

# **Zoning in Southern California**

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Sept. 3, 2010

The 177 cities within the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area – from the counties of Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura –independently determine their system of zoning (The Southern California Studies Center, 2001). Moreover, while codes are available online, these generally do not assert their loyalty to a particular zoning system. Indeed, the cities do not follow a uniform classification system for zoning types, and therefore comparison between systems is difficult.

Initially ninety-seven percent of American cities followed the classic Euclidean system of zoning, which strictly segregated land use (i.e. residential, commercial, and industrial) into separate, mutually exclusive zones (Hall, 2007, pp.917). City planners, scholars, and other commentators later criticized this system for causing a wide range of social, economic, and environmental problems including suburban sprawl, pollution, racial segregation, and the loss of green space. For a succinct overview of the problems associated with classic Euclidean zoning, see Hall (2007, pp.920-934). In response, cities such as Los Angeles and Riverside adopted an altered version of classic Euclidean zoning known as “Euclidean II.”<sup>1</sup> The latter system allows for mixed use development; commercial stores could be built in zones classified as residential, and vice versa, under strict guidelines and incentives. One example can be found in Los Angeles’ Adaptive Reuse Ordinance of June 1999, adopted for the purpose of accommodating the conversion of industrial buildings to residential use by trumping existing regulations, where the two are at variance.<sup>2</sup> And the Adaptive Reuse Ordinance of Dec. 2001 revised the 1999 ordinance to enhance the “Definition of Adaptive Reuse Project”.<sup>3</sup> For zoning consistency of Los Angeles, see Rabinovitz (1989). Riverside, for a second example, created three multi-use zones for reasons such as encouraging “a mixture of compatible and synergistic land uses” and “transit-oriented development.”<sup>4</sup> Regardless, this code does not allow for mixed-use development in other zones. Multiple-family dwellings, for example, are not permitted in office and commercial, or industrial zones; they are only allowed in the three mixed-use zones mentioned above. Riverside’s zoning ordinances seem to be a mixture of hierarchical and specific zoning.

There are considerable differences between the zoning systems applied by different cities in the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area. It would be a daunting task to document 177 zoning systems using a consistent zoning classification scheme. Considering the limited resources available to the project, it was therefore decided that the best that can be done in the way of land use classification for the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area is to use the consistent land use planning classification system developed and employed by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG).

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<sup>1</sup> “Title 19- Zoning”, Municipal Code, City of Riverside Planning Division, available online: <http://www.riversideca.gov/municode/title19.asp>.

“Zoning Map of the City of Riverside,” City of Riverside Planning Division, available online: <http://www.riversideca.gov/planning/pdf/Zoning-Map.pdf>

“Chapter 1: General Provisions and Zoning,” Municipal Code, City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning, available online: [http://www.amlegal.com/nxt/gateway.dll?f=templates&fn=default.htm&vid=amlegal:lapz\\_ca](http://www.amlegal.com/nxt/gateway.dll?f=templates&fn=default.htm&vid=amlegal:lapz_ca)  
“ZIMAS” (Zone Information & Map Access System), City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning, available online: <http://zimas.lacity.org/>.

<sup>2</sup> “City of Los Angeles Adaptive Reuse Program”, available online: <http://www.scag.ca.gov/Housing/pdfs/summit/housing/Adaptive-Reuse-Book-LA.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> “Adaptive Reuse Ordinance”, available online: [http://www.lafd.org/prevention/pdf/forms/adaptive\\_reuse\\_ord.pdf](http://www.lafd.org/prevention/pdf/forms/adaptive_reuse_ord.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Riverside Municipal Code Chapter 19.120, “Mixed-Use (MU-N, MU-V, and MU-U)”, available online: <http://www.riversideca.gov/municode/pdf/19/article-5/19-120.pdf>.

## References:

1. The Southern California Studies Center, "Sprawl Hits the Wall: Confronting the Realities of Metropolitan Los Angeles", University of Southern California, 2001. Available online: <http://www.solimar.org/pdf/sprawlhitstheWall.pdf>.
2. Hall, Eliza, "Divide and Sprawl, Decline and Fall: A Comparative Critique of Euclidean Zoning," *University of Pittsburg Law Review* 68 (Summer 2007), pp. 915-952.
3. "Adaptive Reuse Ordinance", City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning.
4. City of Los Angeles Adaptive Reuse Program, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Southern California Association of Governments, 2006.
5. "Base Zones Permitted Land Uses", Zoning, Chapter 19.150, Riverside Municipal Code, Riverside, California.
6. Axelrod, Jeremiah B.C. "Keep the 'L' out of Los Angeles': Race, Discourse, and Urban Modernity in 1920s Southern California," *Journal of Urban History*, Volume 34, Number 1, 2007, pp. 3-37.
7. Rabinovitz, Francine F., "Rezoning Los Angeles: The Administration of Comprehensive Planning", *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 49, No. 4, 1989, pp. 330-336.
8. Pun, S. K., C. Liu, C. Langston, "Case Study of Demolition Costs of Residential Buildings", *Construction Management and Economics*, Vol. 24, 2006, pp. 967-976.

## Appendix

1. City of Los Angeles Adaptive Reuse Program, 2006.
2. Adaptive Reuse Ordinance, Effective 12/20/01.
3. "Base Zones Permitted Land Uses", Riverside Municipal Code.
4. Rabinovitz, Francine F., "Rezoning Los Angeles: The Administration of Comprehensive Planning".
5. Axelrod, Jeremiah B.C. "Keep the 'L' out of Los Angeles'".
6. Pun et al., "Case Study of Demolition Costs of Residential Buildings".