

Zoning in the County

There are currently 35 Part-1 zone districts in Lewis and Clark County, many created long ago. Most are in the Helena Valley, but some are not. Often narrow in scope, these resident-initiated zone districts were usually created for very specific reasons. Over time, areas experience social, technological, environmental and other changes, but often these Part 1 districts have not been updated. Unlike Part-1 Zoning, County-initiated Part-2 Zoning would ensure County staff regularly review and suggest updates based on changing times and values.

Managing Growth in the Helena Valley

The citizens were very involved with the Growth Policy update and clear that its Helena Valley Area Plan needed to address Five Key Issues that often arise during the review of development proposals. These strategic issues are Water, Wastewater, Roads, Fire Protection and Flooding. Zoning can be a highly effective tool to ensure the development review process addresses these key issues as the Helena Valley continues to grow.

Contact Information

The staff of the Lewis and Clark County **Community Development & Planning Department** regularly receive questions about Zoning and are happy to provide additional information and answer questions. We can provide a copy of the County Growth Policy so you can better understand the future direction the citizens have charted for managing growth and development in the County. You can also find it and other useful land-use planning information on our website at

www.lccountymt.gov/cdp.html

For Zoning FAQs, visit

<https://www.lccountymt.gov/cdp/zoning.html>

Community Development and
Planning Department

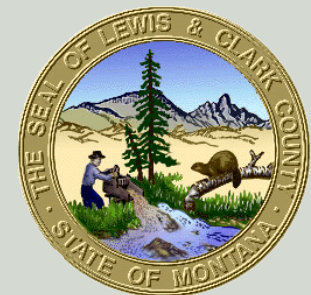
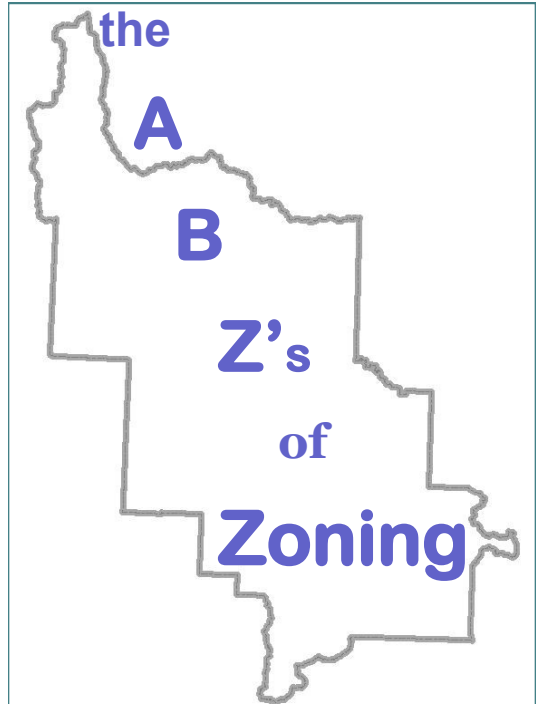
City-County Building

316 North Park Ave. Room 230

Helena, MT 59623

Phone: 406-447-8374

Email: planning@lccountymt.gov



Lewis and Clark County,
Montana

What is Zoning?

Zoning is very common throughout the United States. In Montana, Counties often have two types of Zoning, Part-1 and Part-2. Part-1 is referred to as “Citizen-Initiated Zoning,” while Part 2 is referred to as “County-Initiated Zoning.”

Zoning can take on many different looks, including:

Traditional (a.k.a. Euclidean):

Focuses on the type of use allowed on the land, such as single-family/multi-family residential, commercial or industrial. In Montana, Traditional Zoning is most common.

Form: Focuses on building form as it relates to streetscape and adjacent uses. For example, in a largely suburban single-family residential area, offices, retail or even light industrial use could be allowed as long as its form conformed (setback, building size, lot coverage, height, etc.) to existing development in the area.

Mixed Use: Provides for enhanced flexibility where the landowner has the right to choose a variety of specific uses, such as commercial, industrial, institutional, parks, residential, etc. However, an individual property can also be limited to particular uses.

Performance-Based: Regulates development intensity to prevent adverse impacts on abutting properties. Provides more flexibility than traditional Zoning, but is more difficult to implement. Performance-based Zoning works well in industrial and commercial uses. It typically looks at two categories: regulating the site and regulating the activity.

What is the purpose of Zoning?

The generally agreed upon purpose of Zoning is to address issues such as public health, safety and welfare.

Possibly, the **most important aspect of Zoning is to protect, enhance and stabilize property values** through the predictability it creates. For example, Zoning can ensure uses are mixed together in a compatible manner. Zoning can protect against placing a hog farm, cement plant, industrial yard or medical marijuana stores next to residential areas and daycare centers. Zoning can also be effective at protecting both the “character” of a community as well as the area’s natural resources such as water.



In the Helena Valley, Zoning can be one tool to implement the strategies of the County Growth Policy that specifically calls out the need to focus on the Five Key Issues: Water, Wastewater, Roads, Fire Protection and Flooding.

Consistency and Predictability

Zoning should ensure all parties understand the process. Predictability should equate to reduced process costs and should set the stage for consistency. Predictability usually equates to increased values as affected parties tend to feel more certain about their investment.