



### ***How does Zoning work?***

A zoning ordinance consists of two parts: a map (or series of maps) and text. The zoning map shows how the community is divided into different use districts or zones. Zoning districts common to most ordinances include residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural. The zoning map must show precise boundaries for each district. Consequently, most zoning maps rely on street or property lines as district boundaries.

The zoning text serves two important functions. First, it explains the zoning standards that apply in each zoning district. These rules typically establish a list of land uses permitted in each district plus a series of specific standards governing lot size, building height, and required yard and setback provisions. Second, the text sets forth a series of procedures for administering and applying the zoning ordinance. In most cases, the text is divided according to "sections" (or "articles") for ease of reference.

### ***Why do we have zoning? Why is it important?***

Land use zoning probably isn't the only way of making sure that people don't make ill-advised decisions about where to locate certain businesses or even residences. However, since the 1930's, it's been the standard mechanism in the U.S., and most cities rely on it for a number of reasons.

The greatest reason that good land use guidance is important is the preserving of property values that might decline if someone drops an undesirable business down in the middle of a residential neighborhood. Zoning can protect the value of property by assuring that incompatible uses will be kept apart. Zoning can keep factories out of residential areas (which could lower the value of homes in the immediate vicinity), as well as keep residential developments from locating in industrial areas.

The regulation of matters such as setbacks (meaning the number of feet from a street or an adjoining property line that must be maintained free of structures) helps with a solid urban design. Two homes inappropriately close together in a neighborhood where there is some real room to roam around each house would tend to detract from the neighborhood and therefore reduce property values. Zoning can also promote the public health and safety by requiring that lots be large enough to allow for the safe disposal of septic tank effluent, and by requiring that homes be spaced far enough apart that fires will not spread easily. The promotion of public health and safety are the two basic purposes for which counties and townships are authorized to enact zoning.

Zoning also provides for more orderly development. Regulations pertaining to lot size, set back lines, building height, and population density can make areas more attractive. With zoning, local residents can ensure that poor development will not occur.

Finally, zoning can be important in attracting business and industry to an area. Sufficient good land should be zoned for business and industry that is uniquely suited for business and industry and has adequate access and public facilities.

Zoning is important for those who want the most tried-and-true system of preserving property values by prohibiting inappropriate land uses and encouraging appropriate neighboring uses. It provides predictability to future home and business owners and ensures orderly development.