



# 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: 928-337-4364  
<http://www.co.apache.az.us/community-development/>

### Greenlee County Planning and Zoning

253 Fifth St.  
P.O. Box 908  
Clifton, AZ 85533  
Phone: 928-865-4762  
FAX: 928-865-4763  
<http://www.co.greenlee.az.us/pz/Default.aspx>

### Pima County Development Services

201 North Stone Avenue  
Tucson, AZ 85701  
Phone: 520-740-9000  
<http://webcms.pima.gov/cms/One.aspx?portalId=169&pageId=60605>

### Cochise County Planning and Zoning

1415 Melody Lane, Building E.  
Bisbee, Arizona 85603  
Phone 520-432-9240  
FAX 520-432-9278  
<https://www.cochise.az.gov/planning-and-zoning/home>

### La Paz County Planning and Zoning

1112 Joshua #202  
Parker, AZ 85344  
Phone: 928-669-6138  
<http://www.lapazcomdev.com/>

### Pinal County Planning and Development

31 N Pinal Street, Building F  
Florence, AZ 85232  
Phone: 520-866-6442  
FAX: 520-866-6530  
<http://pinalcountyaz.gov/CommunityDevelopment/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/index.aspx?nid=622>

### Maricopa County Community Development

501 N. 44th St., Suite 200  
Phoenix, AZ 85008  
Phone: 602-506-3301  
<http://www.maricopa.gov/planning/BuildingServices>

### Santa Cruz County Department of Community Development

275 Rio Rico Drive  
Rio Rico, AZ 85648  
Phone: 520-375-7930  
<http://www.santa-cruz.az.us/162/Planning-Zoning>

### Gila County Community Development

**Globe Office**  
745 N. Rose Mofford Way  
Globe, Arizona 85501  
Phone: 928-402-4224  
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  
[http://www.gilacountyaz.gov/government/community\\_development](http://www.gilacountyaz.gov/government/community_development)

### Mohave County Planning and Zoning

3250 E. Kino Ave.  
Kingman, AZ 86409  
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/planning-and-zoning/>

### Navajo County Planning & Zoning

100 Public Works Drive  
P.O. Box 668  
Holbrook, AZ 86025

**Show Low Location**

South County Public Works Facility  
1100 E. Thorton Rd. Show Low, AZ 85901

Phone: 928-524-4100

FAX: 928-524-4399

<http://www.navajocountyaz.gov/Departments/Planning-and-Zoning>

**Yuma Department of Development Services**

2351 W. 26th Street

Yuma AZ 85364

Phone: 928-817-5000

FAX: 928-817-5020 <http://www.yumacountyaz.gov/departments-and-services/development-services/divisions/planning-zoning->



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