

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



CINCINNATI HILLSIDE
INITIATIVE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Cincinnati Hillside Initiative Frequently Asked Questions

This document compiles questions heard during the Cincinnati Hillside Initiative engagement sessions. Similar questions were combined. We hope this helps provide some clarity about the initiative!

Q1: What is the Cincinnati Hillside Initiative?

The Cincinnati Hillside Initiative is a collaborative effort between the City of Cincinnati's Department of Buildings and Inspections, the Department of City Planning and Engagement, and The Hillside Trust. This initiative aims to evaluate and improve the city's hillside building and zoning codes to ensure future developments are safe, responsible, and carefully managed.

Q2: Why focus on Cincinnati's hillsides?

Approximately 19% of Cincinnati's incorporated area consists of hillsides with slopes of 20% or greater. These hillsides are a vital part of the city's identity, offering scenic views, green space, and development opportunities. However, they also pose unique challenges such as soil instability, erosion, and infrastructure risks.

Q3: What are the goals of this initiative?

The Hillside Initiative seeks to:

- Reassess Hillside Overlay District maps and zoning design standards
- Streamline and improve building and zoning codes related to hillsides
- Strengthen hillside protections with updated engineering standards
- Eliminate ambiguity in current development guidelines
- Introduce alternative design methodologies in the building code
- Re-evaluate construction management standards for hillside development

Q4: What are the expected benefits of these updates?

- Encourage responsible, well-engineered hillside development
- Reduce risks of landslides, erosion, and property damage
- Protect city infrastructure and natural water drainage systems
- Support balanced community growth while preserving the environment
- Maintain the unique beauty and character of Cincinnati's hillsides

Q5: How was the public involved in the process?

The City hosted two public engagement sessions (one in-person and one virtual) to gather feedback from residents and development professionals. The City also gave community members an opportunity to submit their feedback via survey:

- **In-Person Session:** May 7, 2025, at the Price Hill Recreation Center
- **Virtual Session:** May 20, 2025, via Zoom
- **Survey:** Open from March 29, 2025 to June 6, 2025

A dedicated session for developers, builders, designers, and engineers was also held as well as an opportunity to submit feedback via survey, which was created specifically for the development industry.

Q6: Will there be additional engagement opportunities?

Yes, there will be additional opportunities to engage once recommendations are drafted.

Stay updated by signing up for our email list or continuing to check our website:

<https://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/planning/projects/active/cincinnati-hillside-initiative/>

Q7: What is the timeline?

Anticipate staggered rollout of recommendations as they become finalized. We anticipate recommendations for adoption beginning in Fall 2025 and thereafter.

Q8: Are there other cities involved in this process?

This initiative is only reviewing regulations within the City of Cincinnati, and not Hamilton County or other neighboring Ohio communities, due to the unique geography of the City of Cincinnati. This process, however, will be studying what cities with comparable hillside/landslide challenges have currently adopted for their regulations. (Ex. Pittsburgh, Louisville, Huntington)

Q9: Is the City using previous hillside studies in this initiative?

Yes, part of the research phase is assessing previous research, soil boring locations of landslides, geotechnical reports, etc. These will be used in consideration of overlay area definitions and map amendments.

Q10: How will the City use the survey and the public engagement feedback?

The public engagement meetings were used as listening sessions to help us understand community experiences with the hillside. The City's recommendations regarding the policies that affect future development in our hillside neighborhoods, will be guided by the feedback received from both the in-person and virtual engagement sessions as well as surveys.

Q11: Who owns the hillsides?

Cincinnati's hillsides are not owned by one group or entity. The hillsides are owned by a mixture of governments (primarily the City), preservation groups (aka Hillside Trust and others), and private property owners.

Q12: Are there any economic incentives being offered?

The Cincinnati Hillside Initiative is focused on the Building and Zoning Codes, which do not include economic incentives. Economic incentives would have to be explored outside of this initiative.