INFILL HOUSING GUIDELINES

2021 UPDATE

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
LAND USE ELEMENT
SUPPORTING PLAN
INDIANAPOLIS AND MARION COUNTY

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
NEIGHBORHOOD ELEMENT
SUPPORTING PLAN
INDIANAPOLIS AND MARION COUNTY

METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

OF MARION COUNTY, INDIANA

RESOLUTION NO. 2021-P-004

RESOLUTION **2021-P-004**, amending a segment of the Comprehensive or Master Plan of Marion County, Indiana, the Infill Housing Guidelines, 2021 Update.

Be it resolved that, pursuant to I.C. 36-7-4, the Metropolitan Development Commission of Marion County, Indiana, hereby amends the Comprehensive or Master Plan for Marion County, Indiana, by the adoption of the Infill Housing Guidelines, 2021 Update, a copy of which is on file and available for inspection during normal business hours in the office of the Department of Metropolitan Development, as an amendment to the Comprehensive or Master Plan of Marion County, Indiana.

Be it further resolved that the Secretary of the Metropolitan Development Commission is directed to certify copies of this Resolution **2021-P-004** amending the Comprehensive or Master Plan of Marion County, Indiana, Infill Housing Guidelines, 2021 Update.

Be it further resolved that the Director of the Department of Metropolitan Development is directed to mail or deliver certified copies of this Resolution **2021-P-004**, to the Mayor of the City of Indianapolis, the City-County Council of Indianapolis and Marion County, the Board of Commissioners of Marion County, Indiana and to the legislative authorities of the incorporated cities and towns of Marion County, Indiana that are directly affected by this amendment: Beech Grove, Lawrence, Southport, Speedway, Clermont, Crows Nest, Cumberland, Highwoods, Homecroft, Meridian Hills, North Crows Nest, Rocky Ripple, Spring Hills, Warren Park, Williams Creek, and Wynnedale The Director shall also file one (1) summary of the amendment in the office of the Recorder of Marion County.

DATE: _5-19-2021_

METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION OF MARION COUNTY,
INDIANA

APPROVED AS TO LEGAL FORM
AND ADEQUACY THIS 12th DAY
OF ___May___, 20 21 .

_____
John J. Dillon III, President

Thomas Moore
Thomas Moore,
Assistant Corporation Counsel

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, there has been increased demand for housing in downtown Indianapolis and nearby neighborhoods. Since the beginning of the Great Recession in 2008, hundreds of new single-family houses and duplexes have been built within three miles of Monument Circle, in addition to thousands of units of other types of housing, including townhomes and apartments. Much of the growth has occurred in neighborhoods that were first built decades ago.

The design of this new housing, called "infill housing" because it occurs in-between existing houses, has sometimes differed from the surrounding context. Some of these differences in design reflect changes in individual taste and outdated design standards. Other differences reflect changes in preferences, including residents looking for the square footage associated with suburban-sized houses on traditionally sized lots. As such, there has been an increase in the massing of houses in mature neighborhoods. This has led to houses that may be taller, wider, or shaped differently than nearby houses.

There are many elements that foster a sense of community and belonging within a neighborhood. The 2010 Knight Soul of the Community report* that surveyed over 14,000 people in 26 different communities found that aesthetics was one of the top three reasons that people felt connected to their community. Additionally, when smaller homes are torn down and replaced with significantly larger homes that do not match the surrounding context, this reduces the stock of affordable housing in a way that can limit long-term residents' ability to stay within a neighborhood.** Though cities should approach community-building from a wide range of people- and place-based policies, design matters.

Growth in mature neighborhoods offers many opportunities, and it can be a sign of the overall well-being of the entire city. However, preserving character while allowing neighborhoods to grow and adapt to modern trends is challenging. New development that is not coordinated with its surrounding context can diminish an area's sense of place, but heavily dictating the design or type of development, including single-family homes, duplexes, triplexes, and townhomes, can potentially drive up real estate prices when demand for housing is strong. Finding methods to honor the past while allowing sustainable growth at a range of price points is important. The goal of these Infill Housing Guidelines is to create a strong framework to do just this.

*Gallup International, Inc. 2010. *Knight Soul of the Community 2010 - Why People Love Where They Live and Why It Matters: A National Perspective*. Accessed July 2020. Available at https://knightfoundation.org/sotc/overall-findings/

**US Department of Housing and Urban Development. May 2018. *Displacement of Lower-Income Families in Urban Areas*. Accessed April 2021. Available at https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/DisplacementReport.pdf

PURPOSE STATEMENTS

The following statements drove the creation of these Infill Housing Guidelines:

- The City of Indianapolis first created Infill Housing Guidelines in 1993. Although there have been significant changes in existing neighborhoods, those guidelines have never been updated. An update is needed to make the Infill Housing Guidelines relevant to current growth patterns, while maintaining the original goal of guiding context-appropriate development in existing neighborhoods.

- Over its history, dozens of unique neighborhoods have grown throughout Indianapolis. Providing customized recommendations for each neighborhood is beyond the scope of this document. These guidelines provide insight into basic concepts that shape the character of neighborhoods and are meant to be utilized in context with surrounding architecture, the individual history of each neighborhood, and in relation to current zoning and applicable plans.

- These guidelines capture elements of neighborhoods to help guide growth and change so that the future character of neighborhoods is compatible with their past.

- These guidelines are not meant to create uniform neighborhoods. Rather, they are meant to aid in identifying critical elements that shape a neighborhood's "sense of place," helping to maintain cohesive neighborhoods with unique identities.

- These guidelines are not intended to prevent new types of housing from being introduced into existing neighborhoods, nor are they intended to add to the cost of housing in Indianapolis. Instead, these guidelines should provide a flexible framework for new types of development to blend into existing neighborhoods at a range of price points.

INFILL HOUSING GUIDELINES: WHAT ARE THEY?

The goal of the Infill Housing Guidelines is to help preserve neighborhood pattern and character by providing guiding principles for new construction to coexist within the context of adjacent homes, blocks, and existing neighborhoods. These guidelines provide insight into basic design concepts that shape neighborhoods, including reasons why design elements are important, recommendations for best practices, and references to plans and ordinance regulations that reinforce the importance of these concepts.

These Infill Housing Guidelines do not provide customized recommendations for every neighborhood. They should not to be used in a vacuum; instead, they are meant to be utilized in an appropriate context that accounts for surrounding architecture of each block or neighborhood. The guidelines should also be used in coordination with other applicable plans.

This document is not an addendum to the current Zoning Ordinance, and the guidelines should not be used as a prescriptive code for every house, lot, or neighborhood design. Additionally, these guidelines are not intended to replace or supplement recommendations, standards, or guidelines for historic areas designated by the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission. Instead, the Infill Housing Guidelines provide recommendations for decisions-makers, developers, the public, and City staff on using context to drive design. The guidelines should be used in coordination with the Zoning Ordinance as a starting point for considering individual requests for variances, rezoning, or other appropriate circumstances.

The guidelines do not demand a certain design aesthetic nor do they dictate materials. By encouraging best practices, the guidelines aim to provide a framework that allows for new types of development to occur in a way that is compatible with existing development.

As the city grows and changes, its needs will continue to evolve. These guidelines attempt to allow for flexibility and innovation in policy, building, and site design. The guidelines also aim to help build the foundation for expanded design standards in the future.

BOUNDARIES

Though neighborhoods in Indianapolis were established at different times throughout the city's history, one development, in particular, transformed the way that neighborhoods were designed: automobile-focused growth that occurred after World War II. Areas developed before World War II are characterized by smaller lots, narrower streets, and a greater variety of uses generally supported by public transportation or walking; areas developed after this time are characterized by larger lots, wider streets, and separated uses that are more optimized for vehicle travel.

The Zoning Ordinance - the regulatory tool that manages development and redevelopment within Marion County - is designed with these two different growth patterns in mind. The Zoning Ordinance includes different sets of rules that cover these two growth patterns: the Compact Context Area and the Metro Context Area. The Compact Context Area roughly matches the old boundaries for Indianapolis and other small towns that were settled before World War II. The Metro Context Area covers parts of the county developed since the 1950s or that remain undeveloped today.

The Infill Housing Guidelines apply to infill development in residential areas within the Compact Context Area. When infill development occurs in the Metro Context Area, the Infill Housing Guidelines can provide best practices for integrating new buildings into the fabric of existing neighborhoods.

This map reflects the boundaries for the Compact and Metro Context Areas as of January 2021. These boundaries can change, and the guidelines should apply to the boundaries as amended over time.

Compact Context Area   Metro Context Area

THE BIG PICTURE: CONTEXT IS IMPORTANT!

The Infill Housing Guidelines do not try to define "good" or "bad" architecture. Within Indianapolis, there is a wide variety of architectural styles, each with its own merit.

The overall value of a neighborhood is often greater than the sum of its individual parts. These parts include buildings, streets, alleys, sidewalks, and landscaping. These different pieces can come together to create neighborhood character and a sense of place. As materials evolve and individual preferences change, the design of housing will also change. If design professionals draw from the surrounding context, in addition to incorporating new materials and techniques, new houses can be assets that add value to the overall neighborhood. The City encourages architects, contractors, other design professionals, and residents to consider the surrounding context at the beginning of their design process to create new development that is in harmony with its surrounding environment.

Given the diversity of neighborhoods in Indianapolis, context and character vary greatly. These guidelines have been designed for flexibility that relies on analyzing the surrounding context to help preserve neighborhood character. Each design feature discussed in these guidelines includes a recommended context to evaluate when designing infill housing.

Context can be evaluated on a variety of scales, including adjacent buildings, a city block, and the surrounding neighborhood. Additionally, street types impact context-sensitive design. Local streets might have different characteristics or land use goals than busier collector or arterial streets.

The following contexts are discussed in the Infill Housing Guidelines:

- **Adjacent Buildings**: These are buildings located on parcels that share a boundary with the project site.
- **Blocks**: This includes all buildings and landscaping on the same segment of a street, often between two parallel streets.
- **Street Type**: The City of Indianapolis classifies streets based on their primary function and the amount of traffic they are expected to carry. The guidelines recognize two major distinctions: arterial and collector streets that generally carry higher levels of traffic and local streets that are designed for lower levels of traffic.
- **Neighborhoods**: A neighborhood is a collection of houses and streets that were generally created around the same time. Examples of neighborhoods include Bates-Hendricks, Garfield Park, Emerson Heights, Haughville, Riverside, Mapleton-Fall Creek, Englewood, Crown Hill, and Butler-Tarkington.

THE BIG PICTURE: CONTEXT IS IMPORTANT!

These guidelines indicate an appropriate context to evaluate each set of recommendations. This drawing illustrates many of the contexts described in these guidelines, including adjacent houses, blocks, and neighborhoods.

NEIGHBORHOOD

BLOCK

ADJACENT HOUSES

SECTION 1:

SITE CONFIGURATION
HOW BUILDINGS ARE PLACED

When people think about neighborhoods, they often first think about houses. While the style and design of houses help create character, the placement of houses and landscaping can play an equally important role in creating character.

This section covers important concepts to consider when placing new residential housing in neighborhoods, including setbacks, building orientation, spacing, open space, and landscaping.

FRONT SETBACKS

Good location! Between closest & furthest existing houses.

Too far back.

Setback "Range"
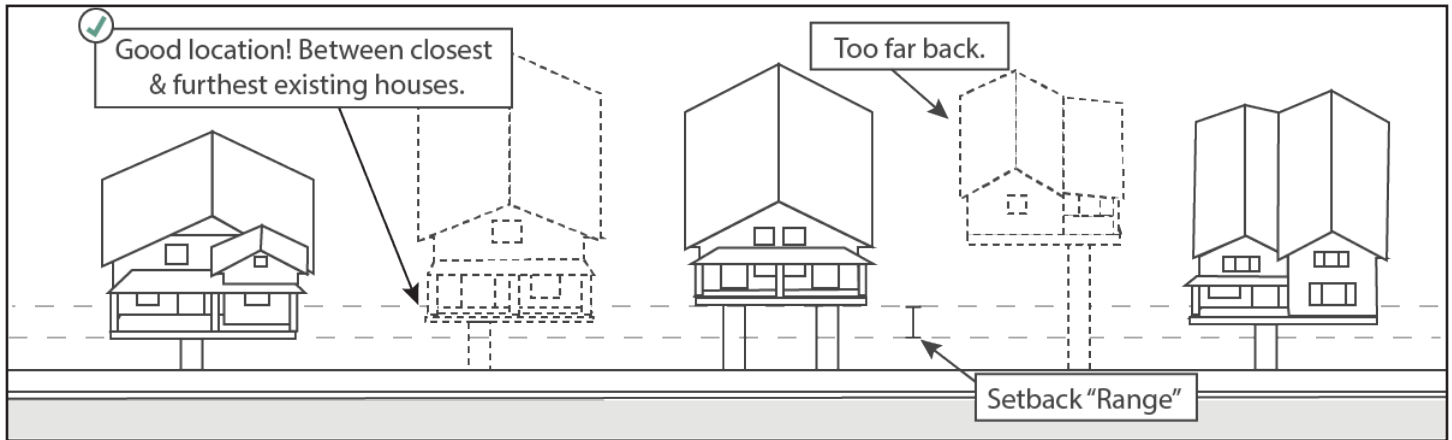
Streets and buildings are two important components of any neighborhood. Front setbacks are one of the key connections between these two components. By establishing the distance from streets and sidewalks to houses, setbacks help shape the perceived size of streets.

KEY WORDS

- *Right-of-Way*: Land devoted to a public use, often transportation. Public roads and sidewalks are usually located within the right-of-way.
- *Front Setback*: The distance between the edge of street right-of-way and a building. In many residential zoning districts, the front setback on corner lots is along the street with the greater number of lots fronting upon it.

CONTEXT

Use the surrounding **block** to help guide where appropriate setbacks should be.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **When Setbacks are Different, Build in the 'Setback Range'**
   If setbacks are varied, new construction should fall in range between the shortest and longest distances from the right-of-way (i.e. streets or sidewalks) to houses.

2. **When Setbacks are the Same, Match the Existing Context**
   In some neighborhoods, houses were designed to be situated along a street in a nearly straight line. If setbacks are uniform, the setbacks for new construction should also be uniform.

3. **On Corner Sites, Reflect Both Streets**
   On conforming corner sites where two streets meet, building setbacks should reflect context from both streets.

HOW TO ACHIEVE?

Zoning Ordinance: The Zoning Ordinance provides required setbacks for each zoning district.

You can find a copy of the Zoning Ordinance here: indy.gov/activity/zoning-and-subdivision-ordinance-indy-rezone

BUILDING ORIENTATION

Though each house on a street may have its own unique features, sharing a common orientation can create a sense of consistency and cohesion.

KEY WORDS

- *Orientation*: The visually perceived direction of the front, rear, and side façades of a building.

CONTEXT

Use the surrounding **block** to help guide appropriate building orientation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Maintain Consistent Angles**
   Avoid new buildings at angles to the street which are not characteristic within the existing street.

2. **Orient Towards the Street**
   Orient the front façade of a house in the same direction as other houses on the street. Avoid single buildings which turn away from the street and give the appearance that the street façade is not the front façade.

3. **When There are Multiple Houses on a Single Lot, Orient the Front Houses Towards the Street**
   For circumstances where there may be multiple housing units on a single parcel, the unit or units closest to the street should face towards the street.

BUILDING SPACING

Inconsistent spacing.

Similar spacing with existing homes!

Spacing between houses establishes a rhythm and pattern along a street.

Insufficient spacing can create maintenance problems, especially when there are significant differences between the height of new and existing homes. Sufficient spacing can also reduce the risk of fire spreading across buildings.

KEY WORDS

- *Side Setback*: This is the distance between the side lot line and buildings or other structures.
- *Building Separation*: This is the distance between the main mass (which includes walls but not eaves or overhangs) of structures like houses and garages. The Zoning Ordinance requires that most new houses be built a minimum distance apart from surrounding buildings.

CONTEXT

Use the surrounding **block** to help guide what appropriate building spacing should be.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Reinforce Spacing on the Existing Block**
   New construction should reflect and reinforce the character of spacing found in its block. New construction should maintain the perceived regularity or lack of regularity of spacing on the block.

2. **Limit Uncharacteristically Large Gaps Between Houses**
   Avoid the creation of large open spaces where historically none existed. Such spacing is uncharacteristic and establishes holes in the traditional pattern and rhythm of the street.

3. **Leave Room for Maintenance**
   Minimum spacing can be crucial for proper maintenance of homes. For example, additional spacing between tall houses can be key to allowing for maintenance with basic tools, like ladders.

4. **When Lots are Larger Than Average on a Block, Adjust Plans to Account for this Difference**

Over time, individual lots may have been combined with neighboring lots. This creates lots that are larger than others in their surrounding context. In these situations, consider one of the following strategies:

- Build a single-family house on one side of the larger lot; ideally, build a house that fits in the historic boundary lines of the former parcels. Utilize the other side of the lot as a yard or open space. This allows for context-sensitive spacing for the new house with the existing neighboring house while leaving the option for the side lot to be developed in context-sensitive ways in the future.

- Larger lots may support a larger structure such as a two-family or three-family house. When designing these structures, follow building spacing recommendations and other recommendations in these guidelines, including massing.

Zoning Ordinance: The Zoning Ordinance includes minimum distances from side property lines (i.e. side setbacks) for most residential properties in addition to minimum building separation requirements.

You can find a copy of the Zoning Ordinance here: indy.gov/activity/zoning-and-subdivision-ordinance-indy-rezone

OPEN SPACE
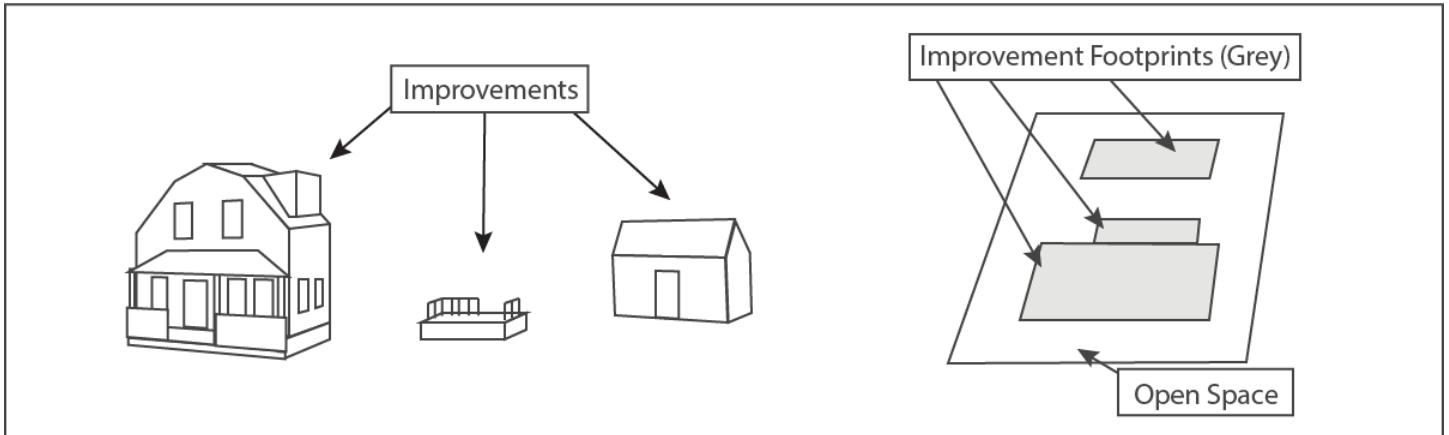
Open space is one of the key ways that the Zoning Ordinance ensures that oversized structures are not placed on smaller lots by limiting the percentage of a lot that is covered by houses, garages, or other built features. Open space requirements prevent over-development, promote development pattern unity, and preserve space for outdoor recreation.

Open space can improve stormwater drainage on existing lots when combined with strategic landscaping and limited impervious surfaces, like driveways and paved pathways.

KEY WORDS

- *Open Space*: In the Zoning Ordinance, open space is defined as "land area that is exposed to the weather." This generally means areas that are not covered by houses, garages, large decks, or other accessory structures.

CONTEXT

Use the surrounding **block** and **neighborhood** to help guide appropriate open space.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **For Lots that Meet Current Size Requirements, Meet Open Space Standards**
   New construction should meet open space standards on lots that meet minimum lot size standards. Development that does not meet these standards may not fit the character of the surrounding neighborhood or the development goals of the neighborhood.

2. **For Undersized Lots, Look at the Surrounding Context for Appropriate Housing Sizes**
   In some existing neighborhoods, there may be lots that do not meet current minimum size requirements. In these cases, it may be appropriate to seek a variance to request a reduction in open space for the construction of a primary structure like a house. However, the resulting primary structure should be consistent in height, mass, and footprint with other structures on the same street or in the surrounding area.

3. **Consider Both How Additions and Improvements Meet Comprehensive Plan Goals and Ways to Mitigate Impacts, Particularly for Accessory Structures**
    New construction that includes patio areas should consider permanent permeable materials (such as permeable asphalt or unit masonry systems). Where the creation of accessory structures, like garages or secondary dwelling units, leads to insufficient open space, the following factors should be considered when requesting a variance:
    *   Does the addition further goals laid out in the Comprehensive Plan, like increasing housing diversity with an accessory unit?
    *   Are there stormwater management techniques to mitigate additional stormwater runoff associated with the accessory structure?

Zoning Ordinance: The Zoning Ordinance includes minimum open space requirements for zoning districts.

You can find a copy of the Zoning Ordinance here: indy.gov/activity/zoning-and-subdivision-ordinance-indy-rezone

Variances: There may be circumstances where a variance is warranted to address minimum open space, especially for undersized lots.

TREES, LANDSCAPING, AND THE OUTDOORS

Diversity provides protection against disease.

Provides shading to pedestrians!

Trees and well-designed landscaping can foster aesthetically pleasing, environmentally beneficial, and sustainable development that will:

- Protect and preserve the appearance, character, general health, safety, and welfare of the community,
- Increase the attractiveness and long-term value of a property,
- Assist in the management of stormwater runoff quantity and quality,
- Improve walkability by providing shading to neighborhood sidewalks and streets, and
- Preserve significant trees that will help absorb carbon dioxide emissions and reduce heat island impacts and related energy costs.

KEY WORDS

- *Tree Lawn*: A tree lawn is a strip of land between a sidewalk and a street that often has grass, trees, or other vegetation.
- *Heritage Trees*: A tree over 18 inches diameter measured at breast height (DBH) and is a heritage tree species as defined in the Zoning Ordinance.
- *Native Plant*: A plant that is a part of the balance of nature that has developed over hundreds or thousands of years in a particular region or ecosystem.
- *Invasive Species*: A non-native organism whose introduction to an ecosystem is likely to cause economic or environmental harm.

CONTEXT

Use the surrounding **block** and **neighborhood** to help guide appropriate landscaping. Also consider proximity to sensitive natural features, such as rivers, streams, and wetlands.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Add Trees in the Tree Lawn that Complement the Street**
   If the tree lawn is six feet or more in width, plant one tree every 35 feet. Often tree lawns are in the right-of-way, and planting in this area requires a flora permit. Shade trees are generally recommended along streets. However, if there are overhead utilities like power lines, plant understory trees instead. Avoid planting trees like Silver Maple (Acer saccharinum), catalpa (Catalpa spp.), and poplars (Populus spp.) that are weak-wooded or will drop fruit in the street.

2. **Provide Shade in the Front Yard**
   If a tree lawn is not available, plant at least one tree in the front yard if space is available. Plant trees away from permanent structures, such as houses, driveways, and sidewalks. Avoid placing trees that conflict with utility lines both overhead and underground. Call Indiana 811 to have utilities marked before planting. Shade trees are recommended in the front yard.

3. **Provide Shade, Beauty, and Recreation in the Rear Yard**
   Trees and other landscaping can provide shade for windows and roofs, which reduces air conditioning needs and cover for outdoor spaces during the hottest parts of the day. Backyards can also be good places for small vegetable and flower gardens. Consider using permanent permeable materials (such as permeable asphalt or unit masonry systems) for patio areas.

4. **Thoughtfully Design Landscaping**
   Locate trees to shade areas in the summer but not to interfere with utilities, including overhead power lines. Do not plant shrubs that block views at intersections, reduce safety, or create hazards for persons using wheelchairs or mobility devices. Plant low maintenance ground cover or low-growing plants on sloped lawn areas. Design ornamental elements, such as fences and retaining walls, to be simple, fit the context of the block and neighborhood, do not obstruct views of the front of the house, and do not obstruct public sidewalks.

5. **Choose Trees that Fit the Context**
   When selecting trees along streets or in backyards, consider the following factors:
   - Preserve Existing Trees: Protect and retain existing healthy trees whenever possible. Preserve trees designated as Heritage Trees in the Zoning Ordinance unless they are determined to meet one of the exceptions listed in the ordinance. Existing trees should have all dead wood pruned out. Existing trees should not be "topped," meaning the indiscriminate removal of large branches from the treetop and leaving only lateral branches and stumps on the tree. This method can be harmful to a tree's health and make the tree susceptible to fungal decay and insect attack.
   - Choose Non-Invasive Varieties of Trees: Selecting tree species that are native to Central Indiana and are adapted well to the local climate is recommended. Invasive tree species should be avoided. The Marion County Tree Board maintains a list of recommended plantings.
   - Encourage Diversity: To make landscaping resilient to disease and other challenges, try to ensure that one type of tree does not dominate a street block.
   - Avoid Prohibited Trees: Avoid planting trees that are not recommended in Indianapolis.

6. **Maintain Landscaping to Retain Visibility**
   Landscaping should not block windows, doors, or corners. Planting anything taller than two feet under windows is not recommended. Be mindful of the placement of trees in front yards so as not to obstruct views from inside houses. Finally, limit placement of shrubs and bushes along corners to maintain high visibility.

7. **Light Strategically**

   Lighting can illuminate activity around the front door, in side yards, in rear yards, and along alleys. Consider the following recommendations:

   - Avoid clear-globe lighting as those create glare and can negatively affect night vision.
   - Full cut-off fixtures that direct light and prevent light pollution are recommended.
   - LED is the best type of lighting as they provide the most accurate representation of colors, are cost-efficient, and have long life expectancy.
   - Lighting paths is recommended
   - Include at least one porch light at the front entry and one rear yard flood light to illuminate activity in these areas. Two lights may be appropriate for larger porches. Exterior and interior garage lights also serve this purpose. Lighting should not shine into the sky.
   - Prevent landscaping from blocking lights or casting shadows.
   - When possible, consider using motion detectors for lights. Constant light throughout the night is detrimental to a number of butterfly, insect, and bird species.

8. **Build Thoughtful Fences**

   Fencing around dwellings should be carefully placed. See-through fencing is the safest. In the front, fences should be ornamental in style. Do not install privacy fences in front yard.

   HOW TO ACHIEVE?

   Zoning Ordinance: The Zoning Ordinance requires street trees in many residential and mixed-use zoning districts. The Zoning Ordinance also includes requirements for fence style and height.

   You can find a copy of the Zoning Ordinance here: indy.gov/activity/zoning-and-subdivision-ordinance-indy-rezone

SECTION 2:
AESTHETIC CONSIDERATIONS
HOW HOUSES LOOK

Single-family houses, duplexes, triplexes, and townhomes are created in a wide variety of sizes and styles. Often, there are shared characteristics between houses that reflect the history of a neighborhood.

This section covers important concepts to consider when designing infill housing, including building massing, height, and architectural features.

BUILDING MASSING

Low sloped roofline increases appearence of mass at the street, much more than surrounding houses.

Though taller than adjacent buildings, roof style and window placement reduces appearence of mass.

Massing refers to the shape and size of buildings. Massing can contribute to the overall character of a neighborhood. For example, ranch developments from the 1950s and 1960s feel very different than a neighborhood of bungalows. Massing that coordinates with existing buildings along a street and the overall neighborhood enhances cohesion and maintains the character of the area.

Massing and façade composition refines the scale and form of buildings beyond basic height, setback, and lot coverage standards by breaking down the volume into smaller-scale masses and adding depth, texture and variation to surfaces in a manner that improves the relationships of buildings to the lot, to adjacent lots and buildings, and to the streetscape. This cohesive relationship between a building and its surrounding context promotes neighborhood character.

From a design perspective, massing is more than just a number, like square footage. The way that buildings are designed can affect how people perceive the size of a building. The use of materials, roof styles and slope, and breaking up the façades with various components are ways to influence the perception of massing.

KEY WORDS

- *Massing*: Massing is the shape and size of buildings. Though massing can be affected by the footprint of a building, different materials can make the massing of buildings appear larger or smaller.

CONTEXT

Use the surrounding **neighborhood** and **street type** to help guide appropriate massing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Consider the Size of Surrounding Houses**
   The massing of new construction and additions should be characteristic of surrounding buildings, particularly on local streets.

2. **Build with Respect to the Street**
   Use the street type to help guide appropriate massing. Busier, wider streets might allow for greater massing than local streets.

3. **Design Strategically to Match Context**

   Larger than typical massing can be appropriate if it is broken into elements that are visually compatible with the mass of surrounding buildings.

   - For larger new construction, stepping back upper stories, off-setting secondary masses from main masses, dividing larger façades into smaller components, and/or varying materials may be appropriate solutions to reduce the overall feel of the massing.
   - Adding a basements may also offer an opportunity to increase square footage without increasing massing or height.

4. **Utilize Roof Lines to Reinforce Massing**

   Roof styles can play an important role in massing. Houses with similar square footage can feel very different based on their roof design. For example, a standard gabled roof may create the illusion of more massing than a hipped roof. Similarly, a flat or low-sloped roof has much different massing than more steeply pitched gabled roofs.

5. **Materials Matter; Use Them Strategically**

   Material selection plays a large role in how massing is perceived. Some materials provide a much heavier feel than others. For example, masonry often has the appearance of more mass than glazing (i.e. windows).

BUILDING HEIGHT
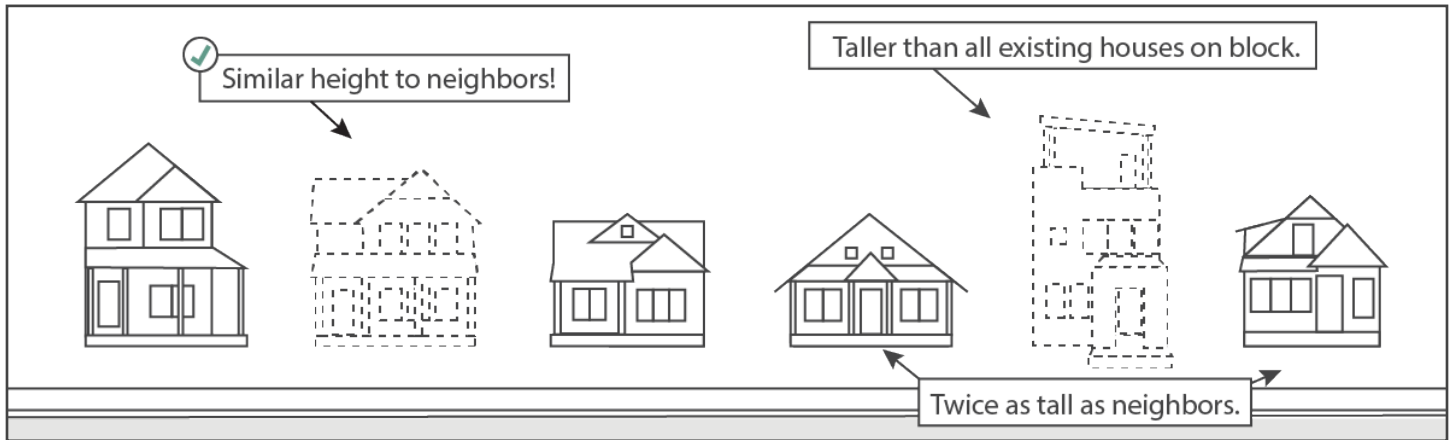
The height of buildings sets the tone of the block and is a major factor in the overall character of a neighborhood. Building heights affect neighbors and the community in varying ways, including adding/detracting to neighborhood character, providing shade from the sun, enhancing safety, providing views, and affecting an owner's ability to maintain the home's exterior and roof safely and with ease.

Much like massing, the perception of height may be affected by the design of buildings.

KEY WORDS

- *Roof Eaves*: This is the lower border of a roof that overhangs a wall. Eaves direct rainwater clear of the exterior wall and may also be highly decorative as part of an architectural style.
- *Height*: In building design and construction, height is the distance from the ground to the top of a feature. When designing infill development, the following two height measurements are important:
    - *Eave Height*: The distance between the ground and the lower border (i.e. bottom) of the roof eave.
    - *Roof Height*: The distance between the ground and the highest point of the roof.
- *Story*: The space between two adjacent floor levels in a building.
- *Step Back*: Step backs are when elements of a building, often upper stories, are pushed back from the main façade. Strategically designed step backs can reduce the appearance of height.

CONTEXT

Use the surrounding **block**, **neighborhood**, and **street type** to help guide appropriate height.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Consider the Shortest and Tallest Buildings on the Block When Planning Height**
   The shortest and tallest buildings on a block should provide a good guide for appropriate building heights for new construction, particularly on local streets. Additional height may be appropriate for busier streets, like collector and arterial roads, especially for denser development of townhomes and apartments. However, buildings that are uncharacteristically tall or short should not be considered when determining the appropriate range.

2. **When there is Little Street Context, Look to the Surrounding Neighborhood For Guidance**
When there are few existing houses on a block, use the height of buildings in the surrounding neighborhood to provide guidance on appropriate height.

3. **Avoid Significant Jumps in Height**
At the street setback, new infill housing should not be taller than adjacent houses by more than a story, providing the existing block context lends itself to homes that vary in height.

4. **Consider Eave Lines to Coordinate with Existing Houses**
Though overall building height is the most common way to evaluate structure height, eave heights can affect the perception of height. As such, when new construction is adjacent to buildings with different overall heights, roof eave heights for new construction should be similar to eave heights of surrounding buildings.

5. **For Taller-Than-Average Buildings, Consider Step Backs**
Step backs are a way of making buildings feel smaller from the street. When new construction requires greater height than surrounding buildings, consider utilizing step backs.

6. **When Adding to an Existing House, Minimize Significant Increases in Height**
New additions should not be greater than one and a half times taller than the existing structure.

HOW TO ACHIEVE?

Zoning Ordinance: The Zoning Ordinance includes maximum heights for structures in all zoning districts.
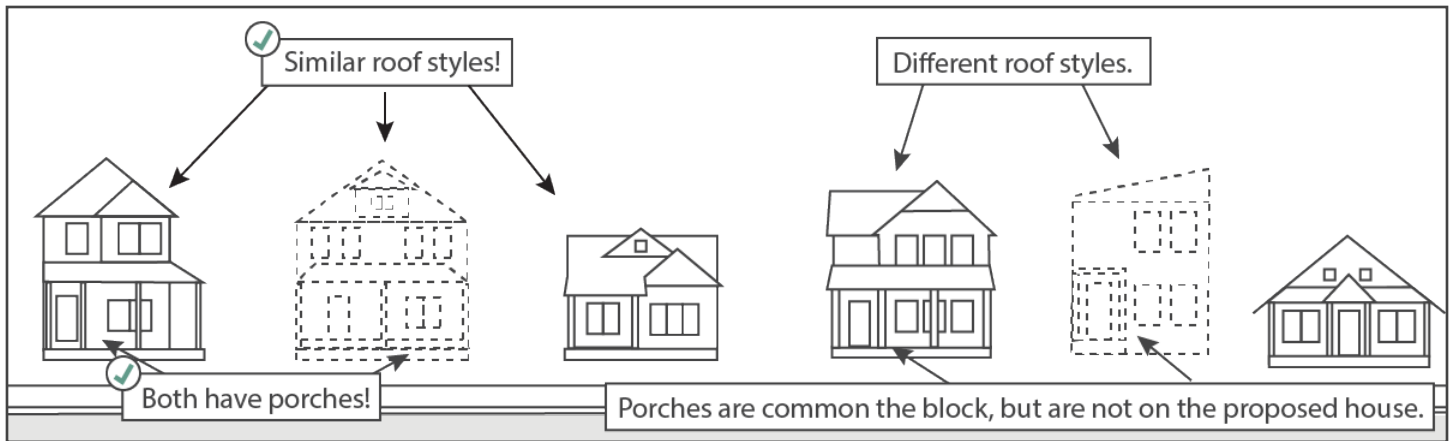
You can find a copy of the Zoning Ordinance here: indy.gov/activity/zoning-and-subdivision-ordinance-indy-rezone

Marion County Land Use Maps and Pattern Book: The Pattern Book provides height recommendations dependent on use and neighborhood context. In many 'Living Typologies', the Land Use Plan recommends that the height of new housing does not exceed one and a half times the height of surrounding primary structures.

You can find the Marion County Land Use Maps and Pattern Book here: indy.gov/activity/comprehensive-plan-for-the-city-county

BUILDING ELEVATIONS AND ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

Similar roof styles!

Different roof styles.

Both have porches!

Porches are common the block, but are not on the proposed house.

In addition to height and massing, houses within a neighborhood may share common architectural elements like porches, window and door styles, materials, and basic building shape. These architectural elements contribute to the character of the neighborhood, and neighborhoods benefit by new buildings relating to and complementing the surrounding style.

Front entry features create "human-scale" massing elements that relate buildings to the frontages and streetscape and social spaces that activate the streetscape. They provide endless opportunities for unique design with subtle variations to building patterns but create a consistent form and scale along streets. This helps reinforces a neighborhood character by creating distinctions between the same or similar building type and creating compatible relationships between buildings of different size or type.

Some neighborhoods have a very consistent, defined style, while others have greater variation. It is important to consider context when evaluating how specific architectural elements contribute to the character of a neighborhood.

KEY WORDS

- *Elevation:* A side (or façade) of a building. In architecture, the term 'elevation' also refers to 2D drawings that show the finished appearance of a building.
- *Outline*: The silhouette of a building as seen from the street.
- *Fenestration*: The arrangement, quantity, and proportion of windows and doors on the elevation of a building.

CONTEXT

Use the surrounding **neighborhood** to help guide the appropriateness of incorporating different architectural elements into infill design.

1. **Utilize Foundation Styles and Heights that are Consistent with Nearby Houses**
   The height of the foundation affects where doors, porches, and windows are located. Unless there are special circumstances that require additional height, such as the location is in or near a floodplain, the foundation height for new construction should be consistent with nearby buildings.

2. **Be Consistent with Surrounding Entry Locations**
   Main entries should be visible from the street. Entries should not be hidden, obscured, or missing from the main street elevation (front). The entry should reflect a similar characteristic to those that surround it, such as formal or casual, recessed or flush, narrow or wide.

3. **Where Appropriate, Include Porches or Stoops**
   Use context to determine if front porches are consistent elements used in the neighborhood. If so, add porches or stoops to new construction.

4. **Coordinate the Location and Door Style of Balconies with the Surrounding Neighborhood**
   Balconies are common architectural elements in some neighborhoods, but uncommon in others. Balconies along the street should be used when appropriate. When a balcony is used, consider the appropriate door access for the type of balcony. For example, Juliet balconies, which are intended to bring the outside in, make the most sense when French doors are used.

5. **Consider Nearby Roof Styles**
   The basic outline of a new building should reflect building outlines typical of the area. Roof selection and overall height contribute to the building outline. Select roof shapes that are frequently used in the neighborhood.

6. **Fenestration Should Relate to the Surrounding Context**
   Windows and doors should be arranged on buildings so as not to conflict with the basic fenestration patterns in the neighborhood. The proportion of glass (windows) to solid materials (wood, bricks, and other materials) which is found within the surrounding context should be reflected in new construction. Every elevation (sides and rear) should have windows on each story to help break up the monotony of the façade.

7. **Materials Used Should Reflect the Context of the Neighborhood**
   Introducing new materials that are not used in the existing context should be done in a way where those materials are not the dominant material and make up less than 30% of the overall façade design.

8. **Consider Unique Neighborhood Features**
   In addition to the architectural features mentioned above, consider other common features like chimneys, dormers, gables, and overhanging eaves that shape the character of a neighborhood. When possible, include these features into new construction.

SECTION 3:
ADDITIONAL TOPICS

SECONDARY DWELLING UNITS, GARAGES, AND ACCESSORY STRUCTURES
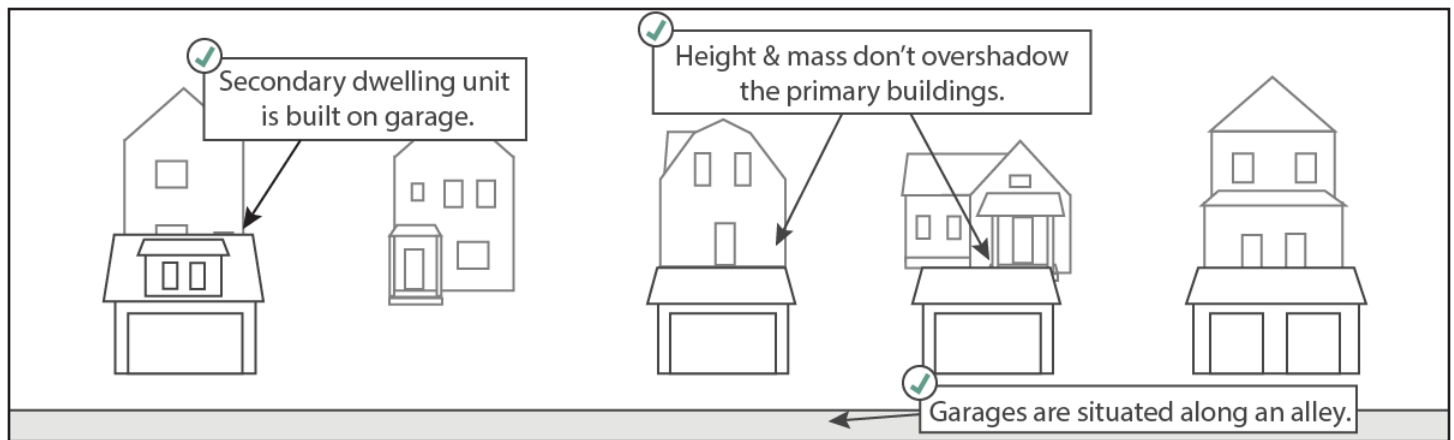
Many neighborhoods within several miles of downtown Indianapolis were built with non-automobile forms of transportation in mind, including walking, buses, and streetcars. Since these neighborhoods were built, cars have become the most commonly used form of transportation. As population has increased around downtown over the past decade, there has been a growth in the number of garages in these neighborhoods.

In addition to traditional accessory structures like garages and sheds, there has also been a growth in secondary dwelling units. These dwelling units offer many benefits, including the potential to increase affordability, to increase the diversity of housing options in neighborhoods, and to enable seniors to stay near families.

KEY WORDS

- *Secondary Dwelling Units*: Secondary dwelling units are secondary living areas that are often disconnected from a house that can support another family. In recent years, secondary dwelling units have been created in separate buildings, including above garages. In many other places, these units are known as "accessory dwelling units."

CONTEXT

The **primary structure** on a parcel sets the context for accessory structures.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Locate Accessory Structures Behind Primary Buildings**
   Accessory buildings should be located behind the existing building unless there is a precedent otherwise.

2. **When Possible, Access Accessory Buildings From Alleys**
   Accessory buildings should be of a secondary nature. Garages should be oriented towards alleys. Avoid front-loading garages and driveways where alleys are available. The Zoning Ordinance requires that entries should be clear and defined.

3. **Don't Overshadow Primary Buildings**

   The scale, height, size, and mass should relate to the primary building and should not overshadow it.

4. **Coordinate Primary and Accessory Structures**

   Coordinate roof lines, window openings, and key architectural styles on accessory buildings with existing primary buildings.

5. **Consider Options when Adding Space, Especially for Secondary Dwelling Units**

   Where secondary dwelling units are allowed, the Zoning Ordinance establishes a maximum square footage. If additional space is needed, another form of building, such as a duplex or triplex, might be more appropriate. An addition to an existing house may also be appropriate.

   HOW TO ACHIEVE?

   Zoning Ordinance: The Zoning Ordinance provides guidance on the location and size of accessory structures, including garages and secondary dwelling units.

   You can find a copy of the Zoning Ordinance here: indy.gov/activity/zoning-and-subdivision-ordinance-indy-rezone

ADAPTING TO THE FUTURE

The many neighborhoods that have developed across Indianapolis over the past two centuries have their own unique character and design, often based on popular trends, individual preferences, and government policies that reflect the time period when these neighborhoods were first created. However, as time moves forward, preferences and needs change, and neighborhoods continue to adapt.

A current trend in Indianapolis is growing market pressures on areas near downtown that risk making neighborhoods unaffordable. To address this trend, the Comprehensive Plan has supported a shift towards a more diverse housing stock -- particularly around affordable, multimodal transportation options -- that supports the City's affordability and sustainability goals.

Preserving character while allowing neighborhoods to grow and adapt to modern trends is challenging. These guidelines should provide recommendations for ways to merge new housing types and designs into existing neighborhoods.

KEY WORDS

- *Arterial, Collector, and Local Streets*: The City classifies streets based on their functions. Arterial and collector streets support higher speeds and levels of traffic, whereas local streets are designed for slower speeds and provide the greatest amount of access to surrounding properties.
- *The Marion County Land Use Map and Pattern Book*: These are the two components of the Marion County Land Use Plan. This plan provides guidance that promotes the orderly development and redevelopment of the county.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Look to City Plans**
   When determining whether a new use or building type is appropriate for a mature neighborhood, look at existing plans for the neighborhood. This includes elements of the Comprehensive Plan, neighborhood plans, and certified plans. For example, the Marion County Land Use Map and Pattern Book provides recommendations on uses and basic forms that fit into different types of neighborhoods.

2. **Be Sensitive to Street Context**
   Different types of streets adapt to change in different ways. Larger differences in buildings, including greater massing, height, and density, may be appropriate on larger arterial and collector streets or at corners. Smaller differences may be more appropriate mid-block on local streets.

3. **Be Coordinated, but Not Matching**
   As neighborhoods evolve, new types of housing may appear. Though new types of developments may not match existing housing in every way, addressing some of the following factors could help increase the blend between old and new:
   - Massing
   - Height
   - Public Door Placement
   - Setbacks
   - Materiality

4. Incorporate Landscaping

Landscaping, like street trees, can play an important role in tying new development into the fabric of an existing neighborhood.

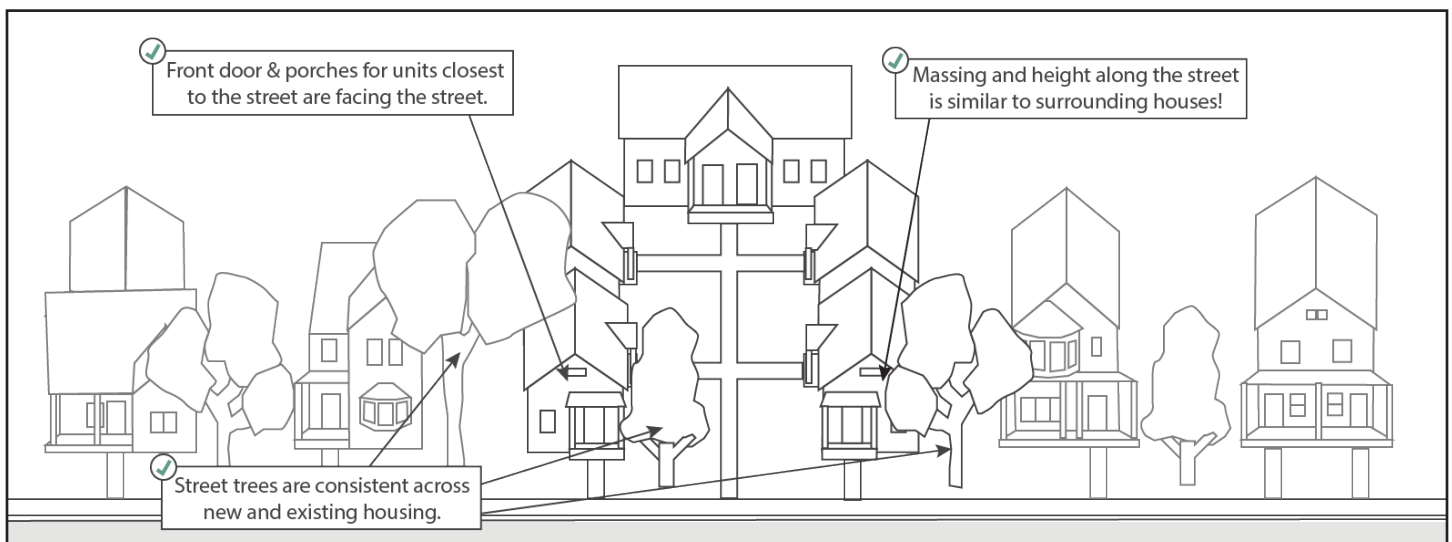**Marion County Land Use Maps and Pattern Book**: Rather than assigning a single future use to each parcel, the Land Use Map and Pattern Book are organized by typologies, or groups of uses that work well together. The Pattern Book also includes guidance on how to make these different uses fit together well.

Thrive Indianapolis: Thrive Indianapolis is part of the Comprehensive Plan. This plan charts a course for an Indianapolis that is equitable, healthier, and prepared for the challenges of the 21st century. The plan includes objectives and action items for creating sustainable, resilient communities.

You can find the Marion County Land Use Maps and Pattern Book and Thrive Indianapolis here: indy.gov/activity/comprehensive-plan-for-the-city-county

EXAMPLE: MERGING NEW TYPES OF HOUSING WITH EXISTING HOUSING

In recent years, there has been increased demand for a variety of housing types at different price points. This includes single-family houses, duplexes, triplexes, cottage home developments, townhomes, and small apartments. Below shows how context-based design can be used to incorporate a new form of housing like a cottage home development --- a type of housing that features a cluster of units around a common open space --- into an existing neighborhood.

Front door & porches for units closest to the street are facing the street.

Massing and height along the street is similar to surrounding houses!

Street trees are consistent across new and existing housing.

CONCLUSION

As established neighborhoods experience new development, infill residential construction will provide housing options for new and existing residents. Increased population contributes positively to the local tax base, economic development, lively neighborhoods, and an interesting city. As infill construction occurs, it is important to guide development in a way that complements current neighborhoods. Each home in a neighborhood not only contributes to the existing context of adjoining houses and the block, but to the sense of place of the entire neighborhood. This document does not intend to codify design standards, but instead serves as a framework for the design of new infill housing that positively contributes to the overall aesthetics, affordability, and sense of place for the City of Indianapolis and its neighborhoods.