



February 19, 2026

To: Council President Matt Biren, Mayor Brendan Pratt, and Members of the Altoona City Council  
From: Susan Wolfgram & Paul Savides, Co-chairs JONAH Affordable Housing Task Force  
Re: February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2026 City Council Meeting, Agenda Item: Zoning Ordinance Amendment

Zoning is a fundamental tool of embedding affordability in a city's development. We advocated for the same recently in Eau Claire with the Century Code Zoning Rewrite. JONAH is committed to the "Seventh Generation Principle," which requires us to consider the impact of development on future generations and to ensure that they are sustainable and beneficial for the community as a whole. When you examine the most recent Eau Claire County ALICE Report (2023), 36% of Eau Claire County residents, 39% of City of Eau Claire residents, and 31% of Altoona residents are struggling to make ends meet, between the ALICE financial threshold and those in poverty. When you struggle to make ends meet, the "rent eats first." Many of these families pay 50% or more of their income on rent, and we cannot afford to wait until wages catch up. How do you balance zoning and growth with increasing access to affordable housing for 31% of your community members struggling to pay the rent, knowing that "Without stable shelter, everything else falls apart" (Matthew Desmond, 2016).

In that spirit, we support the Zoning Ordinance Amendment recommendations provided to you by Christina Thrun, Executive Officer of the Chippewa Valley Home Builders (CVHB). We consider CVHB a partner in affordability. Susan was a member of the Eau Claire Plan Commission during their Century Code Zoning Rewrite, and our comments reflect those recommendations in Altoona's rewrite. Overall, we support embedding affordability in every level of the Code and flexibility in standards vs. requirements, in the spirit of being nimble to ensure affordability. These CVHB recommendations that we support include but are not limited to:

- 1903: Removing the Town Home & Two-Family garage standards
  - *The Plan Commission asked to have the code revised to allow for a multi-story two-family or town home with the garage on the bottom. We have not seen the revised code wording but support the idea of this change to allow more flexibility for this type of housing.*
- 19.08.06 & 19.08.07: Public gathering spaces
  - *We support the requirement of public gathering space and a Homeowner's Association to manage that space not be required for single family and two-family/twin homes.*
- 1904: Parking Lot and Landscaping Requirements:
  - *We support revising the parking lot requirements to reduce the number of concrete islands, medians, endcaps and plantings required; however:*
    - Although plantings may need to be reduced for affordability concerns, we encourage the use of these plantings whenever possible for environmental and quality of life concerns.

Altoona has demonstrated leadership in valuing affordability. One commendable example that our Task Force closely collaborated on with you is Solis Circle, which we continue to use as a statewide model. It is also a demonstration of developers who are committed to contributing to the housing needs of a community. Again, the decisions you make today will impact generations to come.

You have an awesome responsibility.

We appreciate your consideration of our comments.

In Community Partnership,

Susan Wolfgram & Paul Savides  
Co-chairs JONAH Affordable Housing Task Force