

# Mixed-Use Zoning

## More cities and towns are taking steps to encourage compact, mixed-use growth.



Mixed-use zoning allows for the integration of housing, shops, offices, and entertainment in the same development. This approach is in contrast to conventional zoning that requires the separation of uses, with homes in one district, commercial uses in another, and industry elsewhere. Mixed use zoning can help to revitalize existing city and town centers or to support sustainable reuse of previously developed land such as vacant shopping centers or industrial areas. When applied well, mixed-use zoning supports more compact land uses, less auto dependency, and enhanced community character. It is particularly effective when allowed near transit, so that both residents and employees in the district can take advantage of bus, train, or ferry service.

As of 2008, three-quarters of MAPC municipalities have adopted some form of mixed-use zoning. However, 30 of those municipalities did not see any new development in those districts over the period 2006 – 2008. Some developers may be avoiding these mixed-use districts if they include special permit requirements or other factors that may create uncertainty and delays. Municipalities can promote market response by creating district plans with strong community consensus, and codifying those plans in “by-right” zoning with design guidelines or form-based codes. This investment in up-front planning will help to establish shared expectations for development and can support a streamlined permitting process that will be attractive to developers.



**Metropolitan Area  
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