

# Overlay Zoning

## What is Overlay Zoning?

Zoning ordinances regulate how land is used in a municipality. They must be based on sound data, reflect the policy goals of the community and be reviewed and updated as necessary.

There are several methods that enable the zoning ordinance and its administration to be more flexible—and the zoning overlay is one of them. Overlay districts are placed over the original zoning districts and apply additional provisions that are either more restrictive or expansive, or that may provide for different uses or design standards than the original district regulations.



## What Does Overlay Zoning Do?

Overlay zoning can be a useful tool to help promote development that is compatible with, enhances, and protects the function and value of a natural resource. Overlay districts also can be used for infrastructure planning. They can help to manage safety, access, and mobility. They can also be used to preserve scenery and conservation areas. Clustering, performance zoning, planned residential development, traditional neighborhood design, and historic district preservation are types of zoning overlays that add site flexibility. Here, overlay zoning can benefit both the municipality and individuals seeking to develop property.

## How is Overlay Zoning Used?

- ▼ **To preserve open space**  
 Connect parks to walking trails, maintain scenic views, and protect wildlife habitats
- ▼ **To manage natural resources**  
 Protect wetlands and floodplains, encouraging forest re-growth and protect steep slopes and landslide prone soils
- ▼ **To preserve historic treasures**  
 Specify design standards and allow flexibility in uses for certain properties
- ▼ **To encourage improved development design**  
 Help to define community character facilitate flexibility for developers by enhancing subdivision designs requirements



