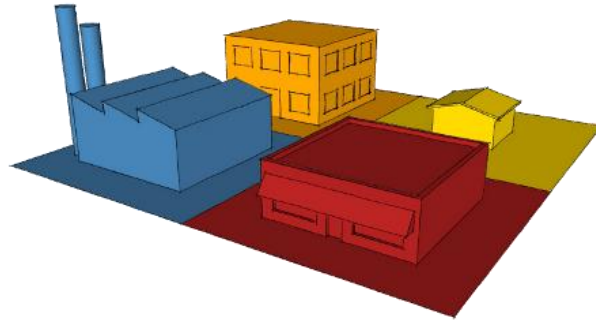


EUCLIDEAN ZONING



The most common form of land-use regulation in the United States is known as Euclidean zoning. Euclidean zoning is not, in fact, named after the eminent Greek mathematician, but rather after the Village of [Euclid, Ohio](#), where in 1926, a development company famously challenged the constitutionality of the local zoning code. Euclid's code had placed height and use restrictions on different zones, and the developer argued that by limiting what could and could not be built on undeveloped property, the code had unfairly reduced the value of its landholdings.

In a landmark decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the local government, declaring that zoning codes are a valid extension of a city's right to regulate land uses in the name of protecting public health, safety, and welfare ([Village of Euclid, Ohio v. Ambler Realty Co., 272 U.S. 365 \(1926\)](#)). Because Euclid's code had segregated different land uses, with housing in one place, shops in another, and factories elsewhere, communities nationwide began following the Euclidean model, believing it to be the most effective way to meet the health, safety, and welfare clause. The Euclidean format soon became standard zoning practice.

As part of isolating 'incompatible' uses, Euclidean codes sort possible land uses into broader categories, usually classified agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, or open space. For example, the 'candle manufacturing' use is identified as an 'industrial' use, and is thus only allowed to take place in industrial zones. Each zone has its own height, setback, parking, landscaping, and building volume restrictions that vary with intensity. For instance, low-density residential areas tend to cap the height of houses at two-stories while high-density residential zones may allow apartment towers up to twenty-stories or more in height.

Some uses are permitted 'by right,' meaning they require no special review from city staff, while others are designated 'conditional' uses that require a public hearing in which special conditions are created to address a project's unique impacts.

While Euclidean zoning has enabled cities to avoid unnecessary noise, glare, and pollution impacts resulting from the incompatible placement of uses, some communities have sought alternatives to Euclidean codes, perceiving that they have a tendency to produce cities where most trips must be made in a private vehicle, and where the mixed-use neighborhoods that 21st century Americans have come to expect, are discouraged.

