

ZONING PRACTICE

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**Protecting Historically
Disadvantaged and
Vulnerable Neighborhoods
and Business Districts**



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Protecting Historically Disadvantaged and Vulnerable Neighborhoods and Business Districts

By Darcie White, AICP

Establishing protective measures for historically disadvantaged and vulnerable neighborhoods and business districts requires a proactive, community-based approach.

In March 2023, the American Planning Association (APA) released the [Equity in Zoning Policy Guide](#) with the goal of “identifying specific ways in which the drafting, public engagement, application, mapping, and enforcement of zoning regulations can be changed to dismantle the barriers that perpetuate the separation of historically disadvantaged and vulnerable communities.”

The [Equity in Zoning Policy Guide](#) acknowledges that some of the most common zoning strategies used to increase access to attainable housing and services and support public investments in transit can help spur market pressure for redevelopment that, in turn, may result in displacement of long-time residents and businesses in historically disadvantaged and vulnerable communities. These strategies include amending base zoning districts or establishing new residential and mixed-use zoning districts to allow for higher densities, a broader range of residential types, and more diverse uses. Unfortunately, broad recognition of the need to “save” or establish protections for neighborhoods and businesses that serve historically disadvantaged and vulnerable communities often comes when they are threatened by demolition or—in the case of a neighborhood—have largely been lost.

This issue of *Zoning Practice* is the first in series exploring recommendations

The [Equity in Zoning Policy Guide](#) defines “historically disadvantaged and vulnerable communities and individuals” as Black, Latino/a/x, Tribal, Indigenous, and other communities of color, older adults, persons experiencing disabilities, persons of different national origins or religious faiths, and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual/ally (LGBTQIA) community.

provided by the [Equity in Zoning Policy Guide](#) in more detail. It outlines clear steps those who write, administer, and enforce zoning regulations can take to proactively protect historically disadvantaged and vulnerable neighborhoods and business districts. Specifically, it reviews the defining characteristics of these areas, highlights documentation strategies, and explores regulatory tools. While many of the topics and strategies explored in this issue are also applicable to areas of naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH), strategies to specifically protect NOAH will be explored in a forthcoming issue.

Background

Unless adopted plans and policies identify and contain recommendations for the protection of historically disadvantaged and vulnerable neighborhoods and business districts, these areas are likely to fall “under the radar” as part of



Increasing densities can erode historically disadvantaged and vulnerable neighborhoods. (Credit: Darcie White)

a citywide zoning code update. Over the past 20 years, cities across the country have—based on adopted plans and policies—moved to revise zoning for their older commercial corridors, downtowns, and neighborhood business districts to provide new opportunities for more diverse housing options and a mix of uses, encourage infill and redevelopment, and support significant public investments in infrastructure and transit enhancements. While these efforts have helped spur the revitalization of many communities, they have also resulted in the erosion or loss of historically disadvantaged and vulnerable neighborhoods and business districts.

Thankfully, the dynamics are changing. The housing affordability crisis in the U.S. and the growing recognition of the need to reform exclusionary zoning practices have underscored the importance of taking proactive steps to engage and establish reasonable protections for historically disadvantaged and vulnerable neighborhoods and business districts.

Defining Characteristics

References to historically disadvantaged and vulnerable neighborhoods and business districts in this article apply broadly

to neighborhoods, business districts, and individual businesses that are owned, rented, or frequented by historically disadvantaged and vulnerable communities and individuals. Typical characteristics and challenges—both physical and social—of these neighborhoods and business districts are summarized below as a foundation for this discussion. A discussion of documentation strategies and potential tools that are available to assist communities in identifying or defining historically disadvantaged neighborhoods and business districts follows.

Neighborhoods

Historically disadvantaged and vulnerable neighborhoods often include the smallest and most affordable homes in the community. While some are well-defined and located within walking distance of the urban core or major commercial corridors, others consist of pockets of homes that are tucked in among service commercial and industrial uses. Because many of these neighborhoods predate the adoption of zoning regulations, it is not uncommon to find a substantial disconnect between “as built” conditions and the dimensional standards established by the underlying zoning district. For example, smaller



Small, affordable homes and generous zoning allowances make historically disadvantaged and vulnerable neighborhoods attractive to investors and real estate speculators. (Credit: Darcie White)

existing homes may not meet minimum home sizes requirements (in terms of their square footage) and may fall below maximum lot coverage and height allowances. Lots may also be larger than those that exist in surrounding neighborhoods. In other more mixed “neighborhoods,” detached homes may actually be nonconforming uses. Housing stock may include detached and attached homes, manufactured homes (often older, single-wide mobile homes), smaller multi-unit buildings, or a mix of housing types.

The combination of these factors makes historically disadvantaged and vulnerable neighborhoods attractive to investors and real estate speculators that see an opportunity to replace existing housing stock with newer, larger homes.

Business Districts

Historically disadvantaged and vulnerable business districts are often found in aging strip malls, historic neighborhood commercial districts, and along former interstate highway corridors that are now in the middle of cities. These areas are typically characterized by small scale—typically one- and two-story

buildings—that lead them to be characterized as “underutilized” in the types of development capacity analyses that are routinely conducted by planners to help inform comprehensive or area plans. Buildings and parking may be nonconforming, and architecturally speaking, buildings are, more often than not, modest representations of the local vernacular or older corporate architecture (depending on location).

Often, these business districts consist of a concentration of stores, restaurants, and businesses that are geared toward the needs and cultural preferences of a specific racial or ethnic group or a historically vulnerable community. Many of these districts have a rich history and play an important role in the cultural heritage of the local community. Two of the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s list of 11 Most Endangered Historic Places in the U.S. for 2023 includes two historic Chinatowns—one in Seattle and one in Philadelphia. The National Trust’s list has been generated annually since 1988 to draw attention to places that are in danger of being torn down due to development pressure or neglect.

Four- and five-story mixed-use buildings have become ubiquitous in U.S. cities over the past 20 years, gradually replacing the modest storefronts that historically disadvantaged and vulnerable businesses have traditionally thrived in. (Credit: Darcie White)



While some of these business districts include “legacy businesses” (as defined by a local legacy business program), they are only part of the story. Other businesses that meet the criteria that would make them eligible for recognition and support as a legacy business may not be aware of the benefits or have the ability to apply. While there are specific strategies that can help protect recognized legacy businesses, protections that address historically disadvantaged and vulnerable businesses more broadly are also important.

Documentation Strategies

Establishing protections for historically disadvantaged and vulnerable communities requires robust data and information and substantial public input. In addition to adopted plans and policies, there are a variety of resources available to help inform these discussions. While these resources may not be available in every city, they can also be used to inform the creation of customized data and information where gaps do exist.

Online Mapping and Data Tools

In recent years, several mapping and data tools have emerged that planners and policymakers can use to quickly assess which areas in their community are experiencing—or are at risk of experiencing—gentrification and displacement. These powerful, easy to use dashboards, combine U.S. Census income, housing, and race/ethnicity data with historic redlining data and other secondary data. The [Urban Displacement Project](#) (UDP), a research and action initiative of the University of California Berkeley and the University of Toronto is one of many examples. Notably, the UDP provides resources related to the displacement of local businesses and cultural organizations as well as neighborhoods.

As a supplement to neighborhood-specific data available through Urban Displacement Project or other platforms, the [National Equity Atlas](#) illustrates trends in neighborhood affordability and racial segregation in over 100 cities across the U.S. based on a range of indicators. Data can be analyzed at a city, county, or zip-code level. Detailed equity profiles for a number of major cities and regions are available for download, and summaries

can be generated for others using the [Data Summary](#) option. This data can be used to provide broader context on trends related to historically disadvantaged and vulnerable communities.

Historic Context Studies

Historic preservationists are increasingly using historic context studies as a tool to better understand and document the roles marginalized populations have played in the evolution of a place and that they may continue to play today. For example, as part of Madison, Wisconsin's recent [Historic Preservation Plan](#) process, the project team conducted extensive research on the local history of underrepresented communities.

The purpose of the [historic resource] survey was not to write a definitive history of the City of Madison, but rather to provide an overview of the history of the city with specific emphasis on six underrepresented communities: African American, First Nations, Hmong, Latino/a, LGBTQ, and Women. The Underrepresented Communities Historic Resource Survey can be used in future planning decisions and to increase public awareness of the collective history of the community.

Pueblo, Colorado, worked with History Colorado to conduct similar studies for several of its oldest and most ethnically diverse neighborhoods in partnership with neighborhood residents. The resulting [historic context studies](#) were used as the basis to adopt stronger policy guidance for these areas as part of a [Pueblo Regional Comprehensive Plan](#) (2022) and to identify them as “neighborhoods eligible for historic designation.” This designation and the accompanying policy guidance encourage, “compatible infill and redevelopment in areas with lower integrity, but good urban form, areas where historic significance is not based on architectural style or form, or areas where the modest scale of vernacular building forms is desirable to retain” (Policy 4.1.8). This guidance has since been used by city planners to help make the case for targeted code

The Role of Legacy Business Programs

The term “legacy business” is often used to loosely describe long-standing, local businesses that are considered to be fixtures of a neighborhood and community. In recent years, more and more cities have established legacy business programs as a strategy to help businesses fend off rising rents and redevelopment pressures. Some programs are city-sponsored, while others are sponsored by local nonprofits. Most programs provide some combination of formal recognition and marketing, technical, and financial support to business owners, but they stop short of establishing regulatory protections. While each program is different, criteria used to help screen applications typically include some combination of the following:

Minimum age for the business. Most city-sponsored programs list 20 to 50 years as a minimum age. At the other end of the spectrum, Baltimore's [Legacy Business Program](#) (sponsored by a local nonprofit) requires a minimum age of 100 years.

Ownership. Some programs (e.g., [San Antonio, Texas](#)) require a business to have been owned and operated by the same family for multiple generations.

Type of business. Program requirements can be fairly broad. For example, [Missoula, Montana](#), requires that the business be “longstanding” and “community-serving.” Or requirements can be more specific. For example, [Birmingham, Alabama](#), requires that the business, “commit to maintaining culinary, art, and/or heritage that braids the history and progression of (the city).”

Contribution to the surrounding neighborhood or community. Generally, these are defined contributions in the form of an area's historic and cultural fabric, and overall identity.

Nomination requirement. Some legacy business programs require that a business be nominated for consideration by an elected or appointed official (e.g., [Boston](#)) or through crowd-sourcing requests on social media (e.g., [Chicago](#)).

In “[Legacy Business Programs: Emerging Directions](#),” Elizabeth Morton, PhD, illustrates how cities have tailored their legacy business programs to the local context (*PAS Memo* 109, 2022). Notably, of the 10 city-sponsored programs that Morton highlights, eight were established in the last four years and all 10 originated within the last decade. Of those 10, three (Seattle; Miami Beach, Florida; and Horry County, South Carolina) are no longer active.



The cultural and economic benefits of business districts that serve historically disadvantaged and vulnerable communities should not be overlooked when considering potential zoning changes. (Credit: Darcie White)

amendments that support the retention of older, smaller housing stock and to accommodate more affordable building types, such as manufactured housing, through infill development.

Larger cities have also been working to document the histories of historically disadvantaged and vulnerable communities in recent years. In 2022, Denver completed a [Latino/Chicano Historic Context Study](#)—the first study in the city that has focused on a specific ethnic, racial, or cultural group. In 2013, Los Angeles completed a series of [historic context statements](#) outlining the migration, settlement, and development of the city's distinct Asian-American communities—Thai, Filipino, Korean, Japanese, and Chinese.

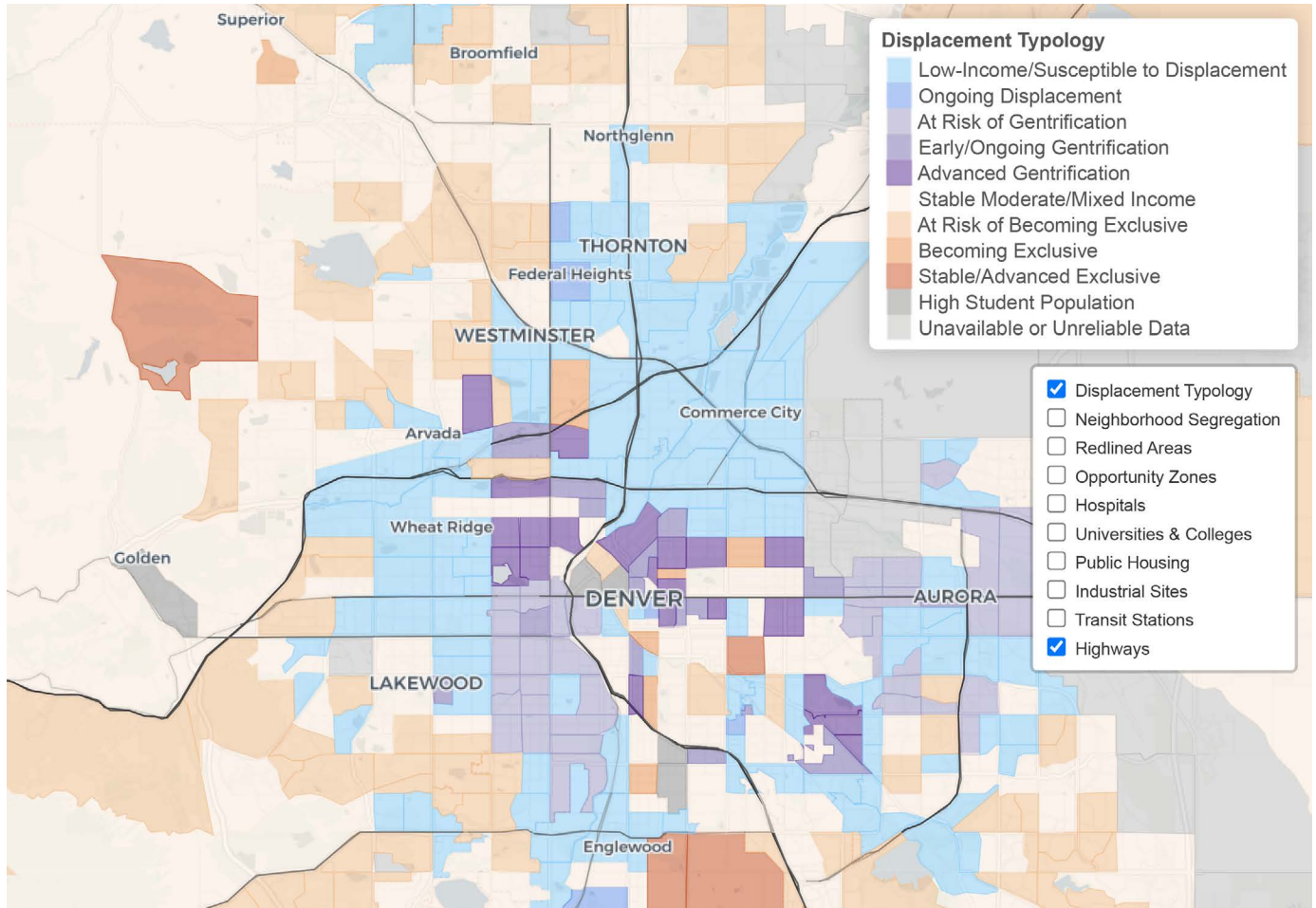
Historic context studies are not generally at the top on the list of the background materials that planners review when they are preparing a comprehensive plan or zoning code, but these studies can be an effective tool to help make the case for establishing regulatory protections for neighborhoods and business districts that might otherwise be overlooked.

Regulatory Tools

There are a variety of regulatory approaches that can be used to help protect historically disadvantaged and vulnerable neighborhoods and business districts. This section provides an overview of these approaches and examples of the varying contexts in which they are being used—or could potentially be used.

Specialized Overlay Zones

Specialized overlay zones modify development standards or allowed uses permitted in the underlying base zoning district(s). They are flexible tools that can be tailored to fit a variety of contexts. In some instances, specialized overlay districts are used to provide relief from standards in the underlying zoning district that might otherwise preclude the desired development pattern. In other instances, specialized overlay districts are used to establish more restrictive design and development standards in order to preserve desired character and reduce the likelihood of speculative investment and displacement of current residents and businesses. The nomenclature used to describe specialized overlay districts varies by community but



commonly includes conservation districts, cultural protection overlays, downtown or business district overlays, historic district overlays, and neighborhood overlays.

While specialized overlay districts that are created to help protect historically disadvantaged and vulnerable neighborhoods and business districts should be developed in the context of any existing overlay districts or frameworks for such districts in the code, they should also clearly communicate their purpose—both in name and applicability. There is no “right” answer as to what to call a specialized overlay zone in this context, but terminology does matter.

For example, efforts to preserve residential neighborhoods or business districts based on their historic and cultural significance have traditionally focused on *architectural* significance as the overriding criterion. This focus has meant that policy and regulatory tools like historic district overlays and design

guidelines—as well as grants and loans for rehabilitation—have more often been applied to “high-style” areas that are generally occupied by largely white and more affluent residents. While preservationists are working to change this practice through the expansion of historic eligibility criteria to encompass cultural values and other intangibles, historic preservation as a tool is viewed as an exclusionary practice by some. As a result, the term *conservation district* or *cultural protection overlay*—when combined with a supporting definition that is tailored to the local context—may be more broadly supported by historically disadvantaged and vulnerable communities and individuals than the term *historic district*, even if the provisions within the overlay are identical.

Conservation district overlays have traditionally been used as an alternative to historic district overlays to establish protective measures for historic neighborhoods that have characteristics that

An interactive map for the Denver metropolitan area, showing where gentrification and displacement are happening (Credit: [Urban Displacement Project](#))

warrant protection, but that do not have the level of property owner support or historic integrity needed to qualify for designation as a historic district. Some cities have a tiered system of overlay districts—ranging from traditional historic districts to conservation districts to neighborhood stabilization overlays—that offer varying levels of protection for neighborhoods in exchange for more or less stringent review processes for new construction and demolitions. Although they typically place less focus on architectural style and historic integrity as defining features, many conservation districts still focus on protecting “character” in the physical sense over the protection of cultural resources or the mitigation of displacement. However, examples of overlay districts or other tools that are designed to specifically to protect historically disadvantaged and vulnerable neighborhoods and business districts do exist.

Chapel Hill, North Carolina, adopted the [Northside and Pine Knolls Community Plan and Neighborhood Conservation District Regulations](#) in 2012 to address concerns about infill and redevelopment pressures and the proliferation of student housing in two of the town’s historically Black neighborhoods near the University of North Carolina campus. Regulations address the building height, lot coverage, parking, and a range of other site and building standards. The regulations represent one of many steps the town has taken in collaboration with neighborhood residents since the 1970s—including investment in infrastructure and services, creation of a land bank, and completion of a housing market action plan. In 2015, the town reported that for the first time since the 1980s, the number of African Americans living in the neighborhood was increasing (2017).

Beaufort County, South Carolina, adopted Cultural Protection Overlay (CPO) Zone Standards to, “provide for the long term protection of the culturally significant resources found on St. Helena Island...a historic and cultural landscape with a notable concentration of Gullah (Geechee) culture” ([§3.4.50](#)). The overlay requires that access to water and other culturally significant locations be maintained and prohibits golf courses, gated communities, and

Authentic Public Engagement

Public input opportunities are a fundamental part of any code update process and should be made available to the entire community. Allowing issues and opportunities related to historically disadvantaged and vulnerable neighborhoods and business districts to emerge organically from a broader community conversation allows the narrative to be driven by people, rather than practitioners. Ultimately, this approach can help participants feel a stronger sense of ownership in the process and build broader support for the regulations that are ultimately brought forward.

However, more targeted public outreach is necessary when working with historically disadvantaged and vulnerable neighborhoods and business districts to establish a clear understanding of what is important, to whom, and why. The [Equity in Zoning Policy Guide](#) notes in several instances that the recommended policies, “should only be used with the clear understanding that restricting private investment (by restricting the density and intensity of development that’s allowed in certain zoning districts) will mean that the existing building stock may age and may remain substandard compared to surrounding areas unless funding for structural improvements or interior remodeling is made available.”

The degree to which a neighborhood or business district is accepting of change (or regulations that may limit change) is dependent upon many factors. None of the regulatory tools that discussed here should be pursued without active participation and support from affected residents, businesses, and property owners. The potential outcomes of proposed regulations should be clearly communicated.

franchise design and limits resort activities. In early 2023, the community pushed back on a developer’s request to weaken the standards to allow more flexibility for development with a counter proposal to expand the stated purpose of the CPO Zone Standards (Protect St Helena Island 2023). The county subsequently updated the standards to more directly address the importance of the Island’s cultural resources as being inclusive of the people themselves ([Ordinance 2023/18](#)).

Houston recently approved an ordinance that establishes a process for creating Conservation Districts and identifies six pilot neighborhoods, including Freedmen’s Town—the oldest Black settlement in Houston ([Ordinance No. 2023-232](#)). The ordinance enables the adoption of design guidelines that address the scale, siting, and appearance of additions and new development, as well

Equity and Inclusivity in Historic Preservation

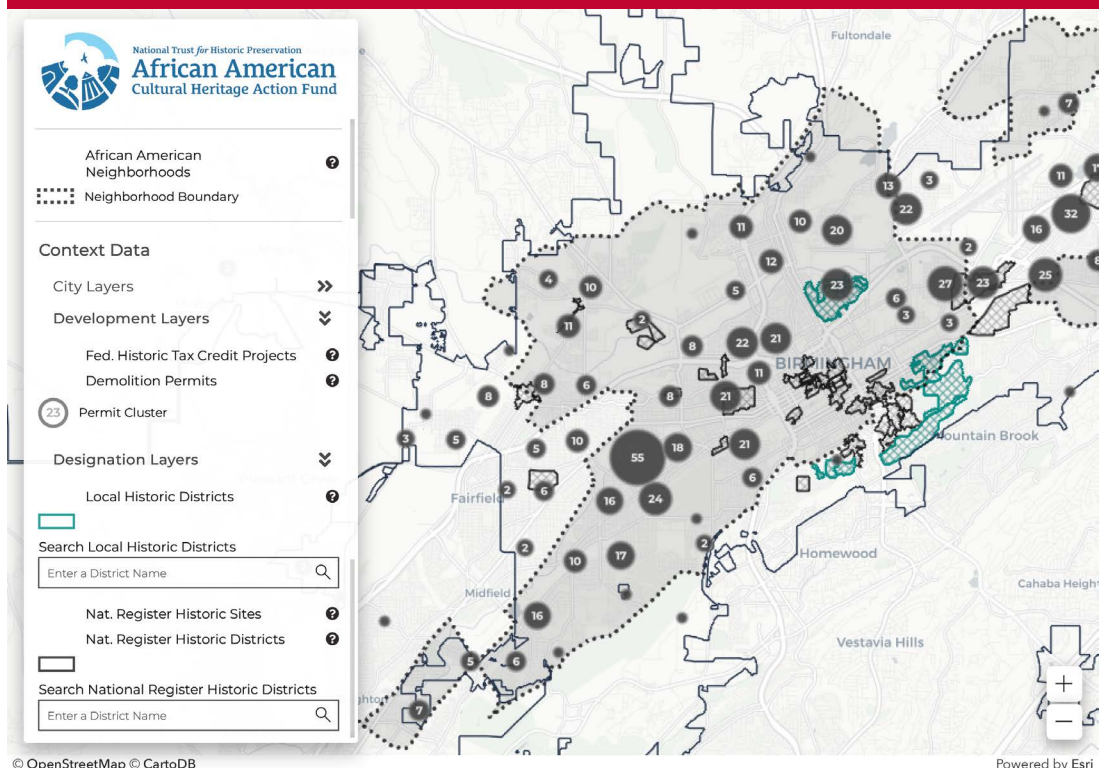
Calls to make historic preservation more equitable and inclusive are not new. In conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 in 2017, the National Trust for Historic Preservation released a roadmap for a more inclusive preservation practice, **Preservation for People: A Vision for the Future**. Prominent equity themes include the need to expand the focus on people in all aspects of the preservation practice, and to expand the reach of preservation through collaboration with other fields, such as planning.

In the past few years, these themes have been amplified for preservation—just as they have been for planning—as concerns about social justice and equity have been at the forefront of conversations across the country. This focus is visible in preservation activities at the local level as municipalities

- take steps to amend landmark preservation ordinances to include (or increase the weight of) cultural resources and social cohesion as defining criteria;
- invest in the creation of historic context studies, mapping, and other reports that document the substantial role that historically disadvantaged and vulnerable communities have played in local communities;
- prioritize efforts to expand representation of historically disadvantaged and vulnerable communities in local historic districts and landmarks; and
- establish alternatives to traditional historic districts.

The National Trust is also helping to draw a clearer throughline between the related—but often siloed—realms of preservation and planning. As a follow up to its 2020 study, **Preserving African American Places: Growing Preservation's Potential as a Path for Equity**, the National Trust released **interactive maps** for 10 U.S. cities—Atlanta; Birmingham, Alabama; Chicago; Philadelphia; St. Louis; Los Angeles; Louisville, Kentucky; Oakland, California; New York City; and Washington, D.C.—that highlight demographic shifts in African American neighborhoods in relation to development permits, historic districts, zoning, and transit lines.

An interactive map for the Birmingham, Alabama, metropolitan area, showing concentrations of demolition permits in African American neighborhoods and historic districts (Credit: [National Trust for Historic Preservation](#))



as demolitions and building relocations. Separately, Freedmen's Town was recognized as the City's first Heritage District—a distinction that allows community members to establish a nonprofit fund for a neighborhood for the purpose of investing in improvements to the public right-of-way (Simon 2021). The Houston Freeman's Town Conservancy has developed a [strategic plan](#) for the area to help protect and preserve the area.

Customized Base Zoning Districts

Customized base zoning districts can be tailored to fit the needs of a particular neighborhood, business district, or type of housing but are less common than overlay districts. This may be because cities, towns, and counties try to minimize their number of base zoning districts or because convincing individual property owners to rezone to a new base zoning district can be more challenging and time intensive than building support for an overlay district with targeted provisions. As a result, customized base zoning districts are sometimes offered as “optional” incentive-based tools that can be applied at the request of a property owner to earn additional flexibility in height, density, or uses. However, establishing meaningful protections for historically disadvantaged and vulnerable neighborhoods and business districts using a customized base zoning district would require a proactive rezoning process that is initiated by local officials to ensure the special-purpose district is applied uniformly across the intended area of applicability. Few business property owners are willing to limit their redevelopment options unless they know their neighbors have done so as well.

Seattle has multiple special review (International) districts—both residential and mixed-use—with the goal of “promoting, preserving, and perpetuating the cultural, economic, historical, and otherwise beneficial qualities of the area, particularly the features derived from its Asian heritage” ([§23.66.302](#)). Provisions encourage the rehabilitation of existing buildings and “pedestrian-oriented retail specialty shops with colorful and interesting displays” and address the scale and potential impacts of new development.

San Francisco has customized base zoning districts that apply to its diverse neighborhoods and neighborhood business districts. The Chinatown Mixed-use Districts offer an example of how customized base zoning districts can be tailored to protect the unique characteristics and cultural practices of historically disadvantaged and vulnerable communities and individuals in a defined area of the city. Three specialized districts address the distinctions between Chinatown's Community Business District ([§810](#)), Visitor Retail District ([§811](#)), and Residential Neighborhood Commercial District ([§812](#)). Provisions address the scale of development and the overall mix of uses allowed in different areas and generally seek to prevent “spill-over” of larger office uses from the city's adjacent financial district.

Targeted code amendments can be used to establish interim protections for historically disadvantaged and vulnerable neighborhoods and business districts, either while a broader code update is underway or as a long-term fix.

Targeted Code Amendments

Targeted code amendments can be used to establish interim protections for historically disadvantaged and vulnerable neighborhoods and business districts, either while a broader code update is underway or as a long-term fix. Targeted amendments are often used to remove barriers to a certain type of development or to address a potential weakness in the existing code that is resulting in development that is not consistent with community or neighborhood goals. They can be applied to specific zoning districts, locations within a defined geography, or types of uses.

San Francisco was one of the first U.S. cities to establish a [legacy business program](#). Since the program was launched

in 2013, over 350 businesses have been registered. The city has since adopted targeted amendments to provide greater flexibility for registered businesses in different zoning districts (2023). These provisions

- require conditional use authorization before replacing a legacy business;
- allow a merger of commercial spaces for a legacy business (the reach of this provision varies by district—ranging from generally applicable, to just corner lots, to just in instances when a retail storefront will be used by a grocery store that is a legacy business); and
- exempt legacy businesses from use size limits.

Zoning Standards

The tools highlighted above can form the basis for a local strategy to support historically disadvantaged and vulnerable neighborhoods and business districts. However, a successful strategy ultimately depends on the relationship between specific zoning standards and local market conditions. Furthermore, neighborhoods and business districts typically require different approaches.

Neighborhoods

Advancing equity objectives in historically disadvantaged and vulnerable neighborhoods may require updates to zoning regulations governing use permissions and dimensional standards, design and development standards, procedures, and definitions. Planners and local officials should consider the following approaches:

- Legalize nonconforming ADUs and allow creation of new ones.
- Eliminate minimum lot widths and minimum home/unit sizes.
- Reduce minimum lot sizes to reflect original lot patterns.
- Define and protect established building forms, with a focus on building massing and scale.
- Take a light touch on defining architectural features, unless they are requested by a majority of neighborhood residents.
- Limit the expansion of existing homes to discourage teardowns.
- Preserve other building or site design features that contribute to the identity and cultural heritage of the neighborhood's built environment or to the traditions and customs of its occupants.
- Provide flexibility on development standards (e.g., landscaping, parking, and minimum densities) to encourage adaptive reuse.
- Limit or prohibit the demolition of historic housing, regardless of whether the homes are listed on a historic register.
- Add or update definition for *cultural resource* to include social value.

Business Districts

Advancing equity objectives in historically disadvantaged and vulnerable business districts may require different updates to many of the same sections of the zoning code. For these areas, planners and local officials should consider the following approaches:

- Restrict common uses that can dominate a streetscape and outbid other current uses, such as banks and real estate offices.
- Permit uses common in the business district, even if they are conditional uses in other commercial areas.
- Define and protect established building forms, with a focus on building massing and scale.
- Take a light touch on defining architectural features unless they are requested by a majority of neighborhood residents.
- Allow exceptions to minimum heights or densities.
- Include a maximum size limit for individual businesses in order to discourage lot consolidation and replacement of small businesses with larger commercial uses that are more profitable and may have more access to financing.
- Limit or prohibit the demolition of recognized Legacy Businesses, businesses that meet criteria determined to be significant to the area, and historic buildings (regardless of whether they are listed on a historic register).



About the Author

Darcie White, AICP, is a Director with Clarion Associates, LLC, based in the Denver office, and has been a member of the firm since 2000. She has assisted nearly 40 U.S. communities with updates to their comprehensive plans, with a particular focus on plan implementation and strategies to promote sustainability and resilience.

Conclusions

Unless reasonable alternatives to upzoning are presented and implemented, historically disadvantaged and vulnerable neighborhoods and business districts will continue to be lost to redevelopment. The onus is on planners to be more proactive in acknowledging and addressing the inherent conflicts that exist when proposing upzoning or other changes that impact historically disadvantaged and vulnerable neighborhoods and business districts.

Documenting potential areas of concern is easier now than it has ever been thanks to the emergence of online mapping tools and the work of historic preservation professionals and engaged community members. A variety of zoning tools can be used to establish protective measures for historically disadvantaged and vulnerable neighborhoods and business districts. They should be crafted in collaboration with affected communities and individuals.

Public engagement efforts need to address both the intended outcomes of each action and the potential unintended consequences of those same actions in order to build community support that can be sustained over time.

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American Planning Association

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ZONING PRACTICE AUGUST 2023 | VOL. 40, NO. 8. Zoning Practice (ISSN 1548-0135) is a monthly publication of the American Planning Association. Joel Albizo, FASAE, CAE, Chief Executive Officer; Petra Hurtado, PHD, Research Director; David Morley, AICP, Editor. Subscriptions are available for \$65 (individuals) and \$120 (organizations). © 2023 by the American Planning Association, 205 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1200, Chicago, IL 60601-5927; planning.org. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means without permission in writing from APA.