



FORWARD LA CROSSE

ZONING CODE UPDATE

Community Engagement Summary | April 2025 - May 2026

LA CROSSE
WISCONSIN



PROJECT BACKGROUND

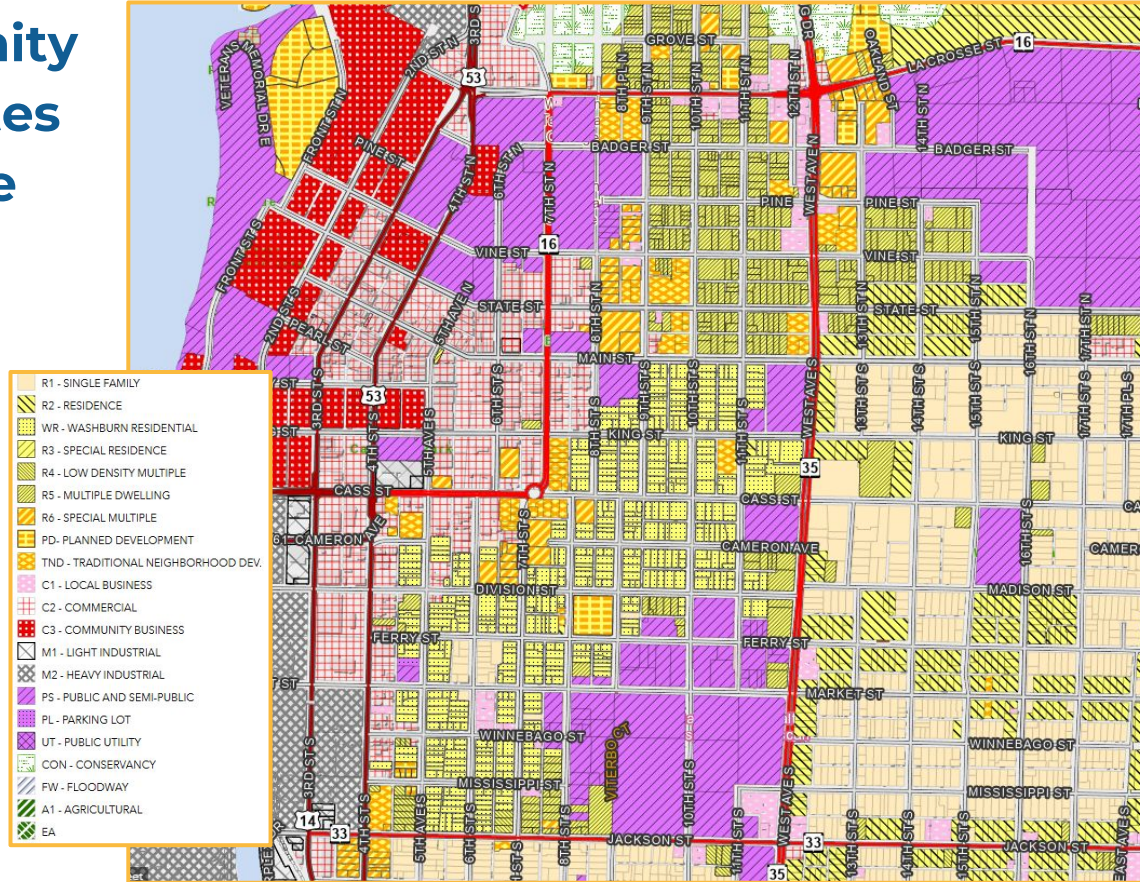
Learn more About Zoning & the Code Update.

PROJECT INTRODUCTION | WHAT IS ZONING?

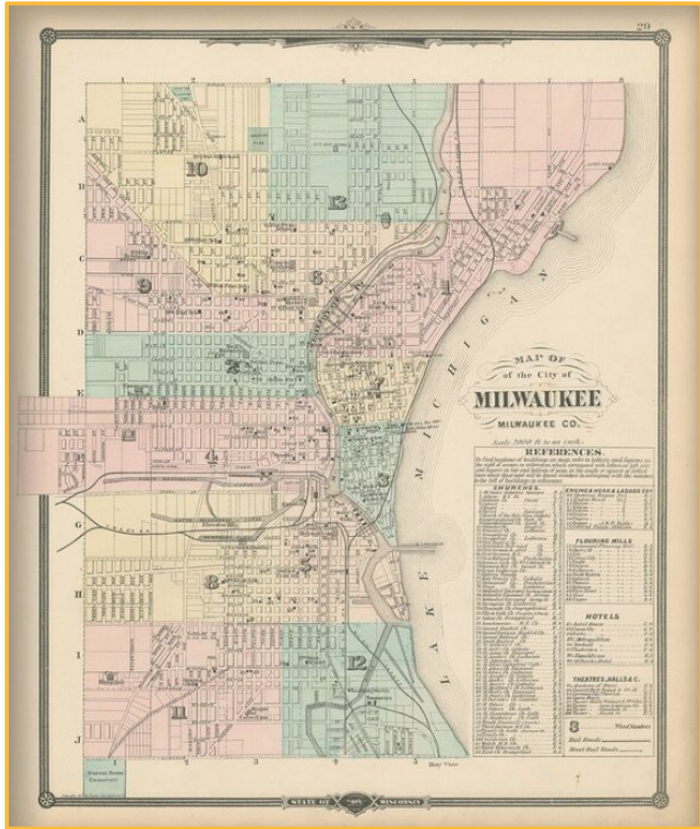
Zoning divides a community into districts, and regulates how the land within those districts can be used.

Zoning Districts are generally categorized as:

- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Agricultural
- Conservancy



PROJECT INTRODUCTION | WHY IS ZONING IMPORTANT?



Zoning was created to protect public health, safety, and the general welfare .

Zoning can be used to...

- Promote desirable development patterns
- Separate incompatible land uses
- Maintain community character and aesthetics
- Protect natural resources and farmland
- Preserve historic and cultural resources

The City of Milwaukee established the first zoning ordinance in Wisconsin in 1920

Zoning is complex.

Navigating the regulatory process is complicated and can slow down development.

- Rezoning
- Variances
- Conditional Use Permits (CUPs)
- Zoning Board of Appeals (BOZA)
- Nonconforming Uses

R-1 Single Family Residence District Regulations

Sec. 115-142. - R-1 Single Family Residence District Regulations.

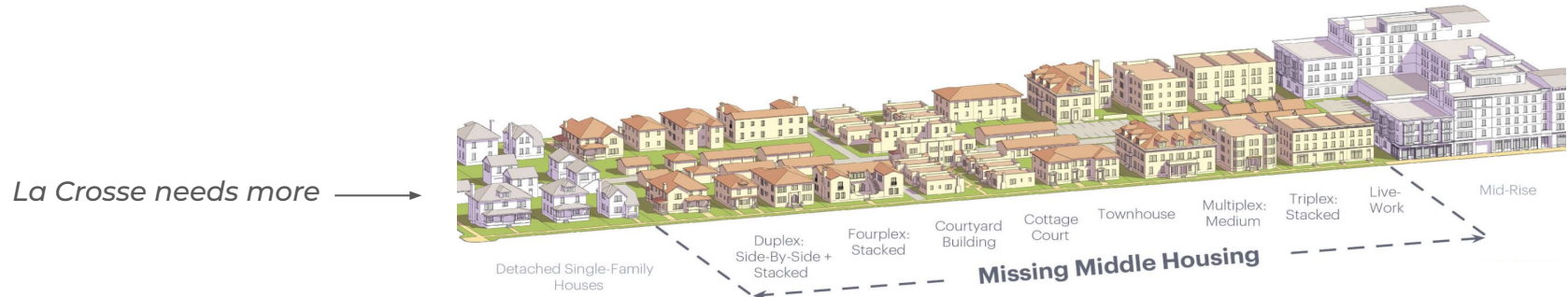
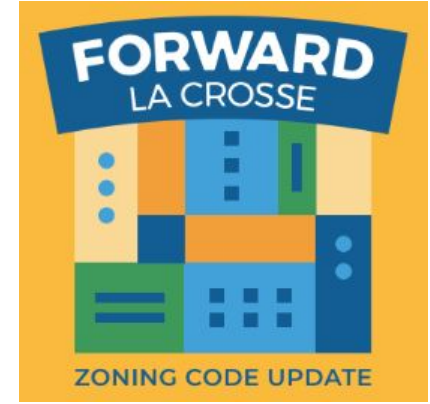
- (a) *Scope and use regulations.* This section applies to the R-1 district. In the Single Family (R-1) Residence District, no building shall be used and no building shall be hereafter erected or structurally altered, unless otherwise provided in this chapter, except for the following uses, including uses customarily incidental to any of the permitted principal uses:
- (1) One-family dwellings.
 - (2) Accessory buildings including one private garage and/or one private carport when such carports are attached to a dwelling or attached to a detached private garage, subject to size and location requirements in [section 115-390](#). A detached carport is subject to the same requirements as a detached private garage as long as the private garage and/or carport or combination thereof do not exceed 1,000 square feet in area.
 - (3) Subject to the provisions of subsections (a)(3)a. and (a)(3)b. of this section, two-family dwellings provided that such were in existence on September 13, 1984, and provided further that such two-family dwelling may be replaced with a two-family dwelling if such replacement has no more than two bedrooms in each dwelling unit.
 - a. No additional bedrooms may be added to any two-family dwellings in existence on September 13, 1984.
 - b. If the unit density is decreased or the property is not used as a two-family dwelling for 12 consecutive months or more then the unit density may not be converted to a two-family dwelling. For the purpose of this subsection, the term "used" means occupied, undergoing active renovation with the appropriate building permits, or an affidavit stating the units are actively being marketed for rent and having proof of publication of rental advertising, signage on the premises or rental magazine.
 - (4) Two or more family dwellings provided that such were in existence on April 10, 1997, have not discontinued the number of dwelling units for a period of 12 months or more, and are located within the area bounded by 9th Street-Farnam Street-east-west alley north of Green Bay Street-West Avenue, and provided further that such two or more family dwellings may be replaced by another two or more family dwellings as long as such replacement shall not contain more units or bedrooms than existed on April 10, 1997 and other applicable building and zoning code requirements for the R-1 District are met.
 - (5) Schools, public and parochial.
 - (6) Public libraries and parks.
 - (7) Churches.
 - (8) Family day care homes.

PROJECT INTRODUCTION | WHAT IS THIS PROJECT?

This project is a comprehensive evaluation and update of La Crosse's zoning code.

It aims to modernize regulations to better reflect current growth patterns.

The goal is to craft a **user-friendly** code that aligns with community's needs while making it **easier to understand + implement**.

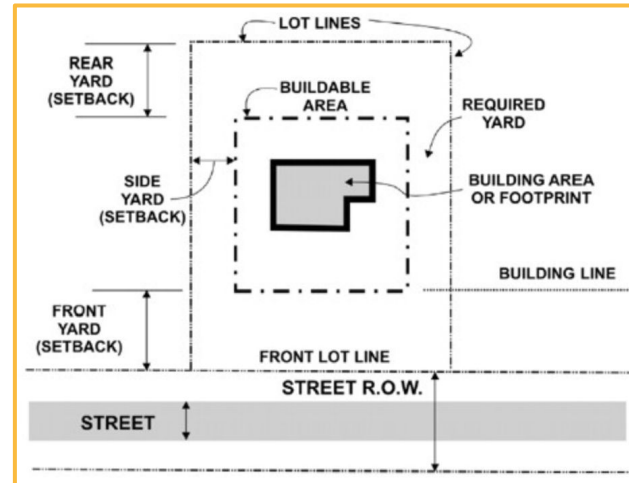
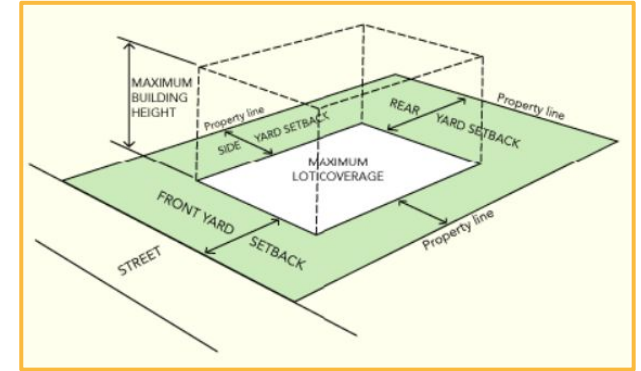


PROJECT INTRODUCTION | WHAT IS ZONING?

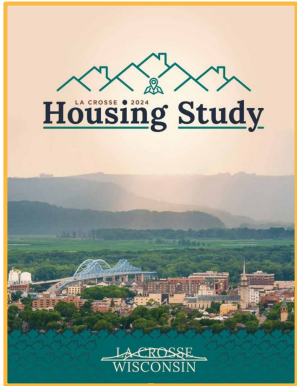
Zoning determines what a community can build, where, and how.

It sets the dimensions of things like:

- Lot sizes
- Building setbacks
- Building heights
- Number of dwelling units



BIGGER PICTURE | WHAT ABOUT OTHER CITY EFFORTS?



Opportunity to **implement recommendations**
from previous planning processes

BIGGER PICTURE | CONNECTION TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The 2040 Comprehensive Plan provides the **policy direction** for the Zoning Code Update.

The Future Land Use Map identifies a mix of uses that may become appropriate for a given area over the next 20 years.

N

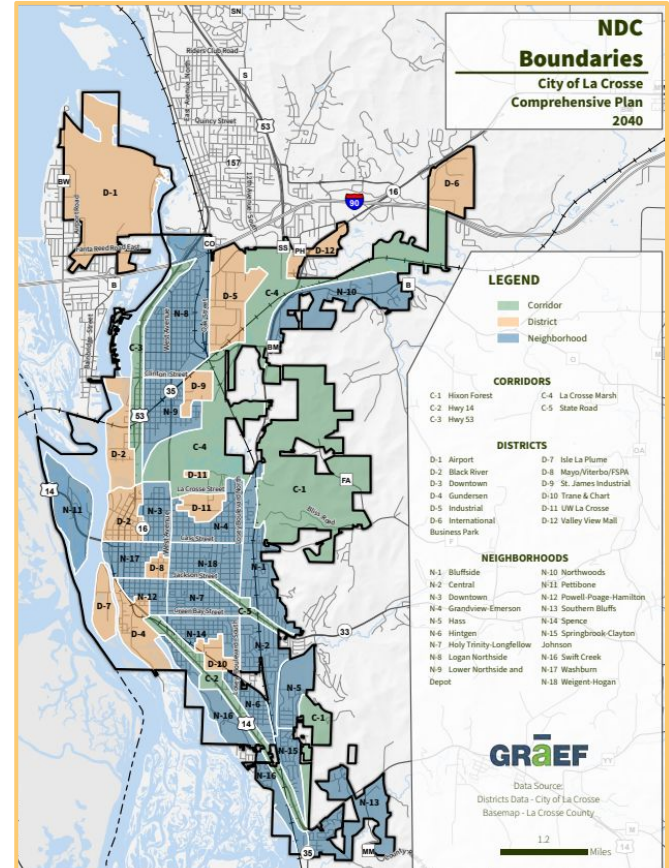
Neighborhood

D

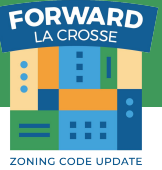
District

C

Corridor



PROJECT TIMELINE | WHEN WILL IT HAPPEN?



Phase 1



KICK-OFF & REVIEW

NOVEMBER 2024 -
JANUARY 2025
(3 months)

Phase 2



ANALYZE & RECOMMEND

FEBRUARY 2025 -
AUGUST 2025
(7 months)

Phase 3



CODIFY & CREATE

SEPTEMBER 2025 -
JULY 2026
(10 months)

WE ARE
HERE!

Phase 4



HEARINGS & ADOPTION

AUGUST 2026 -
OCTOBER 2026
(2 months)

1

2

3

4

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT (surveys, stakeholder convos, public meetings, workshops, and more!)

with four (4) big engagement waves in Spring 2025, Fall 2025, Spring 2026, and late Summer 2026

ENGAGEMENT FORMATS | OPPORTUNITIES TO SHARE THOUGHTS



Project Website



Community Workshops



Citywide Surveys



Housing Week Pop-ups



Neighborhood Meetings



Stakeholder Discussions



ENGAGEMENT WAVE #1-3 | PROJECT WEBSITE

10,141 WEBSITE VISITORS

36,010 PAGE VIEWS

Key Features of the Plan



Comprehensive Review

This update will include a comprehensive review of the City's existing zoning code and address challenges.



Community-Centric

The goal is to craft a modern, user-friendly code that reflects the community's needs while making it easier to understand and implement.



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www.forwardlacrosse.org

Let's Move Forward: Yav Pem Suab | Coowecja | Adelante

2025 Zoning Code Update

This collaborative effort will build on the efforts of past City plans and prioritize community input and values to guide the development and character of La Crosse.

Sign up for updates and future engagement opportunities in Summer 2025.

GET UPDATES



ZONING CODE UPDATE

🗣️ **Your voice matters!** Help shape La Crosse's future by sharing your thoughts on the 2025 Zoning Code Update.

📧 Submit your comments to: info@forwardlacrosse.org

Let's build a better La Crosse—together! 🏡

UPDATE: [City of La Crosse Launches Zoning Survey to Gather Input on Future Development and Neighborhood Character](#)

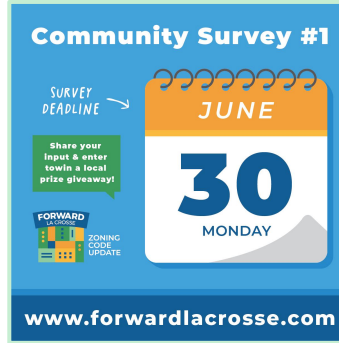


Upcoming Public Input Sessions

ENGAGEMENT WAVE #1-3 | COMMUNICATIONS

- **21** Newsletters
- **6** Regional Press Releases
- **24** Media Coverage Stories

Plus, partner outreach support & poster distribution!



The City of La Crosse Announces an Update to their Zoning and Subdivision Code and Upcoming Community... External La Crosse Zoning x

Forward La Crosse info@forwardlacrosse.org via email.robly.com to me

Mon, Feb 17, 10:12 AM



The City of La Crosse Announces an Update to their Zoning and Subdivision Code and Upcoming Community Input Opportunities

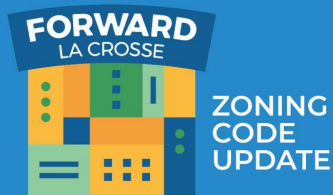
La Crosse, WI (February 2025) The City of La Crosse is updating their Zoning and Subdivision code, an 18-month initiative to help shape a more vibrant, resilient, and livable city for the residents of La Crosse, Wisconsin. This collaborative effort will build on the efforts of past City plans including the most recently adopted [2040 Comprehensive Plan](#) and the La Crosse 2024 Housing Study.

"Zoning impacts our daily lives. It determines how land in La Crosse can be used and developed, influencing how our neighborhoods look, where businesses operate, and even how we get around. However, outdated zoning regulations can be confusing and create barriers to positive change." — Tim Acklin, AICP

Deputy Director - City of La Crosse Planning and Development

LA CROSSE HOUSING WEEK

Whether you are curious about how zoning laws shape neighborhoods or seeking housing options for different life stages, there's something for everyone!



Zoning & Beyond: Forward La Crosse

April 30 | 12 - 1 PM
May 1 | 5 - 6 PM

Public Library Main Branch
800 Main Street

why it matters • its impact on the community • ways to participate

Learn more & view the full Housing Week schedule: www.forwardlacrosse.com

LA CROSSE
WISCONSIN





COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Check Out the Input from the Engagement Wave 1 (Spring 2025)

ENGAGEMENT WAVE #1 | HOUSING WEEK POP-UPS & WORKSHOPS



~300 PARTICIPANTS

- 7 Pop-up Events
- 2 Community Workshops

April 30, 2025 - May 2, 2025

#1 | **Housing Affordability & Availability**



Participants most frequently highlighted the need to facilitate a greater supply of diverse and affordable housing options. This includes addressing “missing middle” housing, increasing rental unit availability, and considering how current regulations impact construction costs and the feasibility of building more attainable homes.

#2 | **Walkability & Sustainable Development**



There were many calls for the creation of more walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods with accessible amenities, reducing car dependency, and exploring innovative urban design strategies like pedestrian-only streets and reduced parking standards.

#3 | Zoning Code Modernization



Participants sought clarity on the scope of proposed zoning changes and how new regulations would impact future development. They stressed the importance of the updated code aligning with broader city goals and the comprehensive plan, while also considering innovative building practices.

#4 | Neighborhood Quality & Livability



A strong desire among participants was for preserving and improving the quality and livability of existing neighborhoods. Suggestions were made for effective code enforcement, ensuring safe living conditions, addressing neglected properties, and fostering inclusive and welcoming residential areas.

#5 | Community Engagement & Inclusion



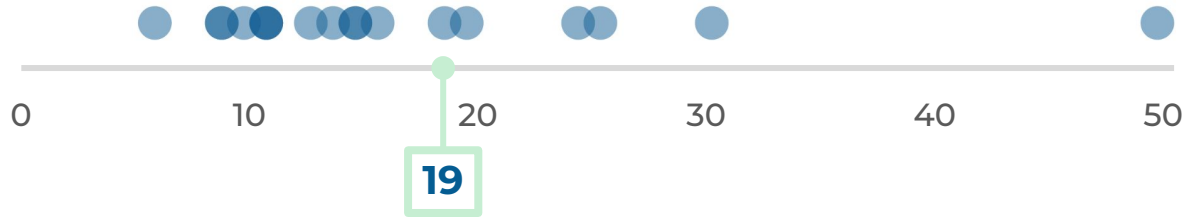
Feedback from participants underscored the need for meaningful participation from all community segments, especially underrepresented voices and students, to gather comprehensive input for the initiative.

ENGAGEMENT WAVE #1 | HOUSING WEEK POP-UP FEEDBACK

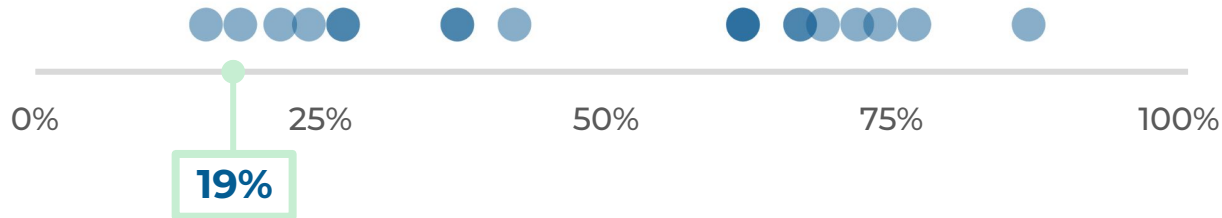
Zoning Facts | Activity Boxes

□ = answer

How many zoning districts are within the city?



What % of land is zoned for single-family residences?



*Dark blue intensity shows response frequency.

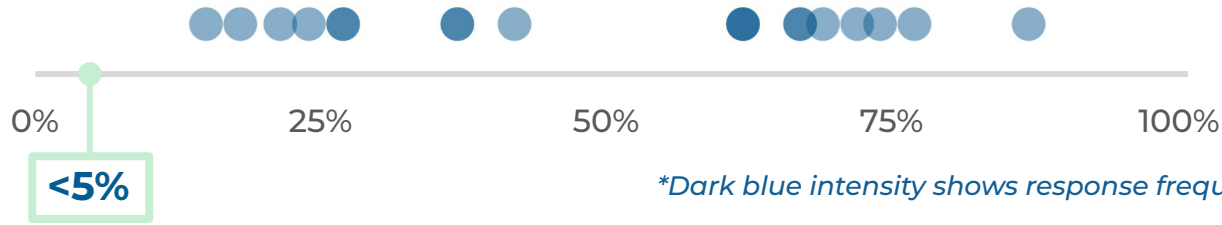


ENGAGEMENT WAVE #1 | HOUSING WEEK POP-UP FEEDBACK

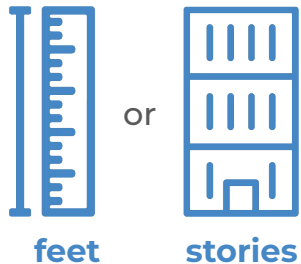
Zoning Facts | Activity Boxes

□ = answer

What % of land is zoned for multifamily residences?



Maximum building height in Downtown La Crosse?



FEET TALL:

Guesses: 35 ft. | 50 ft. | 60 ft. | 100 ft. (x3) | 150 ft. (x2) | 400 ft.

STORIES TALL:

Guesses: 8 | 10 (x3) | 11 | 12 | 15

Additional Guess: none (no maximum)

100 ft.

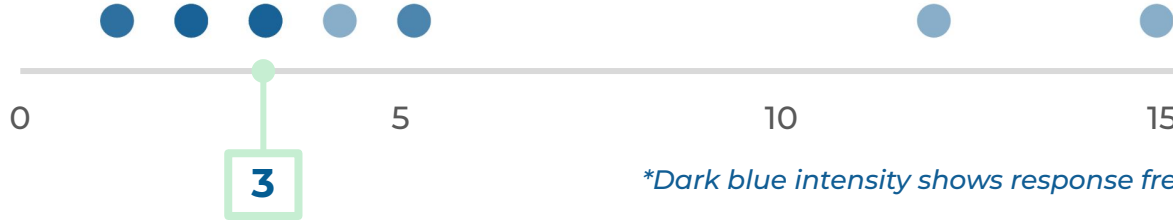


ENGAGEMENT WAVE #1 | HOUSING WEEK POP-UP FEEDBACK

Zoning Facts | Activity Boxes

□ = answer

How many zoning districts allow breweries, wineries, and distilleries?



**Dark blue intensity shows response frequency.*



In what zoning districts are solar panels permitted?

1 vote: 5 districts

1 vote: 18 districts

all districts

18 votes: all districts

ENGAGEMENT WAVE #1 | NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOC. MEETINGS

80+ PARTICIPANTS

May 2025 - June 2025

- **Washburn/Downtown/Powell-Poage-Hamilton**
05.22 @ South Side Neighborhood Center
- **Logan Northside/Lower Northside & Depot Neighbors**
05.27 @ Fire Station #4
- **Weigent-Hogan/Hintgen/Holy Trinity**
06.09 @ Utilitarian Universalist Fellowship
- **Bluffside/Grandview-Emerson**
06.23 @ First Congressional Church



ENGAGEMENT WAVE #1 | STAKEHOLDER DISCUSSIONS

In July 2025, the Zoning Code Update team interviewed stakeholders with direct experience using the City of La Crosse's zoning and subdivision ordinances, including:



**Local
developers,
contractors,
engineering
firms, & realtors**



**City
engineering,
building, &
inspections
staff**



**Local
housing
& homeless
service
providers**



**Local
environmental
nonprofits
& business
associations**

Common solutions that emerged include:

- *Expand 'by right' approvals that city staff can process without Plan Commission or BOZA review.*
- *Allow more mixed-use development, including residential units on ground floors, especially downtown.*
- *Loosen or eliminate the related persons rule for residential dwelling units.*
- *Streamline the development review process so applicants have a clearer sense of where their project stands earlier in the process, reducing financial risk for developers.*

Common challenges that emerged include:

- *Coordinating across city departments can be a challenge, and applicants sometimes experience delays moving through the process.*
- *The zoning ordinance is confusing and disjointed, requiring users to reference multiple sections to understand how requirements apply to specific projects.*
- *The current zoning code makes it harder than it should be to support the range of housing, redevelopment, adaptive reuse, and mixed-use development the community needs.*

Common challenges that emerged include:

- *Current residential zoning categories can make it difficult to move forward without rezoning to a Traditional Neighborhood District (TND) or Planned Unit Development (PUD). While these districts offer more flexibility, they come with additional steps, time, and cost. Several stakeholders noted that TND density limits in particular can be a hurdle.*
- *Because mixed-use zoning options are limited, many redevelopment projects end up needing a variance from the Board of Zoning Appeals (BOZA). This adds time, cost, and some uncertainty to the process.*

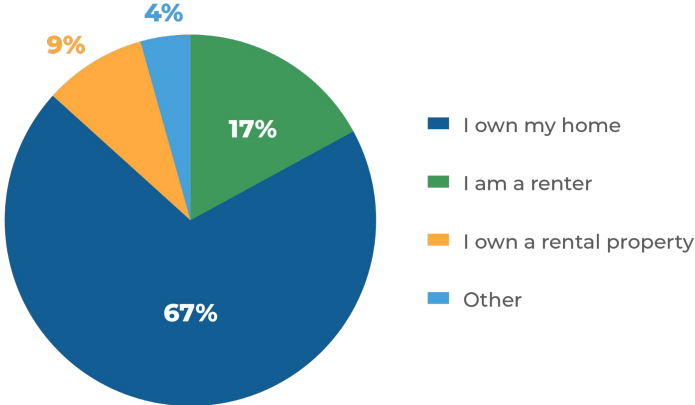
ENGAGEMENT WAVE #1 | CITYWIDE SURVEY #1

+875 PARTICIPANTS

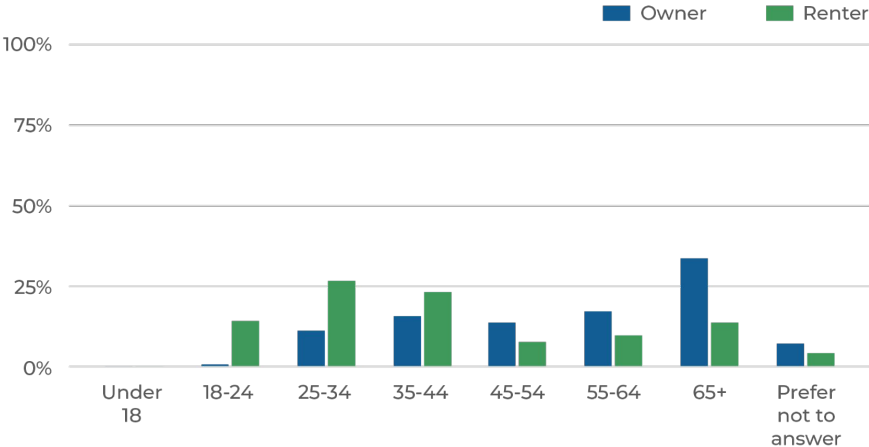
- 9 mins average completion time

April 7, 2025 - June 30, 2025

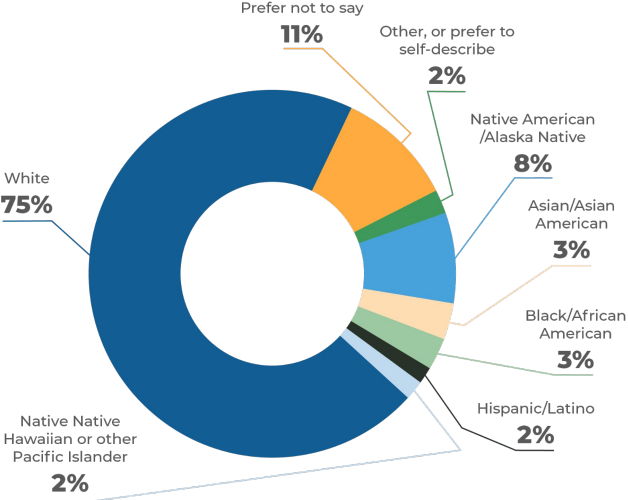
Own vs. Rent



Age

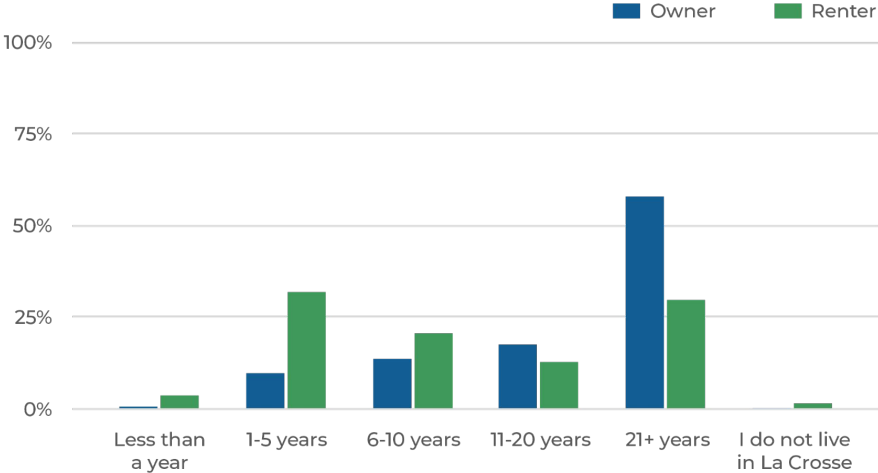


Race/Ethnicity

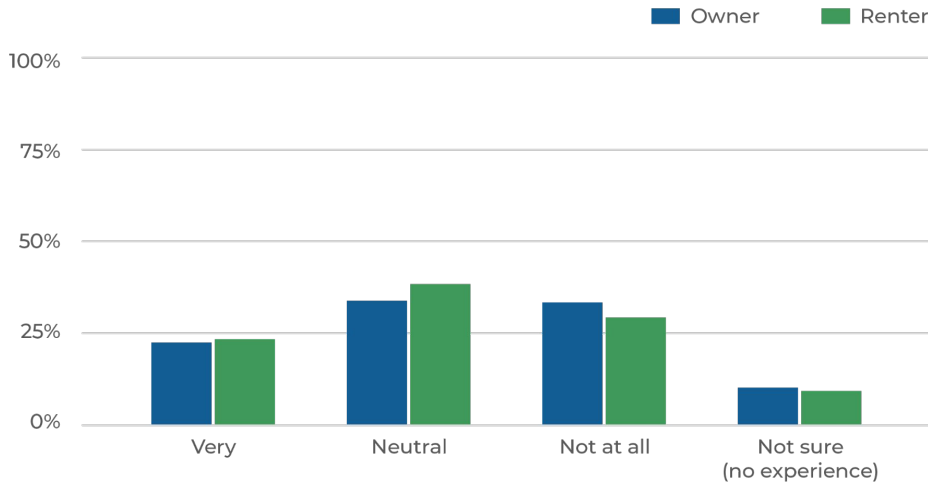


**Select all that apply.*

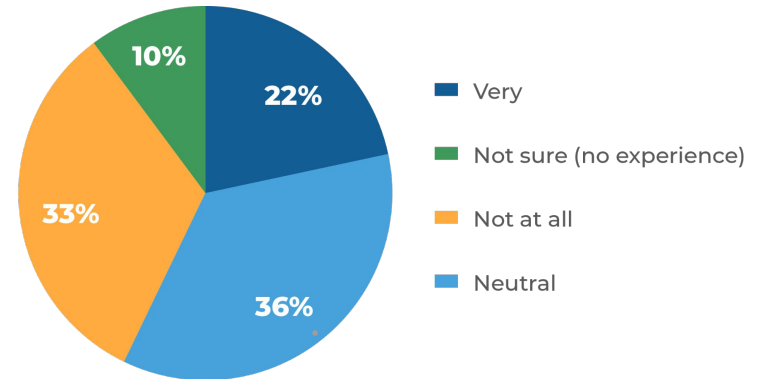
Years of Residence



How informed do you feel about zoning decisions and their potential impact on your neighborhood?

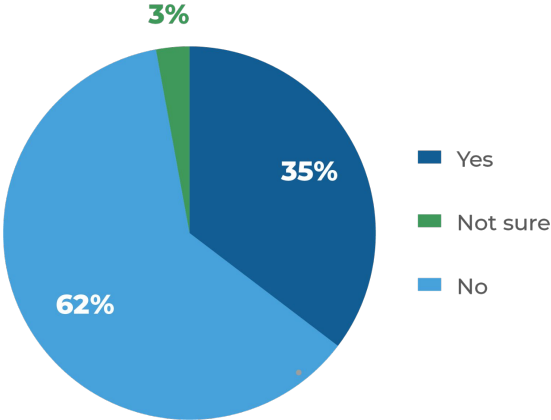
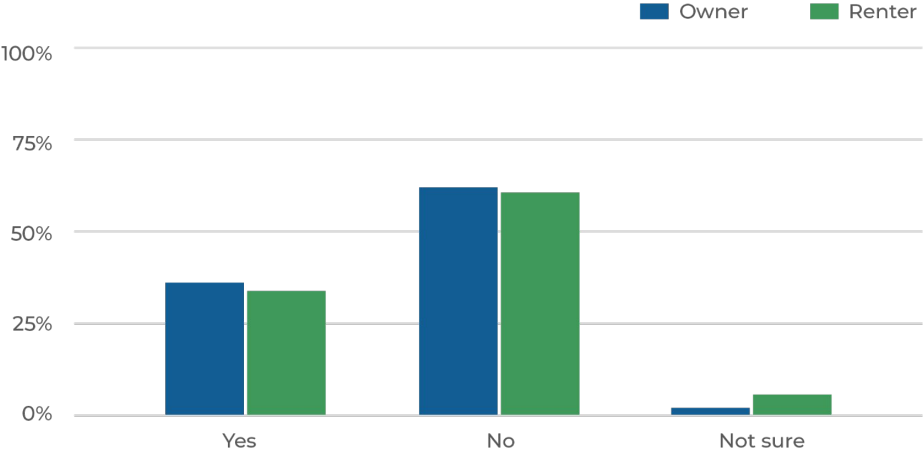


Renters and owners have comparable involvement with zoning but slightly different perceptions.



**Combined responses.*

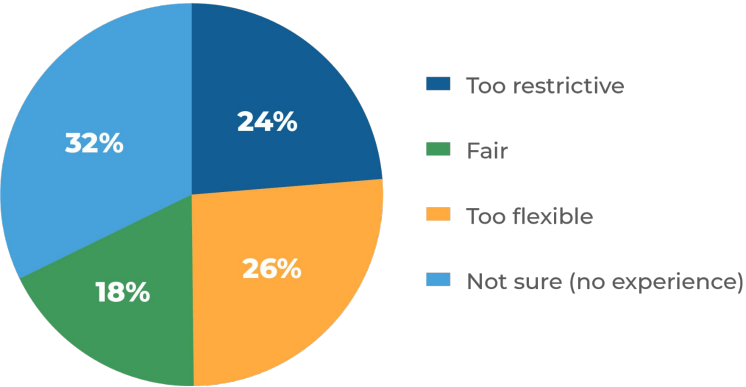
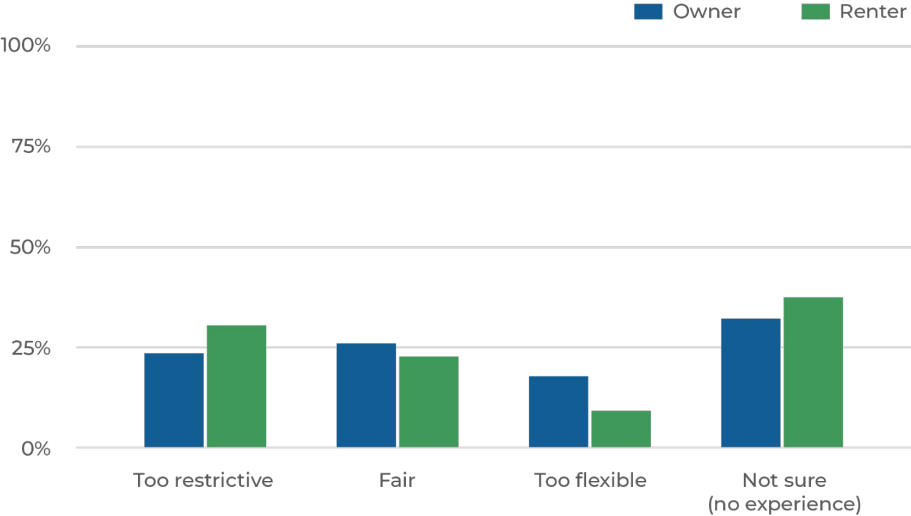
Have you been involved in zoning discussions or decisions affecting your neighborhood?



**Combined responses.*

ENGAGEMENT WAVE #1 | CITYWIDE SURVEY #1

In your experience, La Crosse's zoning code is:



**Combined responses.*

#1 | Increased Housing Availability and Type

There was strong support for increasing the overall housing supply and the diversity of housing types at a range of price points. Both homeowners and renters generally supported single-family homes, smaller multi-family developments, and mixed-use properties. While renters specifically advocated for more multi-family buildings, homeowners held mixed opinions on this.

#2 | Pedestrian-Friendly, Context-Sensitive Building Design

For both multi-family and low-density residential buildings, respondents prioritized attractive, pedestrian-friendly design elements for building entrances, landscaping, and frontage features in order to complement surrounding neighborhoods. Rear or screened parking and proximity to parks and open spaces were also desired for these building types.

#3 | Walkable Neighborhoods & Access to Amenities

Respondents expressed a desire for neighborhoods designed to allow residents to meet most daily needs—including access to housing, small retail, food, and service businesses—within a 15-minute walk or bike.

#4 | Environmental Stewardship & Sustainable Development

Respondents advocated for promoting environmentally friendly design practices in new development, improving stormwater management, preserving natural resources, and ensuring new construction is sensitive to natural surroundings.

#5 | Modernized Zoning Regulations & Public Participation

Many respondents called for modernizing the zoning code and allowing more flexible development. There was specific interest in simplifying zoning districts, increasing allowed density near downtown, supporting small business growth, reducing lot and setback requirements, and creating more adaptable zoning that supports infill and emerging uses, alongside expanding public participation to ensure community needs are met.

#6 | Infrastructure Optimization & Community Facilities

Beyond housing, there was a recognized need to improve and optimize existing infrastructure such as transportation networks (roads, public transit, sidewalks, bike lanes), upgrade water supply and drainage systems, and ensure adequate public service facilities like schools, healthcare, and senior services align with population growth.



COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Check Out the Input from the Engagement Wave 2 (Fall 2025)

ENGAGEMENT WAVE #2 | PUBLIC INPUT MEETINGS

~50+ PARTICIPANTS

October 29, 2025

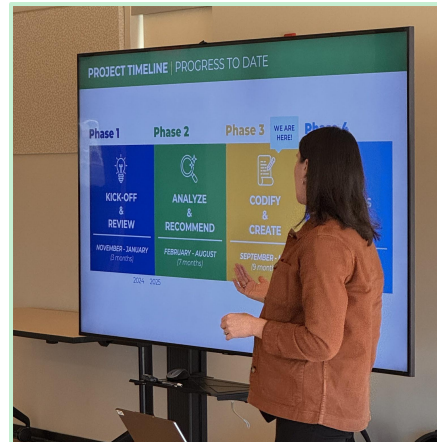
A video recording of the presentation and an online feedback form were available at www.forwardlacrosse.org following the meetings.



Black River Beach Neighborhood Center (12-2 PM)



Southside Neighborhood Center (5-7 PM)



PROJECT INTRODUCTION | WHAT IS ZONING?

Zoning organizes a community into **districts**, and regulates how land can be used.

Zoning Districts are generally categorized as:

- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Agricultural
- Conservancy

See how your feedback shaped the draft recommendations.

Public Input Meetings

12-2 PM @ Black River Beach Neighborhood Center

5-7 PM @ Southside Neighborhood Center

OCTOBER 29 WEDNESDAY

YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

www.forwardlacrosse.org

ENGAGEMENT WAVE #2 | PUBLIC INPUT MEETINGS TAKEAWAYS



Many residents support more housing options, especially missing middle housing like duplexes and small apartment buildings.



Some residents are concerned that allowing 3-4 units per lot could change the look and feel of established neighborhoods.



Neighborhood character, keeping the look and feel of existing neighborhoods is a top priority.



Some residents want to make sure the update benefits existing homeowners and neighborhoods, not just developers.

ENGAGEMENT WAVE #2 | NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOC. MEETINGS

80+ PARTICIPANTS

November 2025 - December 2025

- **Weigent-Hogan/Hintgen/Holy Trinity**
11.10 @ Utilitarian Universalist Fellowship
- **Logan Northside/Lower Northside & Depot Neighbors**
11.17 @ 5th Ward Community Room
- **Bluffside/Grandview-Emerson**
11.24 @ First Congressional Church
- **Washburn/Downtown/Powell-Poage-Hamilton**
12.09 @ American Legion Post #52



#1 | Housing & Parking Balance

Residents want to understand how increases in housing units, especially multi-family buildings, will be balanced with parking needs in their neighborhoods.

#2 | Smaller Lots & Flexibility

Residents were curious about whether smaller lot sizes would allow for creative solutions like garages underneath homes, ADUs (accessory dwelling units) above garages, and the ability to subdivide existing lots.

#3 | Code Enforcement & Property Maintenance

Strong interest in how the city addresses absentee landlords, condemned properties, and ensuring design standards are actually enforced, not just written into code.

#4 | Protecting Neighborhood Character

Residents want to ensure new development fits the existing character of their neighborhoods, with concerns about how density increases might change the feel of established single-family areas.

#5 | Short-Term Rentals (Airbnbs/VRBOs)

Multiple neighborhoods asked whether the updated code will regulate short-term rentals and address concerns about these properties replacing long-term family housing.

#6 | Balancing Housing Types & Community Needs

Discussion about finding the right balance between allowing diverse housing options (duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes) while protecting the stability of established neighborhoods and long-time residents.



COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Check Out the Input from the Engagement Wave 3 (Spring 2026)

ENGAGEMENT WAVE #3 | HOUSING WEEK POP-UPS & WORKSHOPS



ENGAGEMENT WAVE #3 | HOUSING WEEK TAKEAWAYS

~150 PARTICIPANTS

May 4, 2026 - May 5, 2026

- 4 Pop-up Events
- 2 Community Workshops



**Housing
for
Everyone**



**Protect
Neighborhood
Character**



**Remove
Barriers for
More Housing**



**Streamline
Development
Processes**



**More
Affordability
Tools**



Next Steps

Stay tuned for FAQ sheets,
project news, and the next
engagement opportunities!
Thanks for your feedback
& valuable insights!



ZONING
CODE
UPDATE



To learn more & get involved, visit:

www.forwardlacrosse.org