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# SINGLE-FAMILY ZONING ANALYSIS

## PHASE 2

### DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONALS SURVEY FINDINGS



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## NORTHEAST OHIO FIRST SUBURBS CONSORTIUM MEMBER COMMUNITIES

Bedford  
Bedford Heights  
Berea  
Brook Park  
Brooklyn  
Brooklyn Heights  
Cleveland Heights  
East Cleveland  
Euclid  
Fairview Park

Garfield Heights  
Lakewood  
Maple Heights  
Newburgh Heights  
Parma  
Parma Heights  
Shaker Heights  
South Euclid  
University Heights  
Warrensville Heights

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### OUR MISSION

The Cuyahoga County Planning Commission's mission is to inform and provide services in support of the short and long term comprehensive planning, quality of life, environment, and economic development of Cuyahoga County and its cities, villages and townships.

# **SINGLE-FAMILY ZONING ANALYSIS**

PHASE 2

## **DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONALS SURVEY FINDINGS**

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# INTRODUCTION

The Single-Family Zoning Analysis is a project of the Northeast Ohio First Suburbs Consortium in partnership with the Cuyahoga County Land Bank, facilitated by the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission, and supported financially by First Federal of Lakewood. Its goal is to identify issues within zoning regulations that can make constructing desired infill housing difficult or cost-ineffective.

## PROJECT GOAL

**Identify issues within zoning regulations that can make constructing desired infill housing difficult or cost-ineffective.**

## NORTHEAST OHIO FIRST SUBURBS CONSORTIUM

Created in 1996 by elected officials representing communities surrounding Cleveland, the Northeast Ohio First Suburbs Consortium is the first government-led advocacy organization in the country working to revitalize mature developed communities, and raise public and political awareness of the problems and inequities associated with urban sprawl and urban disinvestment.

The Northeast Ohio First Suburbs Consortium was created as a council of governments to respond to government policies and practices which promote the development of new communities at the outer edges of metropolitan regions over the redevelopment and maintenance of mature suburbs.

## INFILL HOUSING



Infill housing brings new homes and people to existing neighborhoods.

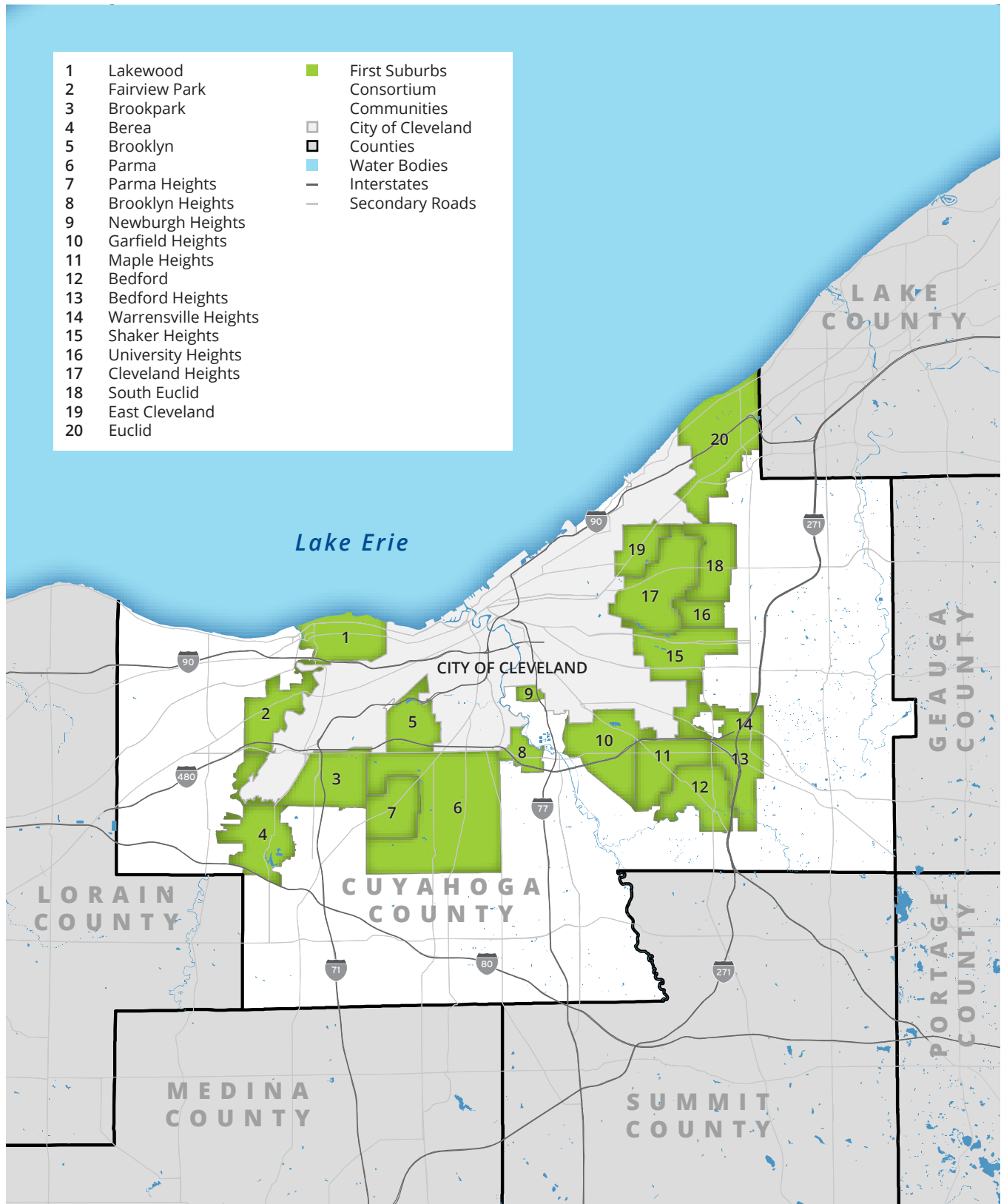
*Source: Cuyahoga County Land Bank*

## SINGLE-FAMILY ZONING ANALYSIS: PHASE 2

The Single-Family Zoning Analysis: Phase 2 is the second phase of a project that will address the issue of single-family infill development in the First Suburbs. Phase 2 provides best practices, incentives, and code options that directly address issues identified in the first phase of the Single-Family Zoning Analysis.

This document provides a summary of a survey sent out to local development professionals, which was used to help inform the guides and best practice materials produced in Phase 2.

## MAP 1 | FIRST SUBURBS CONSORTIUM COMMUNITIES



Source: County Planning

# SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

## DEVELOPER SURVEY

This survey was sent to over 100 development professionals who have experience building single-family infill on April 29th, 2022. The survey includes 17 questions, and this report provides a summary of answers for 13. The remaining four questions include contact information and information about the respondent's organization. In total, 23 development professionals responded to the survey, and the answers are included in this document.

Below are eight major findings from the survey. On the following pages you will find responses to individual questions as submitted by participating development professionals.

1

**Respondents identified tax abatements, land acquisition costs, and neighborhood walkability as major benefits of developing in the First Suburbs.**

The availability of tax abatements (87.5%), land acquisition costs (75%), and neighborhood walkability (56.3%) were identified as the top benefits of building in First Suburb communities. Respondents also indicated that the First Suburbs are an under-served market, and they are communities with good amenities that people want to live in.

2

**Many of the identified challenges builders face when developing single-family infill are process based.**

The city approval process (70.6%), architectural review boards (64.7%), and planning review and approval (52.9%) were identified by respondents as challenges to developing single-family infill housing in the First Suburbs.

3

**An easy-to-use zoning document with clear requirements is important to builders.**

More than half of respondents rated an easy-to-use zoning document with clear requirements as being most important when considering whether to pursue single-family infill development in a specific community. Respondents indicated that clear expectations, a dedicated zoning chapter, or a single point-of-contact with city staff would smooth the process.

4

**Respondents identified additional non-process related challenges to developing single-family infill housing.**

Public perception of safety (58.8%), appraised land value issues (58.8%), and the lack of economy of scale (52.9%) are additional, non-development process or review challenges identified by developers when building single-family infill housing.

5

**Issues with zoning codes can dissuade builders from developing in First Suburb communities.**

While a majority (61.1%) of builders surveyed were not dissuaded from developing single-family infill housing, 38.9% indicated that they have been dissuaded from developing single-family infill housing in a First Suburb community at some point due to that community's zoning code or codified ordinances.

6

**Minimum lot sizes and approval processes can be significant barriers to developing single-family infill.**

Minimum lot sizes (78.6%) and approval processes (78.6%) were identified by respondents as being the biggest barriers to developing single-family infill housing in First Suburbs. Other significant barriers include primary structure setbacks (64.3%) and maximum lot coverage requirements (57.1%).

7

**Tax abatements are the most useful incentive for single-family infill developers in First Suburb communities.**

Tax abatements (93.3%) were identified by respondents as the most helpful incentive for developing infill single-family homes. Other incentives, such as free or reduced lot purchase prices (85.7%) and streamlined approval/permit process (73.3%) are also helpful to builders and developers.

8

**Energy efficiency features, basements, porches, and off-street parking are common infill amenities.**

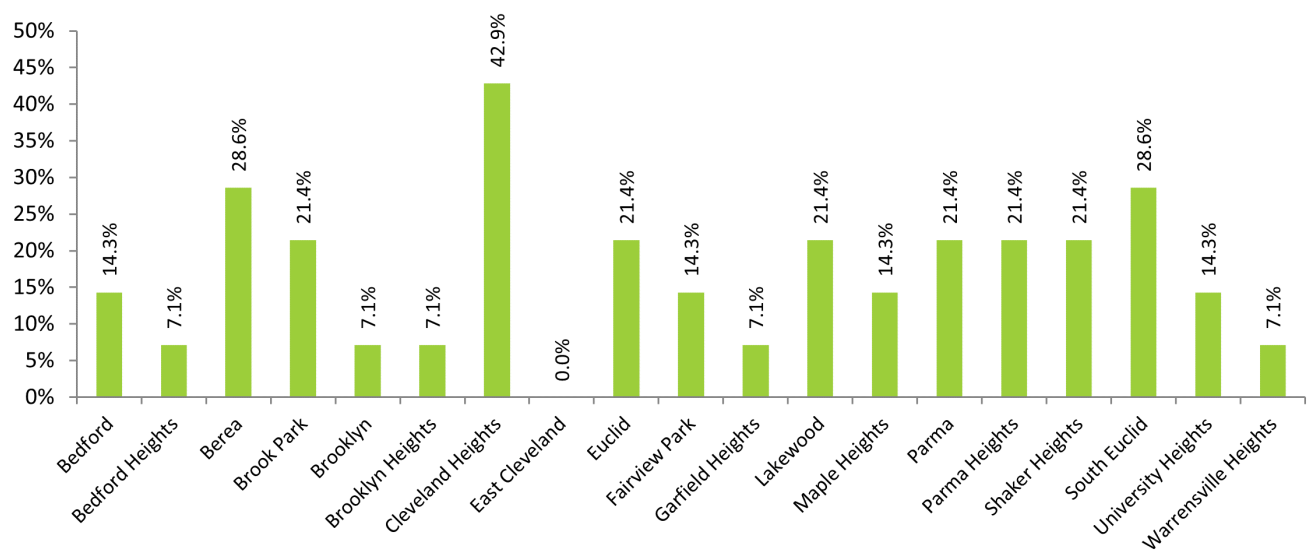
In total 88.2% of respondents typically include energy efficiency features, while only 17.7% include ADA accessibility features, and only 5.9% include accessory dwelling units (ADUs) or in-law suites. Many respondents cite small lots and setback requirements as reasoning for not including ADUs.

# INDIVIDUAL QUESTION RESPONSES

## QUESTION A

IN WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING FIRST SUBURB COMMUNITIES HAVE YOU DEVELOPED SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSING WITHIN THE LAST FIVE YEARS? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

(14 respondents)

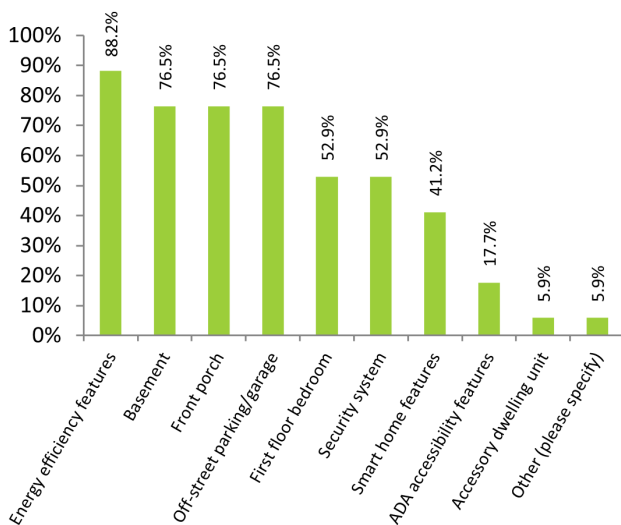




## QUESTION B

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING AMENITIES DO YOU TYPICALLY INCLUDE IN YOUR SINGLE-FAMILY INFILL HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

(17 Respondents)



Comments:

- Modern, open floor plans; large closets; and outdoor space

## QUESTION C

HAVE YOU HAD ANY DIFFICULTIES INCLUDING ANY AMENITIES IN YOUR INFILL SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS IN FIRST SUBURB COMMUNITIES? IF SO, PLEASE DESCRIBE THEM.

(10 Respondents)

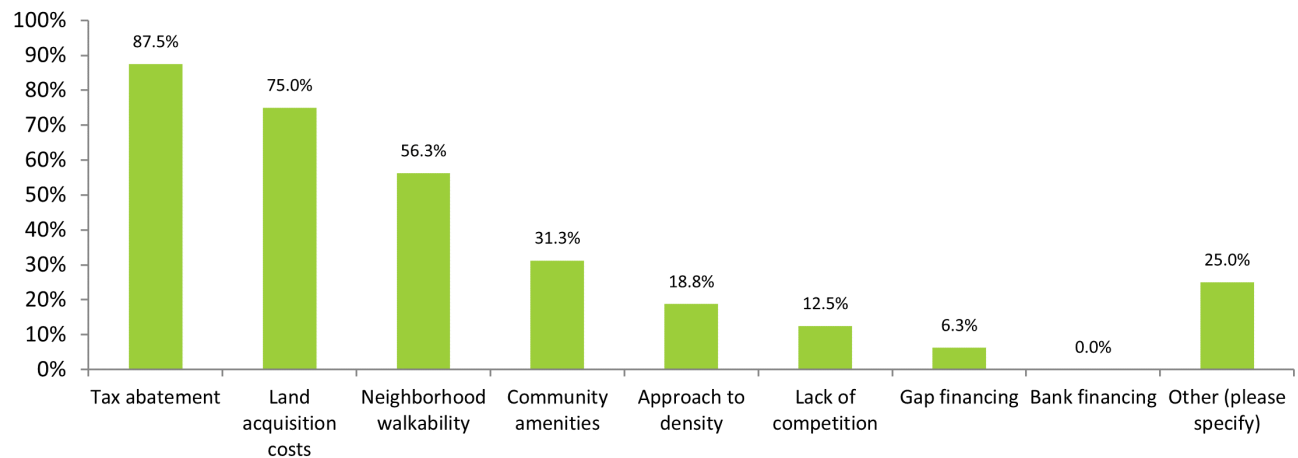
Comments:

- Sometimes it is hard to fit in the first floor bedroom on tighter lots. A third car garage, and extra parking for older children that drive sometimes require variances for additional lot coverage.
- We have attached garages and getting variances from Board of Zoning Appeals and Architecture Review Boards [can be difficult].
- [A community's] current zoning requires an enclosed 2-car garage. We have had some issues fitting this, along with the home, on the lots while working within required set-backs.
- Garages [can be difficult when we] can't do front loading, [and] side loading doesn't work on small lots. People want an attached garage product, if you do it in the rear, you kill a backyard.
- Smaller lots make it difficult for customers to get what they want. We're a custom builder so a little different.

## QUESTION D

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF DEVELOPING INFILL SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSING IN THE FIRST SUBURBS? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

(16 Respondents)



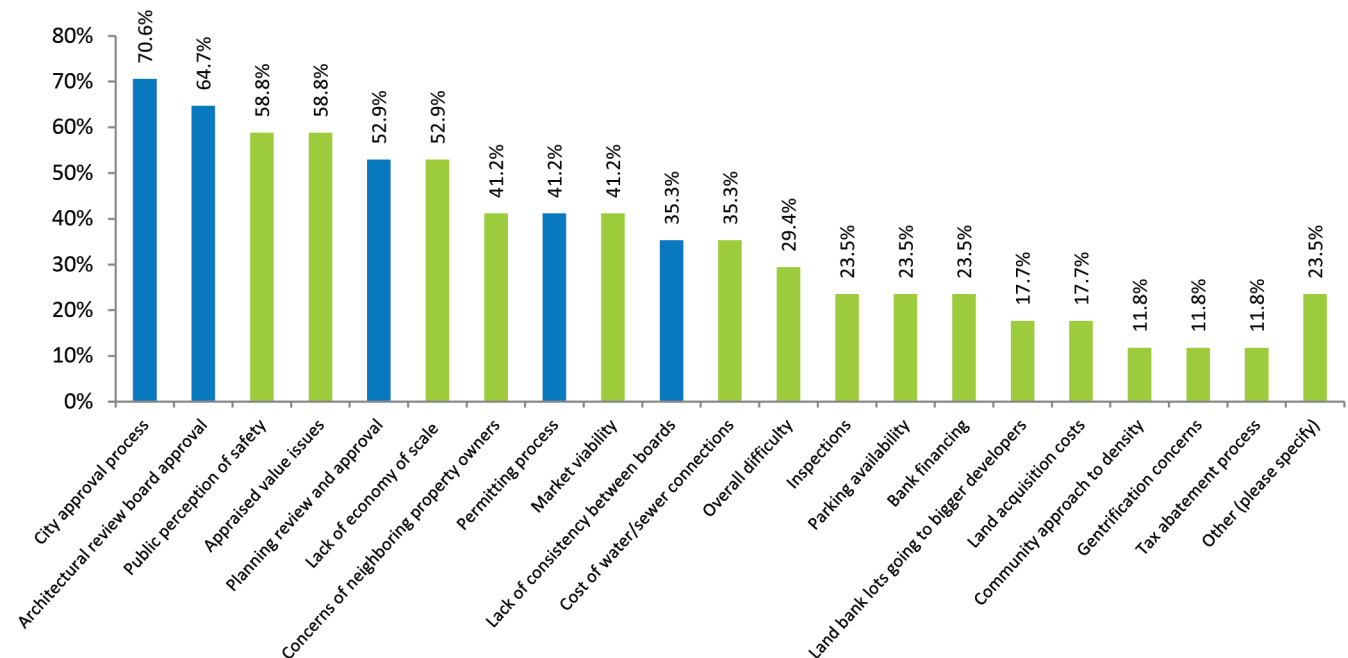
### Comments:

- People want to live in these communities
- Community restoration
- Under-served markets

## QUESTION E

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF DEVELOPING INFILL SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSING IN THE FIRST SUBURBS? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

(17 Respondents)



Comments:

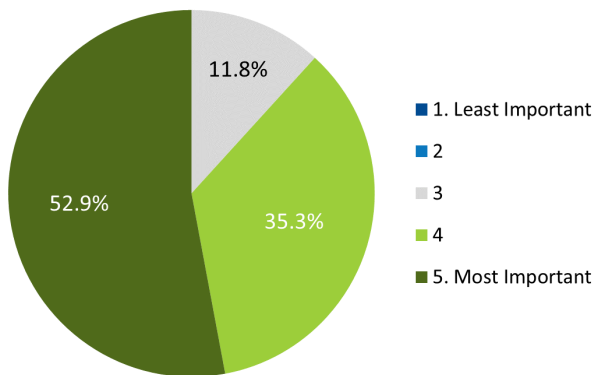
- Difficult/inefficient to send a builder team out to a new market with no other opportunities of scale around them.
- [There is] more scrutiny compared to "newer" suburbs.
- Job Securities

*\*Blue bars indicate challenges that are related to the development review and approval process*

## QUESTION F

FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE, HOW IMPORTANT IS AN EASY-TO-USE ZONING DOCUMENT WITH CLEAR REQUIREMENTS WHEN CONSIDERING WHETHER TO PURSUE NEW SINGLE-FAMILY INFILL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT? PLEASE SELECT ON A SCALE OF 1-5, WITH 1 BEING LEAST IMPORTANT, AND 5 BEING MOST IMPORTANT:

(17 Respondents)

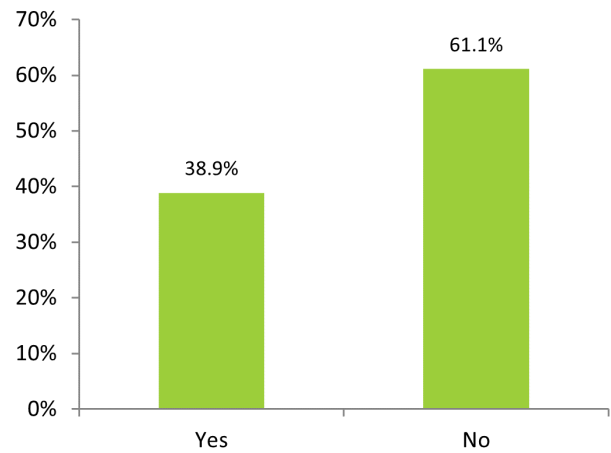


\*No respondent selected 1 (least important) or 2.

## QUESTION G

HAVE YOU BEEN DISSUADED FROM DEVELOPING SINGLE-FAMILY INFILL HOUSING IN A FIRST SUBURB COMMUNITY DUE TO ISSUES WITH ITS ZONING CODE OR CODIFIED ORDINANCES?

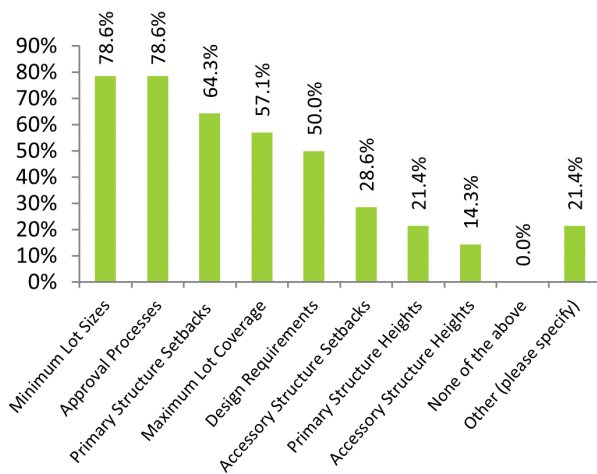
(18 Respondents)



## QUESTION H

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ZONING REGULATIONS ARE THE BIGGEST BARRIERS TO DEVELOPING SINGLE-FAMILY INFILL HOUSING IN FIRST SUBURB COMMUNITIES? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

(14 respondents)



Comments:

- [Communities] have been taking vacant lots and splitting them with the two adjoining homes
- Our new homes are not of the same style as much of the existing housing stock. It is not really practical for a production builder to alter our standard plans to fit with the design elements of older stock present in these communities.

*\*Primary refers to the main structure on the lot (such as the single-family home)*

*\*\*Setbacks refers to front, rear, or side setbacks*

*\*\*\*Accessory refers to secondary structures on the lot (such as garages or sheds)*

## QUESTION I

PLEASE DESCRIBE IF ANY OF THE ZONING REGULATIONS LISTED CAUSED ANY UNEXPECTED COST OR DELAY TO YOUR PROJECT.

(6 Respondents)

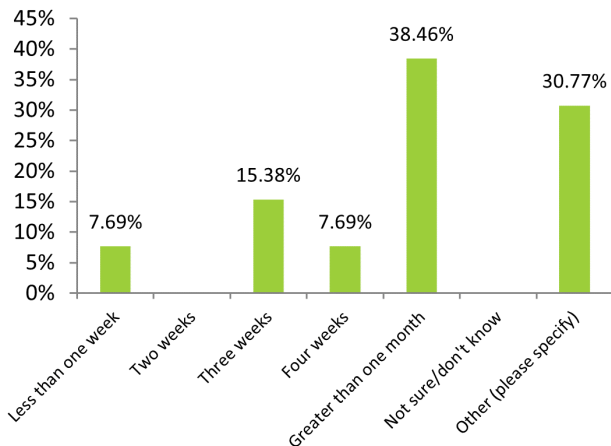
Comments:

- The city handled the demolition of the homes where the infill housing projects took place, but still required phase 1 and 2 soil testing to be completed to ensure that demolition was completed to their standards.
- Top soil, not allowing for slab on grade foundations.
- Any delay is detrimental due to potential cost escalations and holding costs for land - especially in areas with high property taxes, etc.
- Design requirements can cause unexpected costs.

## QUESTION J

IF YOUR FIRM HAS EXPERIENCE DEVELOPING INFILL SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSING IN FIRST SUBURB COMMUNITIES, WHAT IS THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF DAYS THAT ELAPSE FROM PLAN SUBMITTAL TO PROJECT APPROVAL?

(13 Respondents)



Comments:

- Have not built in these communities during my time [at the organization].
- It is usually a 2-3 month process.
- Our infill project is currently underway so we don't have a completion time.

## QUESTION K

PLEASE DESCRIBE ANY OTHER ZONING REGULATIONS OR ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS THAT MAY DISCOURAGE OR IMPEDE YOUR DEVELOPMENT OF SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSING IN FIRST SUBURBS.

(6 Respondents)

- Setbacks and lot coverage.
- Architectural review boards encouraging or requiring rear and/or side loaded garages and antiquated design standards.
- Some communities require simulated divided lite windows for infill projects, which increases the cost for construction considerably. It is hard to match older homes in terms of quality as new products are so much more expensive.
- The minimum square footage has been a challenge in building in LMI (Low- Moderate-Income) areas. [A community] wants minimum 1500 sqft which may price out people in the neighborhood. Lower minimums could be more affordable to build and purchase.
- ARB (Architectural Review Boards) wanting to add items that increase cost of the home that do not add value. Codified ordinances that were not really designed for single-family homes are applied to them.
- Overall NIMBYism

## QUESTION L

PLEASE DESCRIBE ANY CHANGES TO ZONING REGULATIONS THAT MIGHT FACILITATE MORE EFFICIENT OR EFFECTIVE INFILL SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

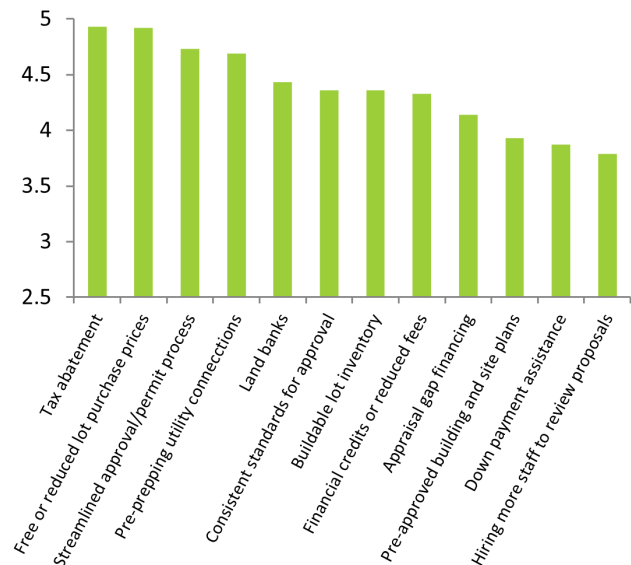
(6 Respondents)

- Laxing of architectural review board requirements.
- Maybe a special "infill single family" zoning chapter that quickly identifies what is required for a new home in that community.
- Having flexible minimum square footage.
- Cities need to have a solid outlined process that is user-friendly, and someone to help you navigate it.
- Allow more density in zoning designations - allow 2-family/cluster homes in some areas that are currently zoned single-family. Perhaps Accessory Dwelling Units are a strategy that could work.
- A clear and detailed requirement list/package is always helpful. Knowing the process, costs, and requirements before you start.

## QUESTION M

FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE WHICH NON-ZONING RELATED INCENTIVE PROGRAMS ARE THE MOST HELPFUL IN SUPPORTING INFILL SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN FIRST SUBURB COMMUNITIES? PLEASE SELECT ON A SCALE OF 1-5, WITH 1 BEING LEAST HELPFUL, AND 5 BEING MOST HELPFUL.

(15 Respondents)



\*Y axis values refer to the weighted average of respondent's answers on the 1-5 scaled matrix.



## County Planning

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FOR OUR REGION  
FOR OUR FUTURE