

Zoning Comparison Exercise
Board of County Commissioners Work Session
August 29, 2018

Overview

For more than a century, zoning has been an effective tool throughout the United States for planning growth and infrastructure improvements/investments while also mitigating impacts arising from disparate, but neighboring, land use intensities. Euclidean zoning essentially inverts the County's current, performance-based, zoning system by analyzing existing conditions, uses, infrastructure, and cost of services up front, instead of at the end of the decision making process. Such a front-loaded analysis provides more certainty to property owners and potential developers than is generally available under our current system.

Staff is developing several proposed Euclidean zone districts which could work in La Plata County, given our diverse characteristics. The process of establishing potential zone districts began with an inventory and organization of existing uses. That process generated the following six general zoning districts which could accommodate existing as well as contemplated uses: Residential, AgPlus, Commercial, Industrial, Mixed Use, and Public. These six districts could be further defined, and may be divided into additional sub-districts tailored to specific uses and property sizes.

The exercise below outlines two potential land-use approval processes, one implementing our current, performance-based zoning system, and the other implementing a proposed, Euclidean zoning system. The flow charts provided represent how land use applications are (or could be) processed under each system.

Staff is seeking direction from the Board of County Commissioners with regard to establishing a land use system to guide land development and growth management. This exercise's intent is to generate discussion and assist the Board in providing direction for how to approach zoning principles in the revised land use code.

Background for exercise

An applicant proposes a "farm equipment repair" business to be located on a 105-acre property in unincorporated La Plata County. This exercise will consider the project through two zoning models: Performance-based and Euclidean.

The applicant has submitted the same documentation to be reviewed for compliance with the land use code. The applicant proposes three full time employees which will generate nominal traffic impacts (12 ADT), and plans to operate between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. The application is consistent with each of the predetermined criteria under each zoning model.

The Performance-based example contemplates a general agricultural zoning whereby basic prescriptions are established in the land use code, however land use applications still require Planning Department review for essential compatibility components, dimensional standards, as well as design standards based on the specific proposal. Planning Commission and/or Board of County Commissioner review would be required depending on the project's impact (i.e. Major, Minor or Limited) as set forth by the code.

Under the Euclidean example, the property is zoned "AgPlus," thereby predetermining compatibility and eliminating the need to review compatibility components, and dimensional and design standards. The application would be reviewed for compliance with established standards, and likely receive administrative approval without public hearing(s).