

Zoning Tools for Housing

City Council Workshop
December 11, 2025

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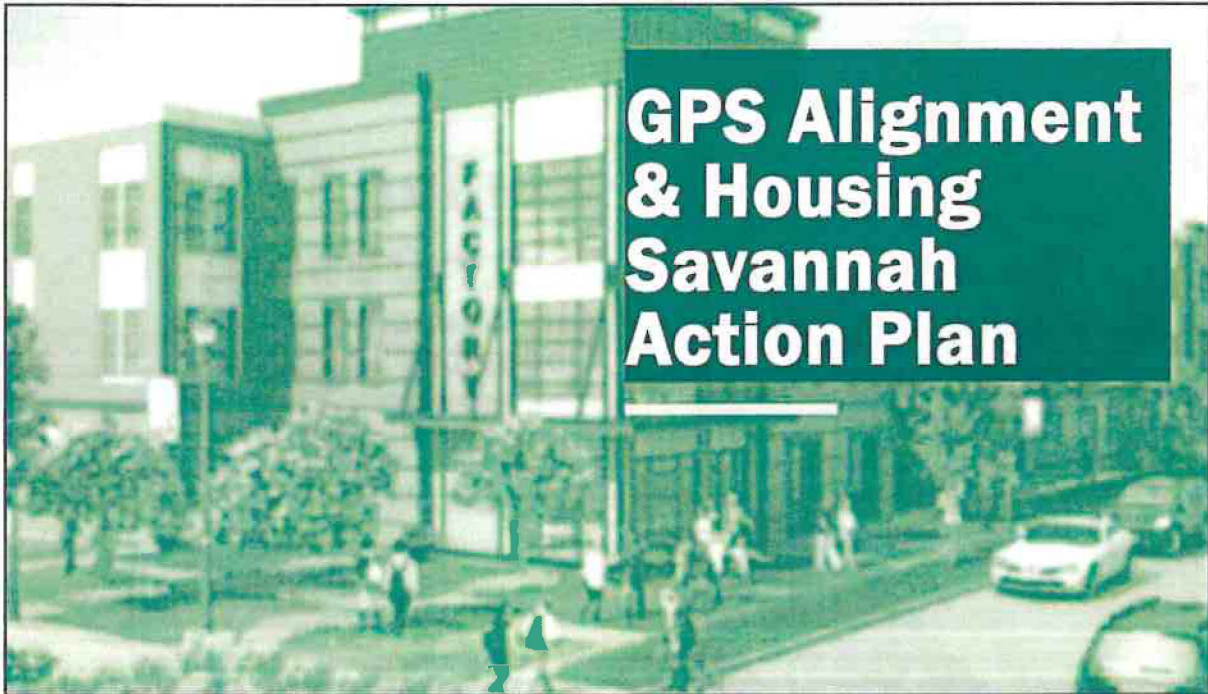
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GPS Alignment

Goal 2, Objective I, Strategy 1

Implement programs and partners with organizations to build, retain, and improve affordable housing and workforce housing options for individuals and families.

Goal 2, Objective I, Strategy 2

Update housing policies and ordinances to remove barriers and offer incentives that encourage the development of affordable housing.

Goal 3, Objective I, Strategy 3

Collaborate with partners and local businesses to foster economic opportunities by implementing effective economic development, incentive programs, streamlining permit and licenses processes, and building needed infrastructure to support local economic growth.

Goal 3, Objective IV, Strategy 4

Promote the development of housing and commercial spaces near transit hubs.

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Housing Savannah Action Plan



- Strategy #5

- Support Local, State and Federal Housing Friendly Policy and Legislation

5.A.4 Support, where appropriate and possible, zoning, development standard, licensing and similar ordinance amendments and/or new ordinances that promote housing affordability

5.A.5 Support research of inclusionary zoning ordinance best practices and alternatives that result in the development and/or funding of affordable housing

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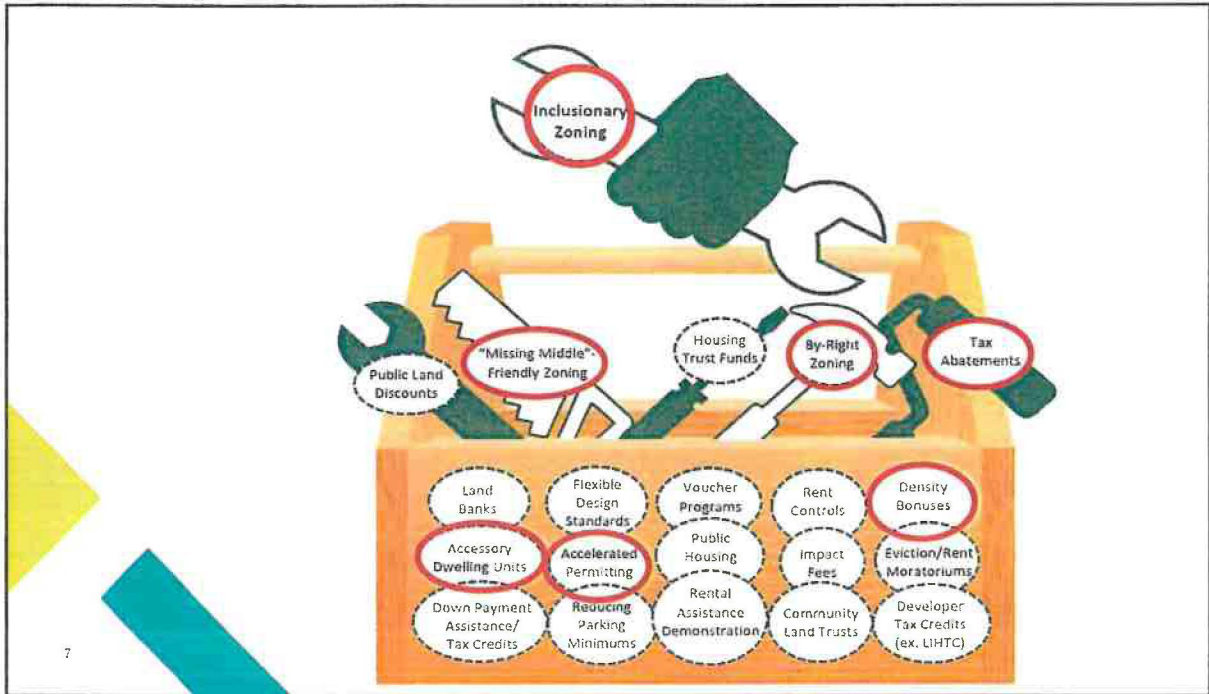
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General Strategy Approaches

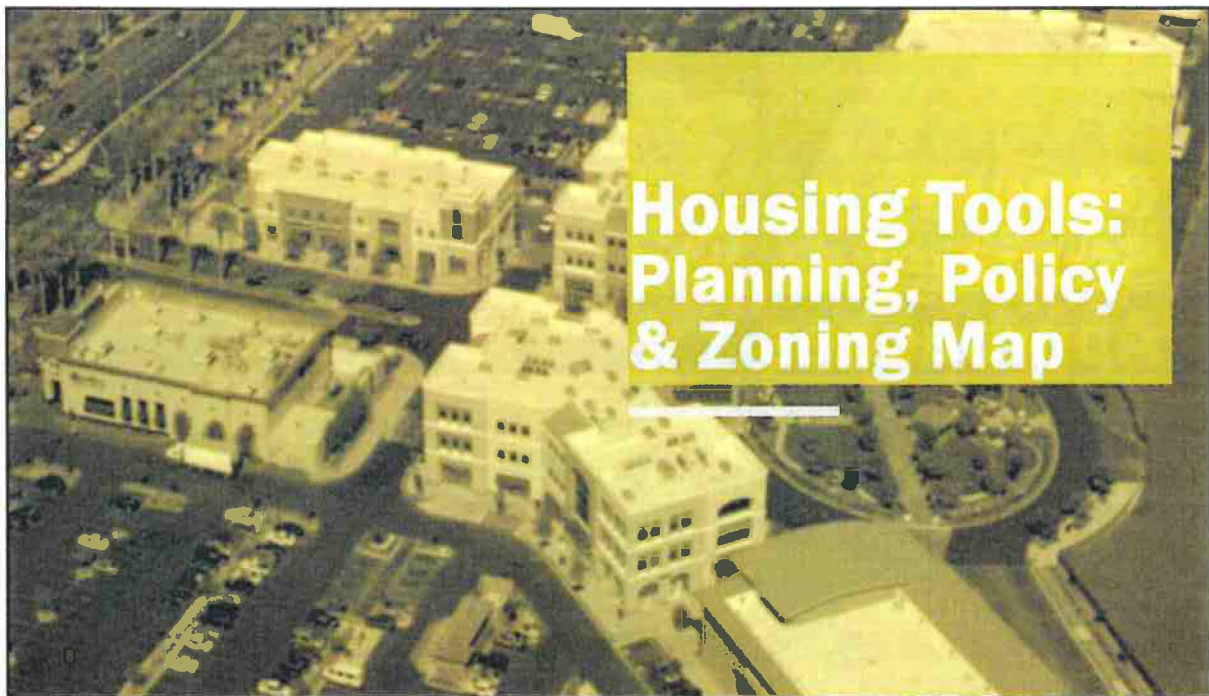


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Identify Housing Locations

- Identify opportunities to amend Future Land Use Map
- Use area planning processes to gather community input
- Identify areas with adequate infrastructure and complementary development to support more housing
- Apply Future Land Use categories to signal housing opportunity areas

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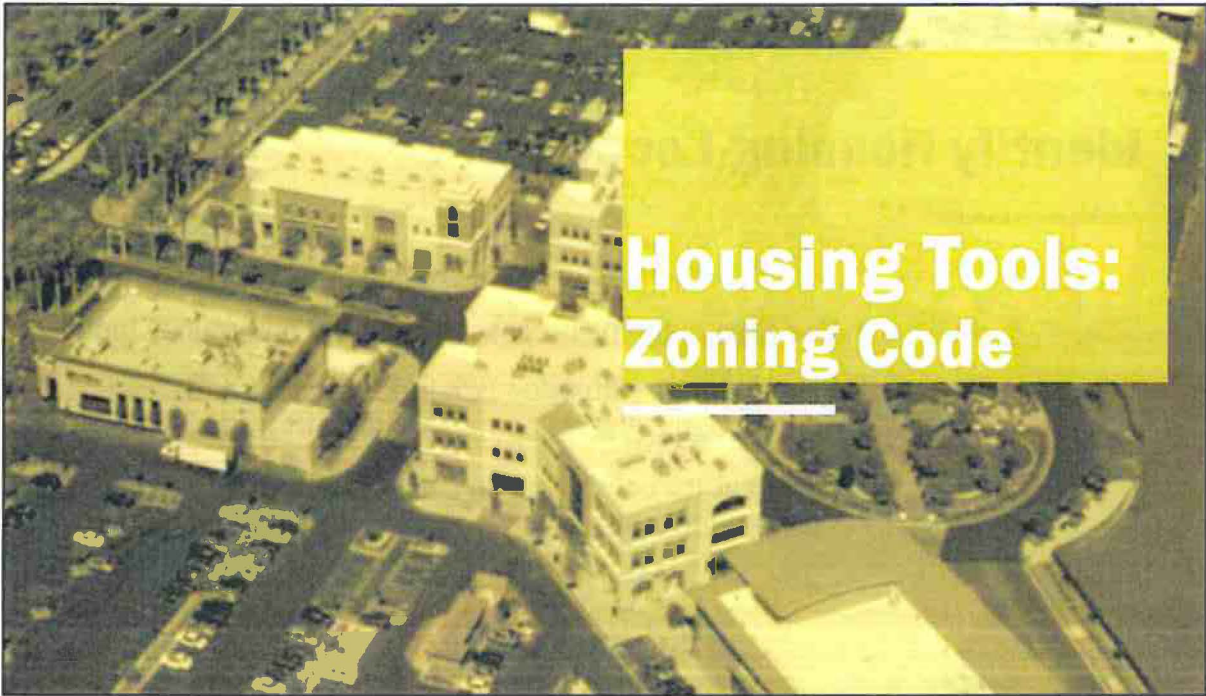
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City-Initiated Rezoning

- Residential Multi-family (RMF-) zoning districts are mostly located where multi-family housing already exists
- Proactive rezoning in FLUM-identified areas reduces procedural time and costs
- It is unnecessary for every townhouse or apartment development to go through the rezoning process
- Can also consider proactive rezoning to Residential Two Family (RTF), Limited Business (B-L), or Office and Institutional-Expanded (OI-E) according to FLUM guidance

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Modify Zoning Standards

- ✓ Affordable Housing Overlay District (AHOD)
- ✓ Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)
 - Multi-family in commercial districts
 - Transit and Pedestrian improvements
 - Use Buffers
 - Expand allowed locations for TN-
 - Cottage Court
 - Amend RSF-

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Multi-family in Commercial Districts



- Multiple business and office districts only allow apartments if located above retail space
- Forces rezoning in areas where apartments are suitable
- Vertical mixed use can be **challenging** for project financing, construction complexity, leasing commercial space
- Stand-alone apartment and townhouse developments could be allowed through text amendment
- Distinct density, setbacks, and limited use standards can be tailored to each zoning district
- Districts where stand-alone apartments and townhouses are not permitted include B-C, B-N, O-I, OI-T and OI-E

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Oglethorpe Mall – Sears Site



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Transit and Pedestrian Improvements



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- Strengthen requirements for pedestrian paths within and between developments
- Require transit stop improvements for developments above a certain size
 - Easement
 - Concrete pad
 - Bench
 - Shelter
- Degree of improvements scaled to size of development
- Reduce parking requirements for development near transit routes

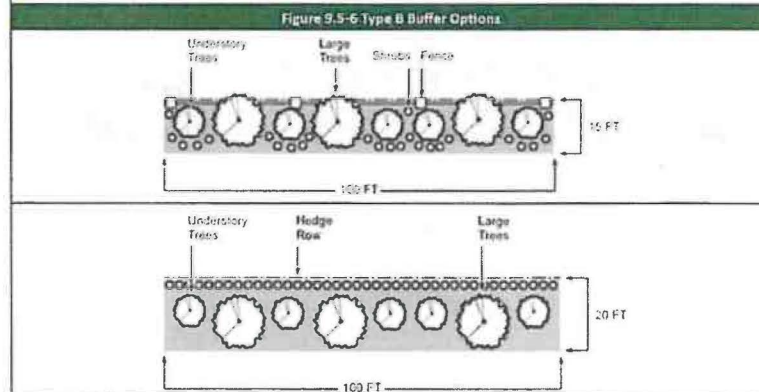
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Use Buffers

- Required landscaped areas between new multi-family development and existing low-density residential
- Typically required to be 15 or 20 feet wide
- Make development of narrow lots difficult

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Type B Buffer Planting Options			
	15 ft buffer with 6 ft fence/wall	20 ft buffer with 6 ft hedge row	30 ft buffer with No fence/wall or hedge
Plantings (per 100 linear feet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 large trees • 5 understory trees • 75 shrubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 large trees • 5 understory trees • Hedge row 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 large trees • 10 understory trees • 60 shrubs



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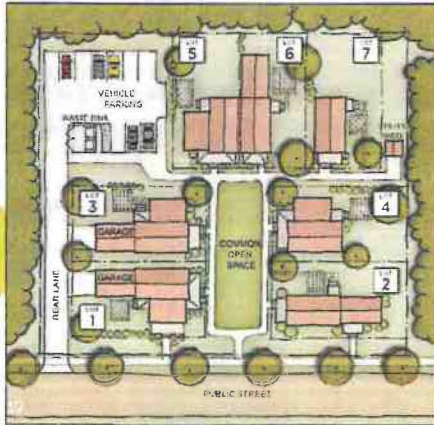
TN- Allowed Neighborhoods

- Definitions of TN- districts restrict them to specified historic areas
- Allow multi-family, mixed use, and limited commercial
- May be appropriate for edges of residential areas along frontage of major streets
- TC- zones are not restricted by neighborhood
- TN- is more restrictive of commercial uses than TC-

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Cottage Court

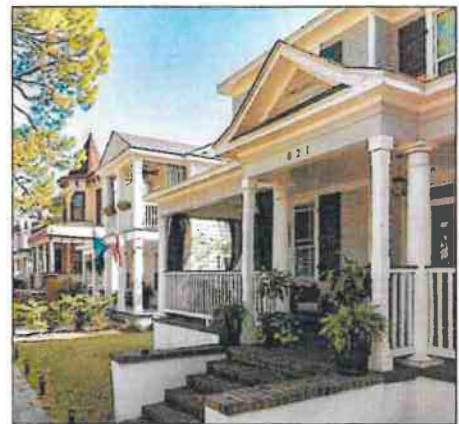


- Allow multiple single-family detached or duplex houses on one lot
- May allow additional density above typical zoning district standard
- Maximum floor area and height of houses often smaller than typical for district
- Includes standards for common areas, buffering, parking, etc.
- Can be single owner, condominium, or individual lots

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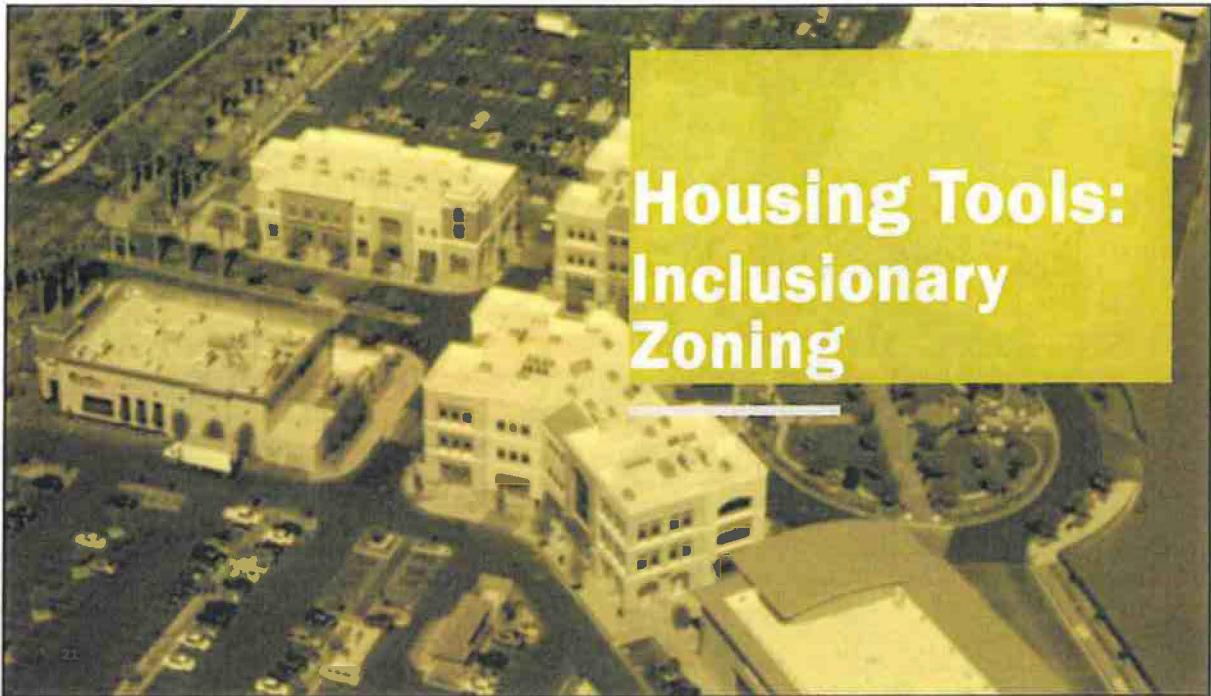
Missing Middle RSF- Standards

- Reduce minimum lot area and width to reflect existing lot patterns
- Allow duplex, three-family, four-family, and/or townhouse
- Reduce parking requirements near transit



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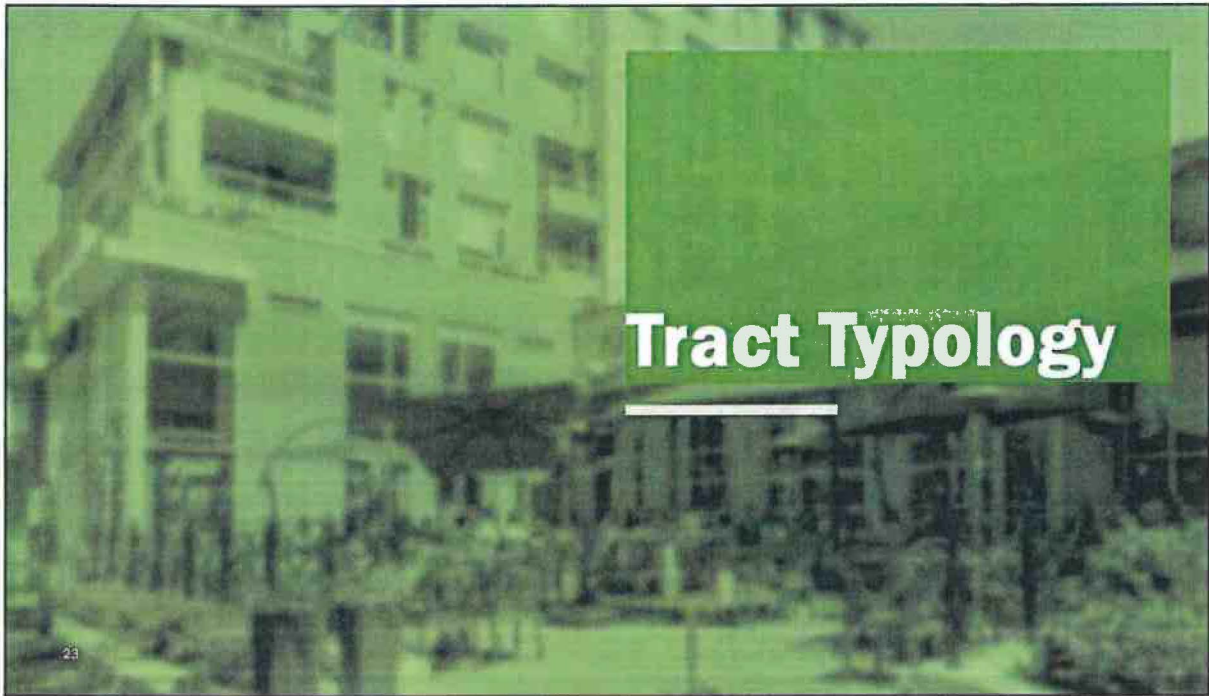
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Goals of Inclusionary Zoning

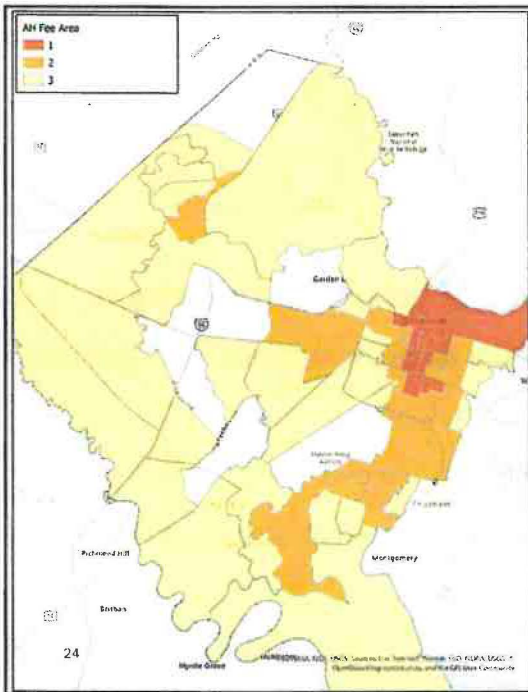
- Increase production of affordable housing units
- Target affordability to a range of incomes
- Encourage mixed-income communities
- Maintain affordability of units over time
- Don't deter development of market rate housing
- Comply with state statute

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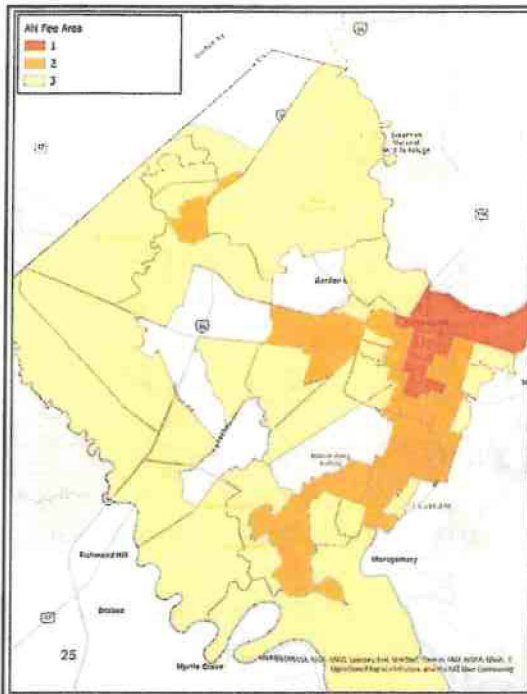


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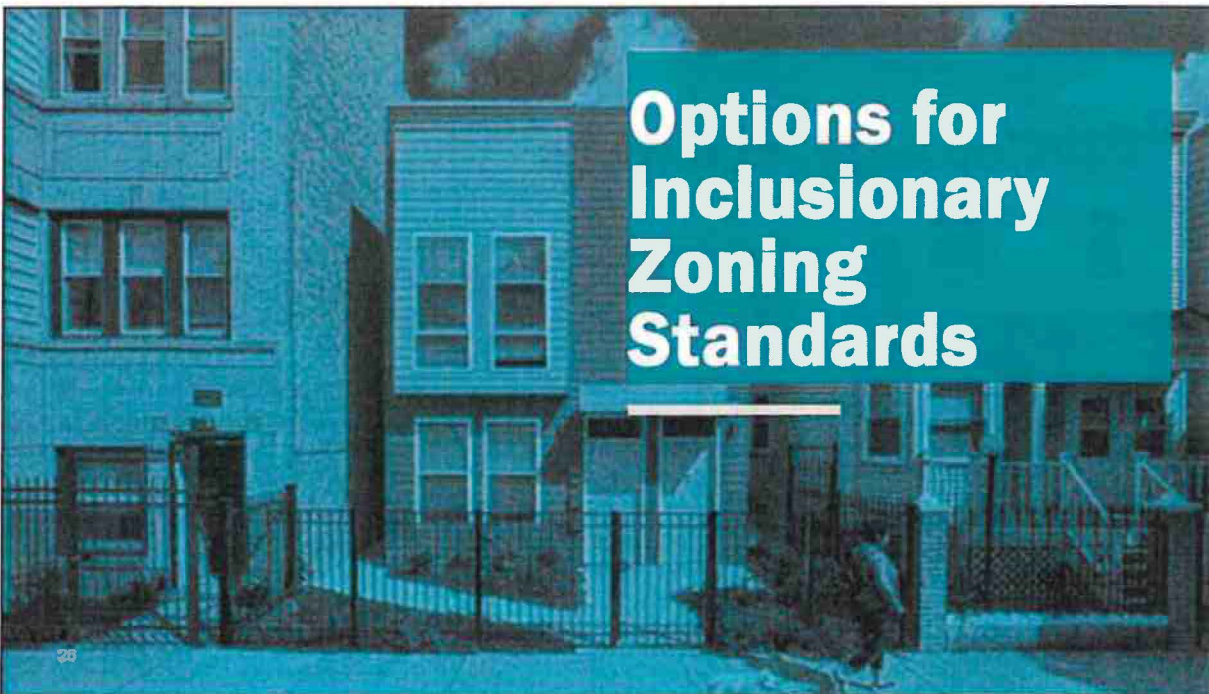
- Identify Census tracts containing Savannah's jurisdiction
- Evaluate property value, rental rates, median income, rent burden
- Assign type 1, 2, or 3
- Tract type determines degree of affordability requirement

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- Tract map would be maintained outside of the zoning ordinance as a policy document
- Ordinance will give City Manager or designee ability to modify
 - Tier 1: High land costs; higher rents; greater inclusionary requirement; higher fee-in-lieu
 - Tier 2: Mid-level land costs; lower rents than downtown; lower inclusionary requirement; lower impact fee
 - Tier 3: Lowest land cost; lowest rental rates; lowest inclusionary requirement; lowest impact fee (areas where market-rate housing is most affordable)

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Affordable Component: Tract Types

The following minimum percentages of affordable units must be provided for each target level of Area Median Income (AMI) for multi-family development

Type 1 Tracts (10+ units)	Type 2 Tracts (15+ units)	Type 3 Tracts (25+ units)
15% of units at 80 to 100% AMI	15% of units at 80 to 100% AMI	7.5% of units at 80 to 100% AMI
10% of units at 60 to 80% AMI	10% of units at 60 to 80% AMI	5% of units at 60 to 80% AMI
5% of units at 60% or less of AMI	5% of units at 60% or less of AMI	2.5% of units at 60% or less of AMI

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Development Incentives



- The following incentives may be used when affordable units are provided within the development (not when fee-in-lieu is used):

- **Height** may be increased by one story and 15 feet
- Maximum **density** may be increased by 10 dwelling units per acre or minimum lot area per unit may be reduced by 30%
- Use **buffer width** may be reduced by 5 feet; height bonus may not be applied in the reduction area
- Affordable units do not require **parking** when the site is within ¼ mile of a public transit route

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Fee-In-Lieu

- A developer may pay a fee-in-lieu of **each** required affordable unit that is not provided on-site
- Fee revenue to be deposited in the Savannah Affordable Housing Fund for **affordable** housing elsewhere
- If a developer splits the requirement between on-site inclusion and fee-in-lieu, the number of units to be used for the basis of the fee-in-lieu will be for the **80% AMI** level
 - Tract Type 1: \$180,000
 - Tract Type 2: \$150,000
 - Tract Type 3: \$75,000

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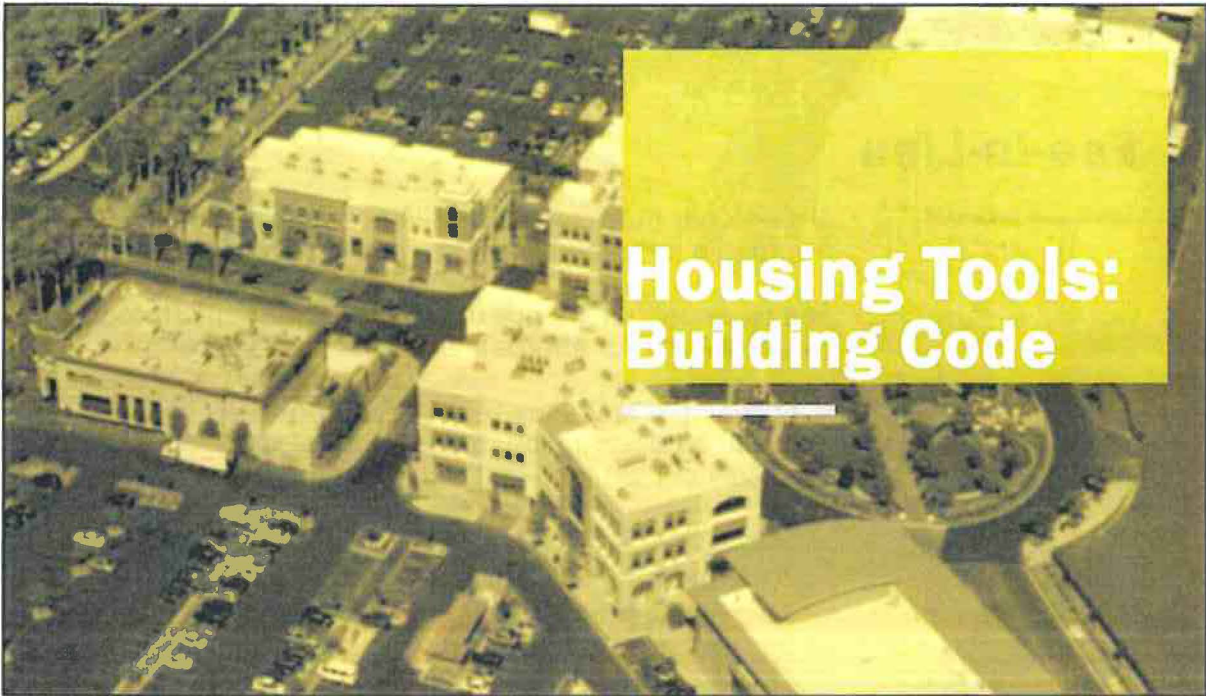
IZ Alternative: Incentive-based



- Require units only when developer makes use of optional incentives
- Similar types of incentives **as** would be offered for mandatory IZ
 - Increased height
 - Increased density
 - Reduced buffers
 - Reduced **parking** near transit
- Likely to be more effective in certain areas (Ex. Type 1 tracts)


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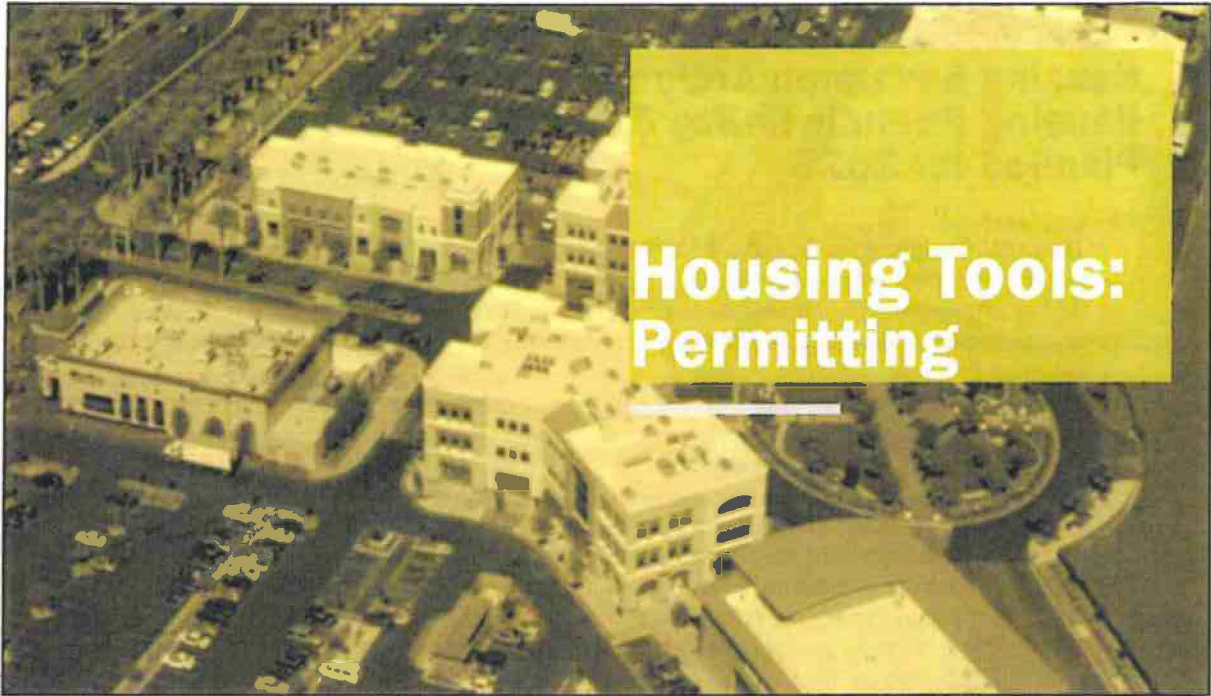
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Building Code




- Savannah uses the 2018 version of the International Building Code (IBC) and the 2024 National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Life Safety Code
- Residential buildings with three or more units are treated as commercial and required to have fire sprinklers
- Fire sprinklers required for most new multi-family construction are costly
- Savannah can work with state agencies on changes to life safety codes to allow lower cost fire safety options for small apartment buildings (such as 3 to 12 units) that do not compromise life safety goals

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Permitting



- Waive site permit review fees for affordable housing
- Create a project manager position to:
 - Provide intensive staff support for site permit review of developments that include affordable units
 - Schedule cross-departmental meetings on behalf of applicants to discuss all review comments
 - Monitor and coordinate applicant submittals with review departments
- Could provide similar service to market-rate and commercial developments for a fee

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Housing Savannah Action Plan: Strategy 5 Housing Friendly Policy & Legislation Activities Planned for 2026

- Continue to increase sources of and funding for the Savannah Affordable Housing Fund.
- Continue to investigate rent and income restricted rental property tax relief options.
- Continue to develop an “umbrella” plan that helps families protect and grow their real estate assets—including providing families with options for building generational wealth with the family property.
- Continue to review and improve local ordinances, standards and policies impacting housing affordability for renters, homeowners, and homebuyers including those related to:
 - Lot size and set back requirements.
 - Driveway size and location requirements. (\$2,000 estimated savings)
 - **Sidewalk** installation requirements in the City right-of-way. (\$2,000 estimated savings)
 - Historic overlay zoning requirements that protect both the architectural and human **characteristics** of older neighborhoods. (\$10,000+ estimated savings)
- ~~Seek State~~ support to exempt affordable and workforce housing development from paying Impact Fees—without the local government having to substitute other resources for the waived fees. (\$3,931 estimated savings)

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