

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO

ZONING



CITY OF HARRISONBURG
**COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT**

WHAT IS ZONING?

★ Land is divided into “zoning districts.”



★ Each zoning district has laws, or rules, about how land **can** and **can't** be used.

★ In some zoning districts, land can be used for homes. In other zoning districts, land can be used for things like factories, parks, or businesses.



WHAT ELSE DOES ZONING CONTROL?

★ The **types of uses** that can be near one another

THIS?



OR THIS?



★ **Where buildings can be placed on a property**

How close to neighbors can it be?

THIS?



OR THIS?



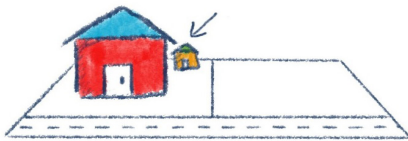
How close to the street can it be?

THIS?

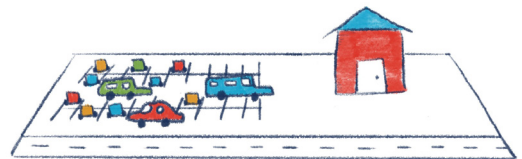


OR THIS?

★ If **extra buildings** can be built on a property



★ How many **parking spaces** there needs to be



★ The **height** of buildings



★ Whether **trees and landscaping** are required

THIS?



OR THIS?

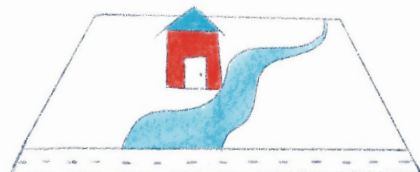
★ How big **signs** can be, and how many there can be

THIS?



OR THIS?

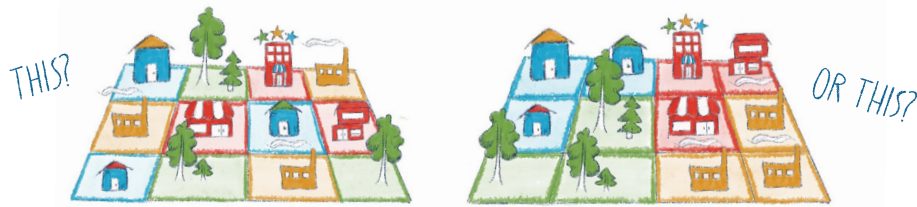
★ Development in **floodplains** and **floodways**



WHY DOES ZONING EXIST?

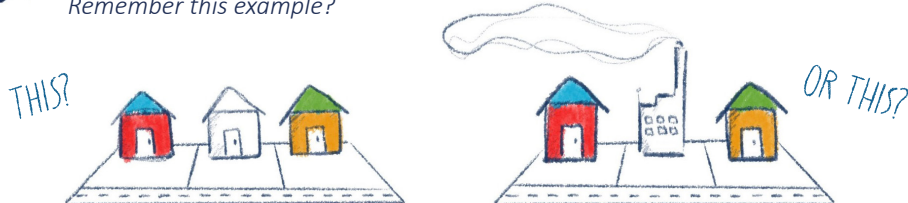
Effective zoning can...

- ★ Keep cities organized



- ★ Prevent disturbances to the community

Remember this example?



- ★ Reflect the values and goals of the community



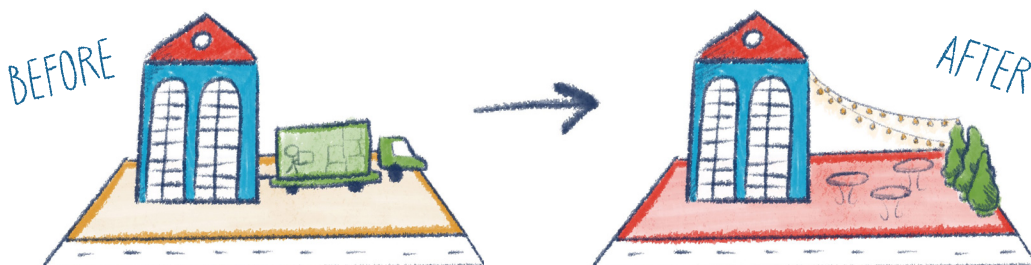
It's important to remember that people have many different views on how zoning should shape a community's development.

WHAT IS REZONING?

- ★ Rezoning is the legal process of changing a property from one zoning district to another.

- ★ **Example:** This property is in the **yellow** zoning district, which is for industrial uses (factories, etc.).

City Council could approve a property owner's request to change the **yellow** zoning district to a **red** zoning district to allow shops or a restaurant to move in.



THE REZONING PROCESS

There's a multi-step process that happens when someone requests to rezone a property. Among other steps, the process involves...

- ★ An application
- ★ Meetings with City staff to discuss the proposal
Can be before and after an application
- ★ A traffic study (when applicable)
- ★ Research and recommendations from City staff
- ★ A **public hearing** at a **Planning Commission meeting** where community members can express their opinions about the rezoning request for the *first* time.
- ★ A **public hearing** at a **City Council meeting** where community members can express their opinions about the rezoning request for the *second* time.
- ★ A vote from City Council

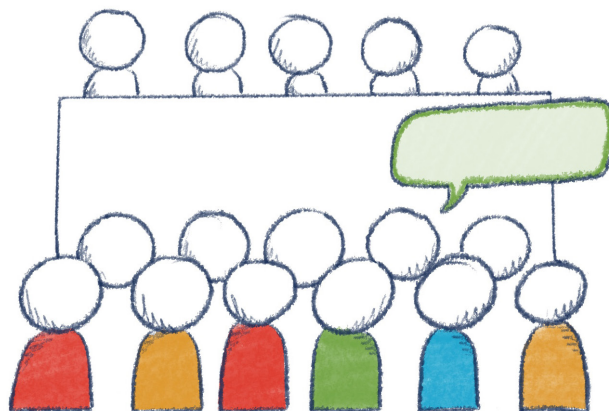
PUBLIC HEARINGS

Both the Harrisonburg Planning Commission and the City Council hold public hearings during their meetings. You are always welcome to come!

➤ HarrisonburgVA.gov/Public-Hearings

You can also submit written comments via email before each public hearing.







✉ CDPlanning@HarrisonburgVA.gov



WHAT ZONING DISTRICTS ARE IN HARRISONBURG?

★ The City of Harrisonburg has 19 zoning districts right now.

★ Here are a few examples of those zoning districts and some of the things they can be used for:

R - 1		<p>SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intended for low-density, single-family detached homes, schools, parks, and places of worship
R - 2		<p>RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intended for medium-density single-family detached homes, duplexes, schools, parks, and places of worship
R - 3		<p>MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intended for medium-density single-family detached homes, duplexes, townhomes, and sometimes apartments. There can also be offices, schools, parks, and places of worship.
B - 1		<p>CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is our downtown. It's for businesses, shopping, professional offices, and governmental uses. • There can also be homes and apartments here.
B - 2		<p>GENERAL BUSINESS DISTRICT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is where we find shopping centers, restaurants, and office uses.
M - 1		<p>GENERAL INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is where we find industrial things like factories and storage facilities.

PROPERTIES WITH PROFFERS

ALSO KNOWN AS "CONDITIONAL ZONING (C)"

- ★ Sometimes land has unique rules that don't quite match the rules of the zoning district it's in. When this happens, we say that the property has "proffers" or "conditional zoning" (C).

R - 1 → R - 1C

B - 1 → B - 1C

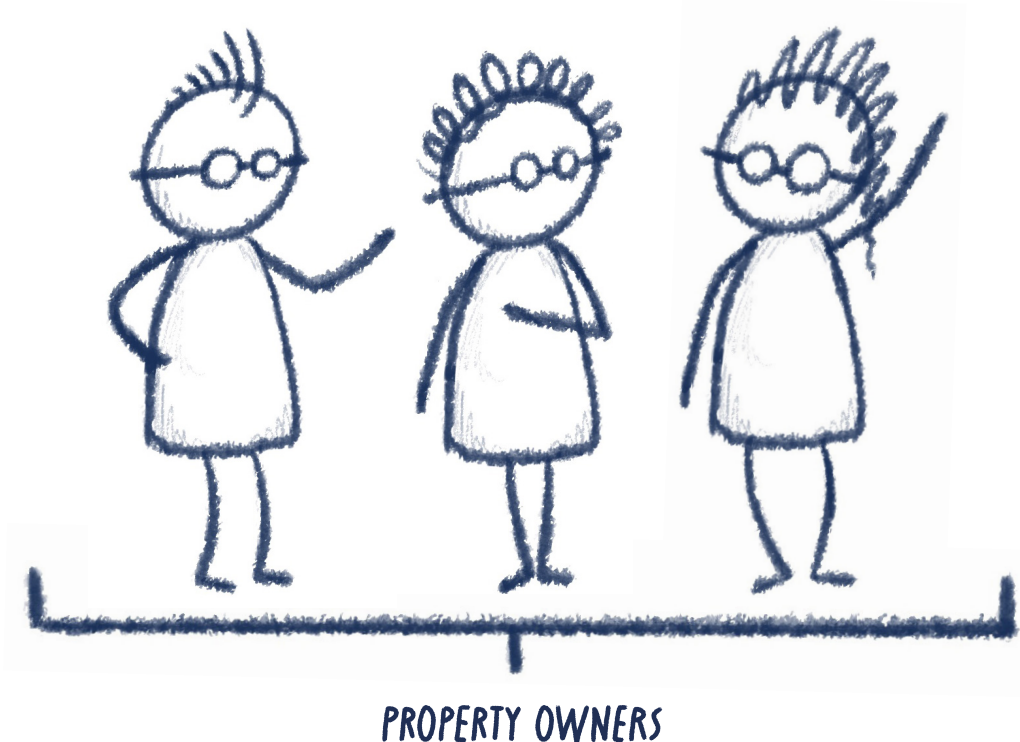
M - 1 → M - 1C

WHERE DO PROFFERS COME FROM?

- ★ Proffers come from property owners. When a property owner requests to rezone their land, they can volunteer to proffer to either...

1. Add requirements to the land,
2. Take away land-use possibilities, or
3. Both

These proffers are to address concerns + impacts and make it more appealing for City Council to vote "yes" on their rezoning requests.



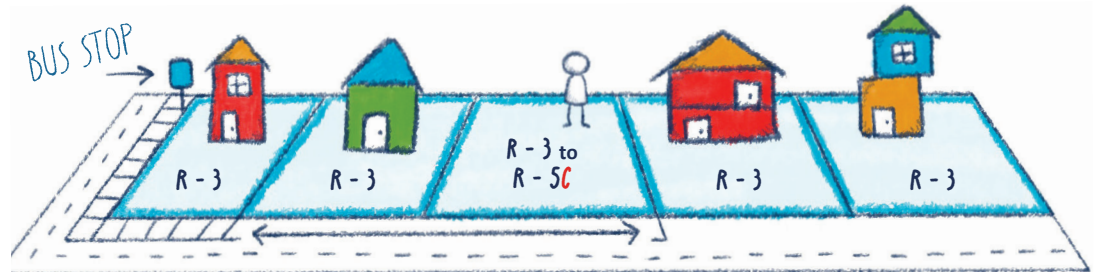
★ Example 1: Proffers that **Add Requirements to the Land**

I'm requesting to rezone my property from **R-3** to **R-5** so I can construct an apartment building with 12 units.

However, there are no sidewalks in front of my property, and my future tenants will need a safe way to walk to the closest bus stop.

So, I proffer to construct sidewalks along the front of my property and the property next door to me.

If City Council votes "yes" on my rezoning request, the final zoning will be called **R-5C** because it has "proffers" or "conditional zoning (**C**)."



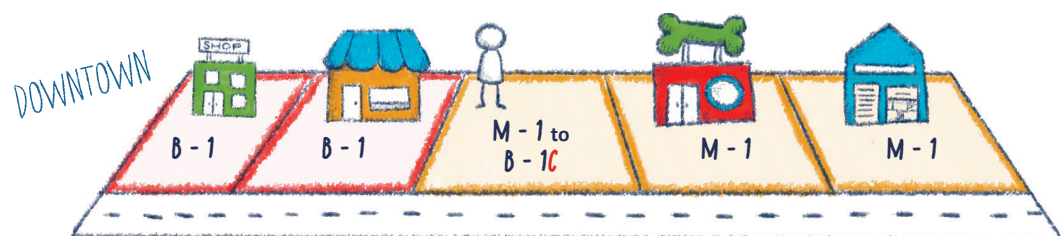
★ Example 2: Proffers that **Take Away Land-Use Possibilities**

I'm requesting to rezone my property from **M-1** to **B-1** so I can use it for a dine-in restaurant without a drive-thru.

However, any land in the **B-1** zoning district can be used for lots of other things, too, including restaurants with drive-thrus. The Community Development staff is concerned because if my land gets rezoned to **B-1**, I could change my mind and put in a restaurant with a drive-thru. They're concerned because a restaurant with a drive-thru would bring more vehicle traffic to my property (downtown is supposed to be a walkable, pedestrian-centered area).

So, I proffer that drive-thrus will be **not** be allowed on my property.

If City Council votes "yes" on my rezoning request, the final zoning will be called **B-1C** because it has "proffers" or "conditional zoning (**C**)".



★ **Example 3: Proffers that both Add Requirements to the Land and Take Away Land-Use Possibilities**

I'm requesting to rezone my property from **R-3** to **B-2** so I can use it for a dine-in restaurant with outdoor seating.

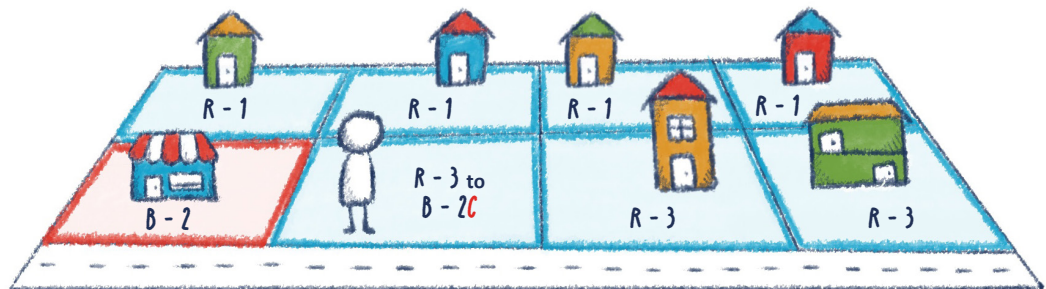
However, the land behind my property has **R-1** zoned single-family detached homes. That neighborhood is concerned that if my property is rezoned to **B-2**, it could one day be used for something else allowed in **B-2** that's more intense than a restaurant (ex. gas stations, vehicle repair shops, and car dealerships).

So, I proffer that gas stations, vehicle repair shops, and car dealerships will not be allowed on my property.

The neighborhood is also concerned about the light and noise that could come from my restaurant given the outdoor seating it will have.

So, I proffer to install a fence and plant landscaping to protect the neighborhood.

If City Council votes "yes" on my rezoning request, the final zoning will be called **B-2C** because it has "proffers" or "conditional zoning (**C**)".



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I SELL MY PROPERTY?

★ A property keeps its zoning district and proffers even after it's sold. Any future property owner can apply for a rezoning, which would go through the normal review, public hearings, and approval process.

In other words, zoning and proffers stay with the *property*, not the *property owner*.

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ZONING?

★ Visit our website or get in touch:

📍 HarrisonburgVA.gov/Zoning

☎ (540) 432-7700

✉ ZoningDivision@HarrisonburgVA.gov

...for questions about zoning requirements or to report a zoning violation

✉ CDPlanning@HarrisonburgVA.gov

...for questions about rezonings and special use permits

📍 Community Development
City Hall, 2nd floor
409 S. Main Street

Thanks to the City of Charlottesville, in conjunction with University of Virginia's Urban & Environmental Planning program, and the Center for Urban Pedagogy's *What is Zoning?* for inspiring this guide.

