

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About Zoning

## What is Zoning?

Zoning determines how you can use and develop a property, such as the type of building or business you can have, how tall a new building can be or how far away from the street it must be. Zoning also specifies how much parking and landscaping must be provided on a site and tells you the type of permit you need to make improvements.

The purpose of zoning is to:

- Achieve a community's overall vision for its physical look and feel
- Shape future development
- Implement the City's policies on economic development, historic preservation, arts and culture, and community health.

These are expressed in Vallejo's *General Plan 2040*. The purpose of the new Zoning Code is to make sure Vallejo's Zoning Code conforms with the General Plan, as required by California law.

## How is Zoning Different From Specific Plans or Planned Development Master Plans?

Since 2000, the City has adopted specific plans and planned development master plans for several key areas, which provide detailed policies and implementation actions to achieve them, with a focus on infrastructure and public

facilities as well as land uses and provide development. These include:

- Downtown Vallejo Specific Plan
- Hiddenbrooke Specific Plan
- Mare Island Specific Plan
- Northgate Specific Plan
- Solano 360 Specific Plan (County Fairgrounds/ Discovery Kingdom area)
- Sonoma Boulevard Corridor Specific Plan
- Vallejo Waterfront Planned Development Master Plan and Design Guidelines
- White Slough Specific Plan

Specific plans and master plans provide more detail than general plans, including financing arrangements for public improvements. Their policies and regulations override pre-existing zoning, but new zoning may implement specific policies establishing details on land use and development that may not have been included in the specific plans or master plans.

## What's My Zoning?



**Can Zoning Dictate Architectural Design?**

No. Zoning controls the building “envelope,” which includes the maximum height of the building, how far it must be set back from the property line, and the size of building/buildings on a lot. Zoning also controls certain features of a building, such as off-street parking and landscaping, and in Downtown and along key corridors, what must be done to make a building more engaging for pedestrians.

Zoning normally does not determine a building’s architectural style and detailed design elements, such as colors and finish materials, leaving this up to a building owner and architects. However, zoning may include guidance on design and refer to design guidelines for certain areas of the City, such as Downtown, or the Waterfront, where more careful coordination of building design through specific plans and master plans supports General Plan concepts.

**Does Zoning Interfere with the Free Market?**

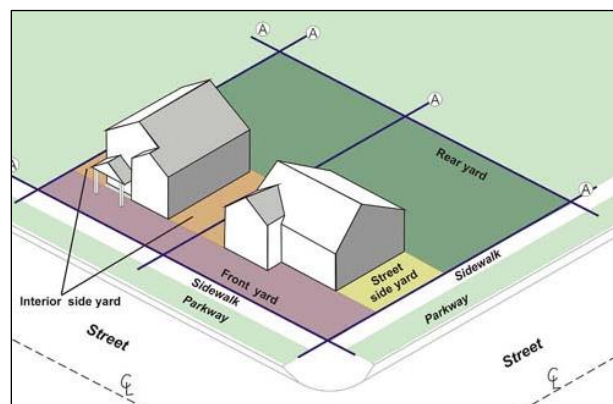
Zoning cannot create a market for new development. For example, it cannot determine the exact mix of tenants in a new mixed use building. It can, however, create opportunities for new development that the City wants under the General Plan or reduce barriers for desirable uses, by streamlining the process or reducing the standards projects. It also can regulate “problem” uses, such as alcohol and tobacco sales, cannabis dispensaries, and cell towers, and keep uses considered inappropriate out of neighborhoods.

**Can Zoning Take Away My Property Rights?**

No. Legal precedent ensures that land use regulations do not “take” property owners’ right to develop their property. Zoning controls the extent and type of development that may be permitted and the land uses that can be established. In other words, an owner will not be able to develop a shopping center on property zoned for housing.

**Why Does Vallejo Need a New Zoning Code?**

Vallejo’s current Zoning Code was last comprehensively updated in 1980 and does not reflect best zoning and planning practices appropriate for an urban community. Amendments to the Zoning Code have been adopted to address specific topics, such as residential view protection, signs, and to reflect new state laws. Overall, the current Code is not effective in implementing the land use and community design, economic development, arts and culture, historic preservation, healthy community, mobility and transportation, climate action, and safety goals in Vallejo’s General Plan 2040.



The purpose of the new Zoning Code is to create an innovative, integrated Code that shapes future growth according to the community’s vision, is clear and easy to use, and provides objective standards and criteria that result in high quality development.

**Will My Property be Rezoned?**

The Zoning Code is expected to result in revised procedures, zoning districts, development standards, and citywide regulations. This means the rules that govern development may change throughout the city. A new Zoning Map will be needed, and a draft will be presented for public review during the process. It is reasonable to expect that there will be minimal zoning changes in established neighborhoods, where little or no major new development is expected to occur. However, in the mixed-use corridors, new zoning districts may be applied. If your property is in an area that will develop or redevelop in the future, the new zoning districts probably will affect you.

**How Can I Participate?**

The Vallejo Zoning Code project kicked off in March 2019. We are soliciting citizen participation in all phases of the project including community open houses. Please visit the City’s Zoning Code page on the Propel Vallejo website for details on upcoming events or contact the Planning Division directly with your thoughts or questions. Questions regarding the Zoning Code will be posted on Open City Hall for public responses and comments prior to future open houses.

