

KNOW YOUR ZONING

Mark Apel

Contrary to popular belief, rural areas in Arizona are “zoned” by their respective county government. In addition to the other many duties that counties have on behalf of their residents, such as taxing responsibilities, law enforcement, health standards, and road maintenance, Arizona Revised Statutes under Title 11 require land use planning and authorize zoning. While planning is the process by which counties and their unincorporated communities determine the general category or designation of land uses for future development, zoning is the more specific determination of uses and development standards, such as lot sizes and setbacks, by zoning districts. Zoning is the mechanism by which government protects public health, safety and welfare in addition to minimizing impacts to neighboring properties. This may not be new information to many, but the perception of the “wild west” free of regulation is still pervasive in sparsely populated areas. Certain general agriculture and ranching activities are statutorily exempt from zoning regulations in Arizona, but this isn’t the case for all other uses such as residential dwellings.

Where should a land owner go to find out about their zoning?

A good place to start is the Internet and a county’s website for planning and zoning. Most counties in the state have a website usually chocked full of information on obtaining building permits, approval processes for land uses, and most importantly—their zoning regulations. Typing in the county’s name into any search engine will often pull up that county’s official website. From there, it’s usually one or two clicks to get to the county’s webpage for “Community Development” or “Planning and Zoning.” If the zoning regulations are not online, there is often contact information to obtain them.

What should a land owner know about their zoning district?

The number, size and height of structures or houses someone can build on their parcel of land is dictated by

zoning. Zoning districts specify densities of residential development, usually based on square footages or acreage of land. For example, the vast majority of rural areas in Cochise County in the southeastern part of the state is zoned “Rural” with a minimum lot size of four acres. That means that if a land owner purchases a three acre parcel, they would not be able to obtain a building permit to construct a house for their family without an arduous and likely unsuccessful attempt to change their zoning. Other counties have different minimum lot sizes in their rural areas. In addition to a minimum lot size and other development standards, zoning regulations will specify minimum distances (also known as “setbacks”) from property boundaries and roads. Floodplain regulations will also dictate minimum setbacks from significant washes—even if they are dry most of the year.

Lastly, the activities a land owner may or may not be allowed to engage in on his or her property are described by zoning district. For example, some typical rural uses that many may assume to be okay, such as dog kennels, roping arenas, horse boarding facilities or backyard auto repair, will likely require a permitting process or even a rezoning in many counties. Some more intensive uses of rural property, such as commercial, manufacturing or other industrial activities are not likely to be allowed at all. Or, they may only be allowed through a public hearing and special approval process with a county’s planning and zoning commission. Other less intensive uses, like a small bed and breakfast may be a use by right, but still require a permitting process to ensure that development meets the zoning district’s standards and the health, safety and welfare of the public are protected.

Rural properties, though sparsely populated and often remote, exist in relationship to neighboring properties as well as the environment as a whole. Zoning standards and regulations are intended to minimize conflicts that may arise in those relationships. For more information regarding permits and zoning, call your county planning or development office.

Contact Information by County

Apache County Community Development

PO Box 238
75 West Cleveland
St. Johns, AZ 85936
Phone: 928-337-7547
FAX: 928-337-7633
<http://www.co.apache.az.us/DepartmentsCommDevelope/Main.htm>

Greenlee County Planning and Zoning

253 Fifth St.
P.O. Box 908
Clifton, AZ 85533
Phone: 928-865-4762
FAX: 928-865-4417
<http://www.co.greenlee.az.us/PlanningZoning/PlanningZoningHomePage.aspx>

Pima County Public Works

201 North Stone Avenue, 1st and 2nd floor
General Info: 520-740-6520
Permit Info: 520-740-6510
Permits FAX: 520-798-1836
<http://www.dsd.pima.gov/>

Cochise County Planning and Zoning

1415 Melody Lane, Building E.
Bisbee, Arizona 85603
Phone 520-432-9240
FAX 520-432-9278
http://cochise.az.gov/cochise_planning_zoning.aspx?id=1222&ekmense1=c580fa7b_182_352_1222_1

La Paz County Planning and Zoning

1112 Joshua #202
Parker, AZ 85344
Phone: 928-669-6138
FAX: 928-669-5503
<http://www.co.la-paz.az.us/>

Pinal County Planning and Development

31 N Pinal Street, Building F
Florence, AZ 85232
Phone: 520-866-6442
FAX: 520-866-6530
<http://pinalcountyaaz.gov/Departments/PlanningDevelopment/Pages/Home.aspx>

Coconino County Community Development

2500 N Fort Valley Road, Building 1
Flagstaff, Arizona 86001
Phone: 928-679-8850
or 800-559-9289 ext. 8850
FAX: 928-679-8851
<http://coconino.az.gov/comdev.aspx>

Maricopa County Community Development

222 N. Central, Suite 5200
Phoenix, AZ 85004
Phone: 602-372-1535
FAX: 602-372-2292
http://www.maricopa.gov/comm_dev/About_Us.aspx

Santa Cruz County Department of Community Development

Planning Division
2150 North Congress Drive, Suite 106
Nogales, AZ 85621
Phone: 520-375-7930
FAX: 520-375-7836
http://www.co.santa-cruz.az.us/com_development/index.html

Gila County Community Development

Globe Office
1400 East Ash
Globe, Arizona 85501
Phone: 928-425-3231 Ext. 4223
FAX: 928-425-0829

Payson Office

714 S. Beeline Hwy. Suite 200
Payson, Arizona 85541
Phone: 928-474-9276
FAX: 928-474-0802

Toll Free

800-304-4452
Extension 4223 for Globe Office
Extension 7110 for Payson Office
<http://www.gilacountyaz.gov/communitydevelopment/planning&zoning/default.html>

Mohave County Planning and Zoning

3675 E. Andy Devine Avenue
Kingman, AZ 86401
Phone: 928-757-0903
FAX: 928-757-3577
<http://co.mohave.az.us/ContentPage.aspx?id=124>

Yavapai County Development Services

Marina Street Annex
500 South Marina Street
Prescott, AZ 86303
Customer Service & Permitting - Prescott
Phone: 928-771-3214
FAX: 928-771-3432

Yavapai County Cottonwood Annex

10 South 6th Street
Cottonwood, AZ 86326
Customer Service & Permitting - Cottonwood
Phone: 928-639-8151
FAX: 928-639-8153
<http://co.yavapai.az.us/DevServ.aspx>

Graham County Planning and Zoning

921 Thatcher Blvd.
Safford AZ 85546
Phone: 928-428-0410
FAX: 928-428-8825

http://www.graham.az.gov/Graham_CMS/display.aspx?id=620&ekmense=c580fa7b_80_118_620_1

Navajo County Planning & Zoning

100 East Carter Drive
P.O. Box 668
Holbrook, AZ 86025
Phone: 928-524-4100
FAX: 928-524-4122

<http://www.navajocountyaz.gov/pubworks/pz/>

Yuma Department of Development Services

2351 W. 26th Street
Yuma AZ 85364
Phone: 928-817-5000
FAX: 928-817-5050

<http://www.co.yuma.az.us/dds/CPlan.htm>



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cals.arizona.edu/pubs/natresources/az1507d.pdf

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cals.arizona.edu/pubs

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