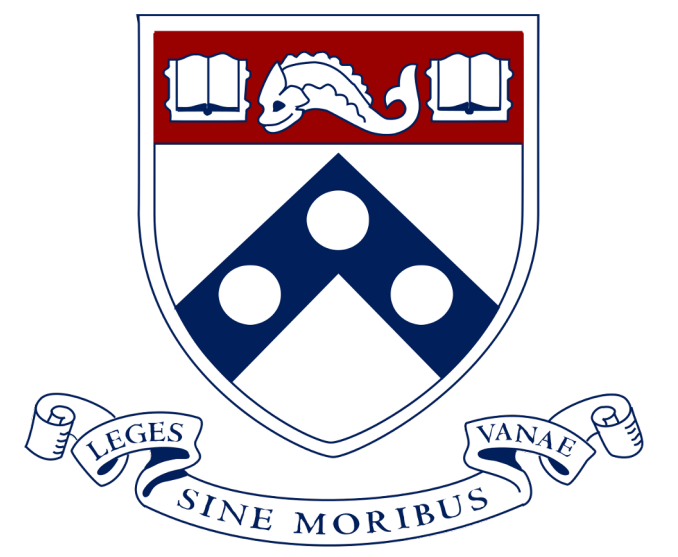


Analyzing the Zoning Code Law of San Antonio, TX

Ailbhe Yasmin Wallis, Undergraduate Urban Research Colloquium, 2021

Mentored by Christine Quattro



Project Description

Goal: investigate changes and historical context for zoning code iterations in San Antonio
 Specific analysis on potentials for disproportionate impact on protected classes

How: examine historic zoning ordinances and archival code records to document code changes over time

Why: Zoning plays an integral part in shaping nearly every city in the country, and understanding its history and how that history has changed over time is important to better prepare for current planning decisions

Question whether Zoning could be a contributing factor to the enforcement of economic and racial segregation (San Antonio was the most economically segregated city in the nation in 2019 and is a minority-majority city)

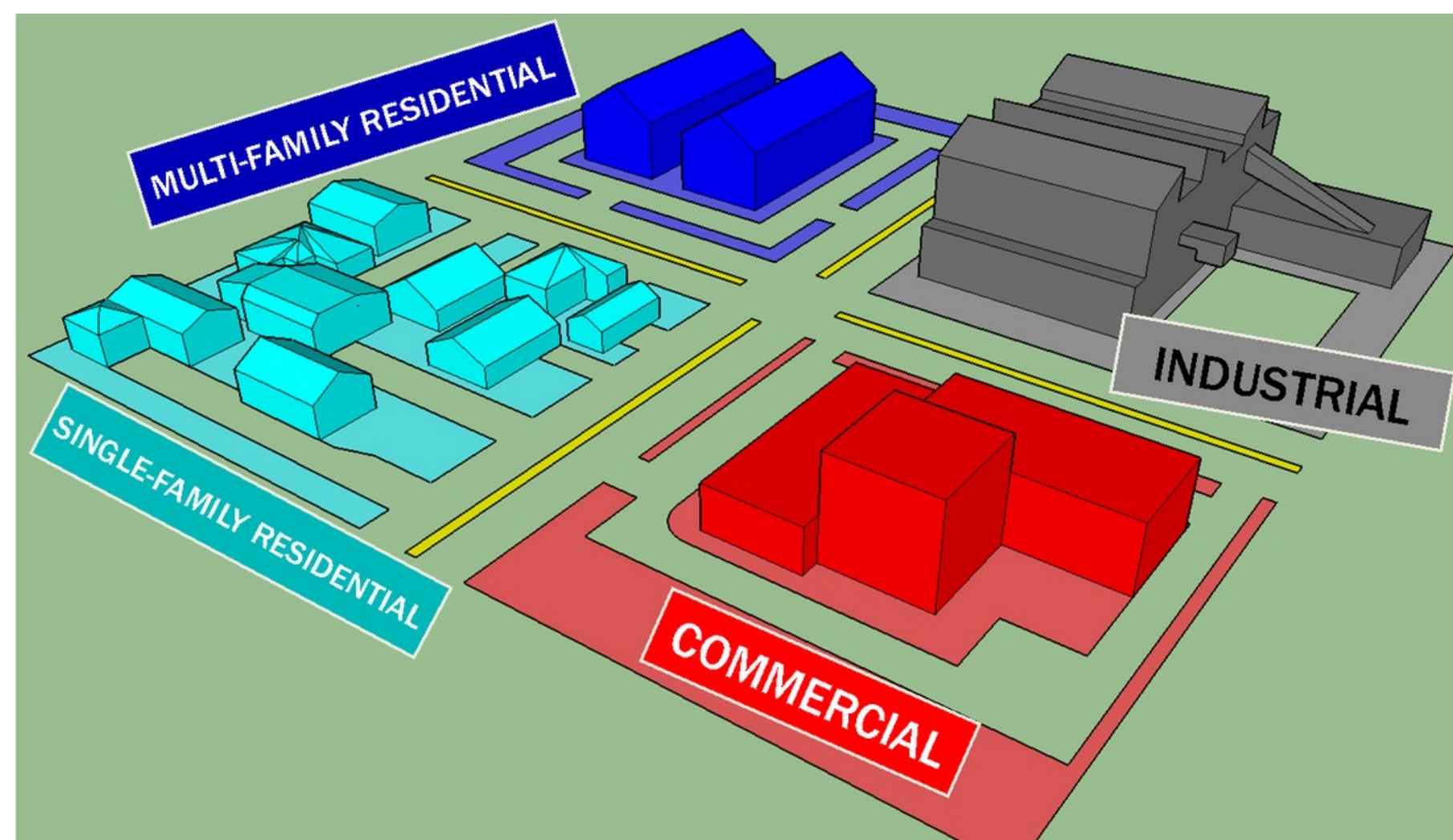
Research Questions

1. What are the details of the zoning ordinances in San Antonio and how has the code language changed over time?
2. What has been the historic relationship between the creation and placement of zoning districts and marginalized communities in the city of San Antonio, TX?
3. How has the code language put marginalized communities (low income and non-white populations) at risk for higher exposure to environmental impacts (such as reduced buffers adjacent to multifamily, etc.)?

Site

San Antonio, TX is the 7th largest city in the United States and is projected to become the 6th largest city before 2030. It is often overlooked in planning research because planners have tended to favor the smaller city, Austin, to the north.

The city uses a **Euclidian** zoning model:



“By allotting industrial, business or residential uses among districts, and by placing the various districts within a hierarchy to protect some districts from less desirable uses more fully, zoning protected those districts deemed worthy of added protection” - Joel Kosman, JD., 1993

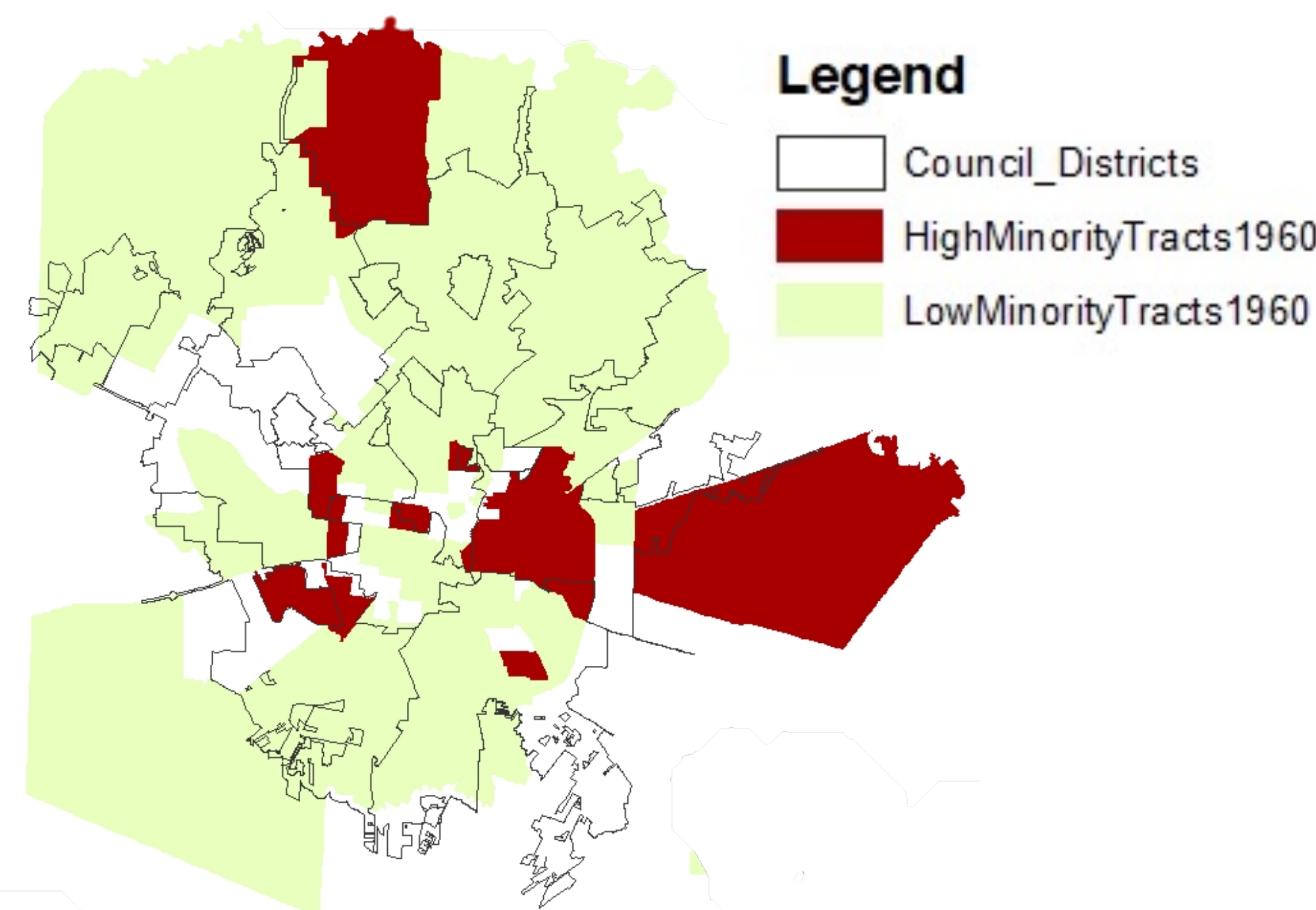
Hypotheses

In the city of San Antonio, code language for more affordable tiers of zoning districts provides **fewer protections** from negative externalities than code sections for other zoning districts.

Aside from becoming more detailed, the zoning codes have not changed significantly since their inception in the 1930s.

Archival Research Results

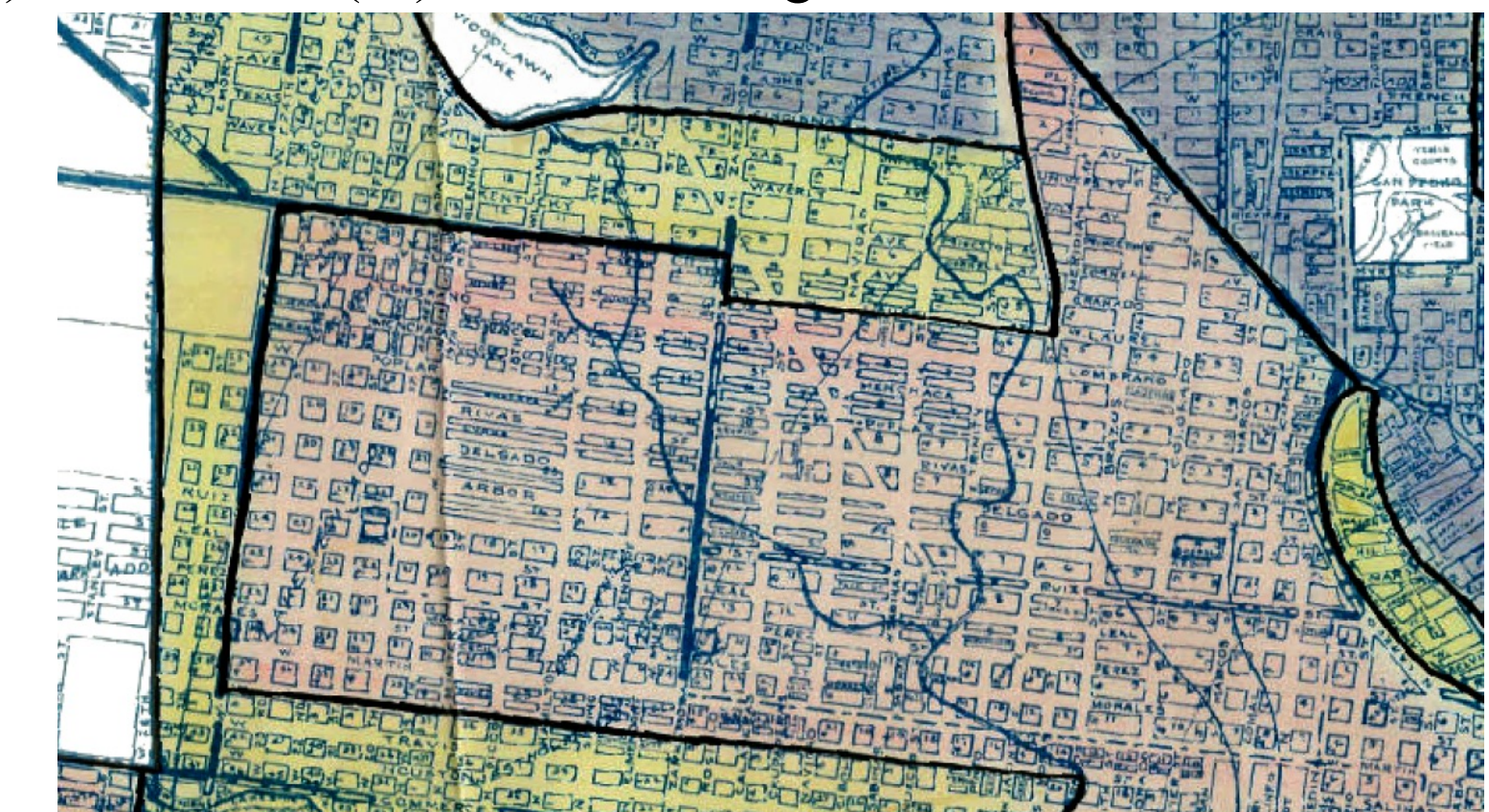
- 1930: Payout to Harland Bartholomew (known to advocate for the use of zoning to separate by race and class)
- 1965 Code (adopted June 28): changed zoning policy to be in line with comprehensive plan. includes all previous zoning districts but adds the following: residence-agriculture (R-A), one-family residence (R-1, R-5), two family residence (R-2), multiple family residence (R-3), mobile homes (R-4), transition business (B-1), community business (B-2), regional business (B-3), central business (B-4), light industry, heavy industry (I-1), heavy industry (I-2).
- 2001 (“Revised Unified Development Code”): claimed to have the overarching goal of uniting the goals of the master plan with zoning policies
- Multifamily homes have less protections:** On commercial corridors, less buffers, no required traffic study when rezoning
- Continued specificity of zoning ordinances**
- Major amendments seem to coincide with the implementation of other neighborhood (sub-area) plans
- The city’s first comprehensive plan was adopted in 2016- despite zoning having been adopted for 78 years prior
- There was no overall comprehensive plan when it was referenced in the 1965 ordinance. The city has only adopted land use plans for some (wealthier, white) neighborhoods of the city, leaving other (poor, black and Tejano)
 - Many regulations also seem to have an influence of religion



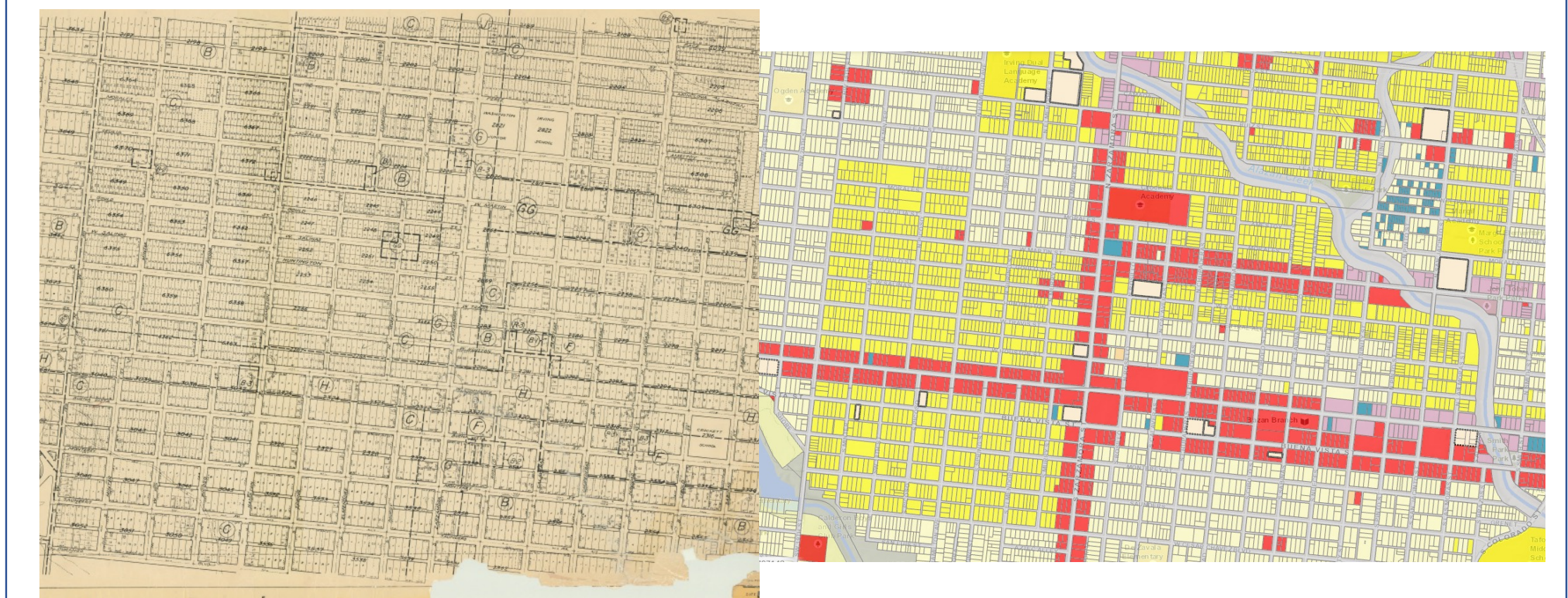
Results

Very few studies have been done to provide empirical evidence assessing the code language delineating different tiers of zoning. We found:

The codes are essentially unchanged, except for becoming more detailed in the establishment of more and improved description of different zoning districts: Original zoning districts were Single Family Residence (A), Residence (B, C), Apartment (D, E), Local Retail (F, G, H), Business (I), Commercial (J, K), and both the First (L) and Second (M) Manufacturing districts.



1965 revised code includes all previous zoning districts but adds the following: residence-agriculture (R-A), one-family residence (R-1, R-5), two family residence (R-2), multiple family residence (R-3), mobile homes (R-4), transition business (B-1), community business (B-2), regional business (B-3), central business (B-4), light industry, heavy industry (I-1), heavy industry (I-2). The 2001 revised UDC claimed to have the overarching goal of uniting the goals of the master plan with zoning policies, though zoning districts remained largely unchanged.



Conclusions

Zoning codes exist in longevity and encounter many legal, financial, and logistical obstacles when changes are sought after. The existing built environment (created at least in part by existing zoning codes) may not have space or the design to be changed, such as adding buffer and green space requirements. Increased requirements for multifamily housing to improve the quality could lead to increased costs in housing for low-income communities. Similarly, relocating LULUs from low-income neighborhoods could increase property values and taxes for those residents (i.e.: gentrification). In this way, planners must always prioritize **improvement with a focus on avoiding unintentional future harm.**