

KEY CONCEPTS: ZONING

WHAT IS ZONING?

ZONING is the practice by which local governments designate what type of development is allowed or not allowed on property.

In Austin, these regulations are included in **ZONE STANDARDS** that define what is or is not allowed on a property, based on how it is zoned. For instance, a property that the city has zoned with “SF-3” zone standards today could have a single-family home, whereas one with “CS” could have commercial services.

These standards are the *tools* Austin uses in the zoning process – they tell you what you can do on a specific property. But how does Austin decide which tools are applied where? That is, how does the city decide which properties on the official **ZONING MAP** receive SF-3 zone standards and which receive CS?

In order to help the city determine where to apply the different zone standards on the zoning map, Austin creates **PLANS** that provide high-level guidance on what the city would like to see in a given area.

In the absence of a specific plan, the city uses broad **ZONING PRINCIPLES** that outline the city’s approach to zoning.

To recap: the city establishes *plans* and *principles* that identify high-level goals for what it would like to see in certain areas. It has a toolbox of *zone standards* that can help it guide development toward these goals through regulation. And it uses these tools to implement its plans and principles through a process known as *zoning*.

KEY ZONING CONCEPTS

- **CodeNEXT** – The process by which the City of Austin is re-writing its Land Development Code, including its zoning regulations.
- **Use-Based Zoning (or ‘Euclidean Zoning’)** – An approach to zoning that prioritizes grouping properties with similar uses together (ie. residential with residential) and keeping properties with different uses separate (ie. residential apart from commercial).
- **Form-Based Zoning** – An approach to zoning that prioritizes regulating the physical form and ‘character’ of development.
- **Negotiated Zoning** – The term for site-specific regulations that the city and the property owner negotiated as an alternative to normal zoning. These include: Planned Unit Developments (PUDs), Transit-Oriented Developments (TODs), and regulating plans (such as the North Burnet/Gateway plan), among others.
- **Overlays** – Extra layer of restrictions placed on a property in addition to the normal zoning regulations. These can include *Overlay Districts* (which apply broadly to properties in a designated area) and *Conditional Overlays* (which apply only to specific properties). The CodeNEXT proposal would preserve certain Overlay Districts but would phase out existing Conditional Overlays and end the practice of applying new Conditional Overlays going forward.
- **Zoning Uses (or ‘Uses’)** – A description of how a property is allowed or not allowed to be used. Common uses include: residential, commercial, industrial, or mixed-use (in which both residential and commercial are allowed).
- **Compatibility** – A principle of land use planning that seeks to mitigate the impact that development in more intense zoning districts has on properties with less intense zoning.
- **Land Use Commissions** – Advisory bodies appointed by City Council whose duties include making recommendations on planning and zoning-related items. Austin has two Land Use Commissions: the Planning Commission and the Zoning and Platting Commission.