

Planning & Zoning

Carver County Land Management Department

2023

Why does planning & zoning matter to your community?

The phrase “planning and zoning” pops up in city and county offices and discussions, but it is not always understood what it means. Planning and zoning are functions of local government, and this type of work impacts a lot of how we see, experience, and use our communities. The purpose of planning and zoning is to create standards that support Carver County community prosperity and protect the environment.

Planning is the process through which a city or county establishes a vision of what it wants to be like in the future and lays out strategies to achieve that vision. In Carver County, much of the planning is done through the County’s Comprehensive Plan, which is updated every ten years. The Comprehensive Plan is a long-range planning document used to guide and shape growth in the County over 20 years. The plan establishes policies for areas like land use, transportation, water resources, parks, and trails all which affect the layout and landscape of the county.

With a plan in place, land use zoning is the next step. Zoning defines how land can be used, where and how development occurs, the population density of an area, and more. Standards/criteria regarding zoning are laid out in a large document called the Zoning Code, and a Zoning Map provides visual guidance. Both cities and counties develop comprehensive plans and zoning standards and use these documents to set future direction. The development and establishment of these plans and codes involve extensive review and input. For Carver County, public input includes citizens, county staff, advisory committees, Township Boards, the Planning Commission, and the County Board. Cities are responsible for their own planning and zoning, but often work with the County as their city boundaries grow into townships.

County planning and zoning

In Carver County, the Land Management Department oversees planning and zoning for all ten townships in the County. Most of the department’s work is permitting. The staff handle over 900+ permits every year for new homes and remodels, accessory buildings, grading/filling, ag preservation, building eligibility transfers, conditional use, interim use, variances, and more. Additional responsibilities include working with subdivisions, floodplain and shoreland ordinances, state building code, and coordination of the County Planning Commission and Board of Adjustment. Staff provide education and support to landowners to help them meet zoning codes, and work with township officials to make decisions and guide development. The vision of the Carver County Land Management Department is that of healthy, stable or growing urban communities, and a rural area where agriculture is the principal land use.

Resources

[Why care about planning and zoning? - Planning \(msu.edu\)](https://www.planning.msu.edu/)

[Comprehensive Plans - What's the Benefit? Why Should I Care? - MSA \(msa-ps.com\)](https://www.msa-ps.com)