



How to Retain Maker and Manufacturer Industries through Creative Zoning Tolls: Lessons from Indianapolis, Somerville, and Nashville

Our Land Use Policy & Real Estate Development Community of Practice hosted a webinar about creative zoning policies in Nashville, Indianapolis and Somerville where cities have taken a proactive stance to protect and create space for makers and manufacturers. Featuring Tammara Tracy from the City of Indianapolis; Brian Phelps from Hawkins Partners in Nashville; and George Proakis from the City of Somerville; facilitated by Ilana Preuss of Recast City and Leah Archibald of Evergreen.

Takeaways

Zoning needs to be embedded in local conversations on sustainability and community economic development. In Indianapolis, we heard how their zoning ordinance is designed to foster adaptive reuse of vacant industrial and non-industrial buildings for small-scale manufacturing. Their focus on vacancy creates a dynamic mechanism, responsive to existing building uses and a neighborhood's needs for lot and building activation.

Organizing across businesses and community organizations can pave the way for thoughtful manufacturing zoning. For example, in Somerville, over 80 small makers and artists (led by the makerspace [Artisans Aslyum](#)) attended community hearings and asserted the importance of the Artisan Ordinance. The Nashville City Council vote saw the influence of the collaboration of their Planning Department, the Arts Council, and the Wedgewood Houston neighborhood.

Mixed-use experimentation needs to be coupled with an explicit commitment to production space. Somerville's new ordinance is changing the concept of "live/work spaces" into "work/live spaces" where fabricators and artists who are already occupying production studios can request a variance to live where they already work. In Nashville, a private real estate developer is creating a mixed-use building of residential and light manufacturing, side-by-side, with a specific plan adopted by the Planning Department to create dedicated production space.

In light of the tragic fire in Oakland, our presenters talked about addressing the safety concerns of live/work spaces. All presenters emphasized that safety is a fundamental priority for each city, as these (and all) developments are coming online. For additional resources, take a look at this [new resource for DIY spaces](#) coming out of Seattle.

Artisan zoning is supporting new space for light-manufacturing, but there is still a need for strategies to support inclusive business curation. Our presenters and facilitators discussed the importance of implementing inclusionary zoning to encourage development of women- and minority-owned businesses and support local ownership, replicating successful housing models. Currently, our communities rely on mission-driven developers to be inclusive, but each presenter recognized the opportunity and importance of building equity into manufacturing zoning tools.



Additional Resources

Learn more by reading [Nashville's](#), [Indianapolis'](#) and [Somerville's](#) ordinances for yourself.