

What is the Equitable Zoning Pilot?

Information for EDI RFP applicants

OPCD is developing an Equitable Zoning Pilot to identify and support real estate projects aligned with the values of the Equitable Development Initiative (EDI) that have encountered barriers in the City's land use and zoning policies. The EDI program is studying several policies and practices that could advance public welfare, address regulatory barriers, facilitate project approvals, reduce cost and time, and increase predictability.

The Equitable Development Implementation Plan identifies six equity drivers that establish the City's interest in advance the welfare of communities who experience lower access to opportunity resulting from years of systemic inequities. The EDI program supports projects that provide community benefit by addressing these equity drivers. Many EDI projects are solutions designed by communities Impacted by systemic and institutional racism. These community-driven rather than City-proposed projects do not benefit from early access to conventional urban planning expertise. The projects also may not adhere strictly to zoning and land use classifications designed for more conventional development patterns that don't emphasize broader community benefits. This disconnect occasionally creates additional hurdles for EDI projects to be able to execute on their community's vision within City-wide development goals where the original public purposes of the regulations are not being well served.

The Pilot will explore, and hopefully test, several short-, medium-, and long-term strategies to assist projects in achieving their goals, including but not limited to:

- 1) A formalized process for OPCD-led rezones where a group of properties can apply for a change in zoning designation or conditional use permits that may help projects achieve shared goals through needed density or allowable use changes.
- 2) Flexibility in existing allowable uses, through either simpler conditional use permitting or creating new, by-right equitable development uses.
- 3) Changes to permitting requirements to reduce the costs and time associated with EDI projects.

OPCD staff will contact project sponsors that indicate an interest in participating in the pilot to identify the issues facing the project. If it seems like there is a possible match that brings benefit to the project's costs or schedule, and the solution would allow the pilot to test potential solutions that advance equitable development, then OPCD's goal is to work with the sponsor to design the strategy and provide technical assistance to help resolve the challenge. It is important for potential participants to understand that OPCD technical assistance is separate from City planning functions. Participation in the pilot project does not mean that recipient will receive a permit or that any particular land use decision will result.

Projects DO NOT need to have received EDI funding in order to participate in the pilot, so long as the project is shown to meet the criteria identified in the RFP Guidance.