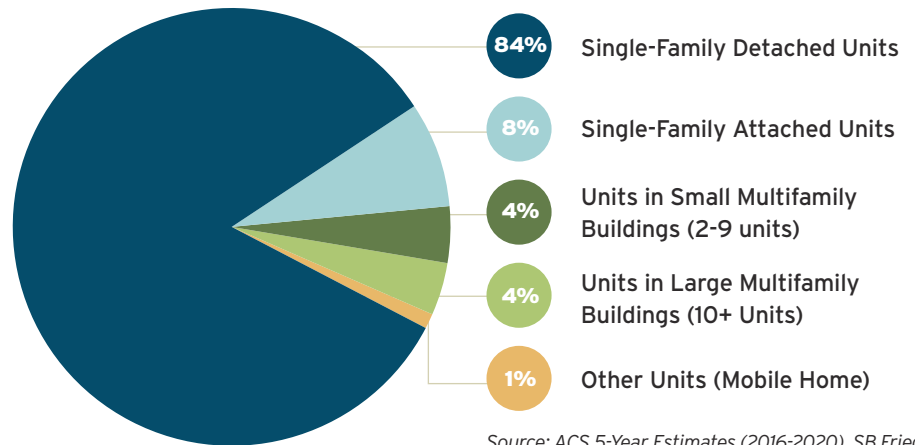
Zoning can increase development costs, raising housing prices for both renters and owners.

- Zoning approval processes can be **costly** for developers.
- Zoning can also impose additional requirements that add to costs including **parking requirements** and **height limitations**.

Zoning was historically used to facilitate racial segregation and continues to disproportionately impact communities of color today.

- Zoning was used to identify and **isolate communities of color**, leading to disinvestment.
- Single-family zoning **historically excluded** most low-income and minority communities.

Dane County Owner Units by Type, 2020



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates (2016-2020), SB Friedman

Single family detached homes make up 84% of the county's total housing stock, limiting the variety and price of housing types available, and using the maximum amount of land.

Zoning Update Examples To Help Address the Housing Crisis:

1. Allow for a **variety of housing types** within your residential zoning code including townhomes, condominiums, and smaller multi-family units
2. **Reduce minimum lot sizes** and setback requirements to allow for smaller single-family homes
(In 2024, Middleton reduced their minimum residential lot size to 3,000 sf.)
3. Increase the **number of permitted dwelling units** per acre
4. Offer a **density bonus** to incentivize more housing units to be built
5. Reduce or eliminate **parking requirements**
6. Create **higher density residential** or **mixed-use districts** that allow for different types of housing, including commercial
7. Single family housing is **allowed by right**. Allow multi-family housing up to a specific number of units by right in designated districts – eliminating the costly pre-development approval processes.

How Can You Help?

Updating local zoning codes was identified as a top priority of the Dane County Regional Housing Strategy. Continue to learn more about the housing crisis, and support zoning reforms that help expand housing opportunities in your community. Visit: [RHS.DANECOUNTY.GOV](https://rhs.danecounty.gov).

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