

Zoning is a method of *regulating the physical environment* through reference to *cartographically delineated geographic boundaries*.

Regulating the Physical Environment

Generally, three aspects of the physical environment are regulated:

function, or the activities that places are intended to support;

form, or the physical structures that support those activities, and;

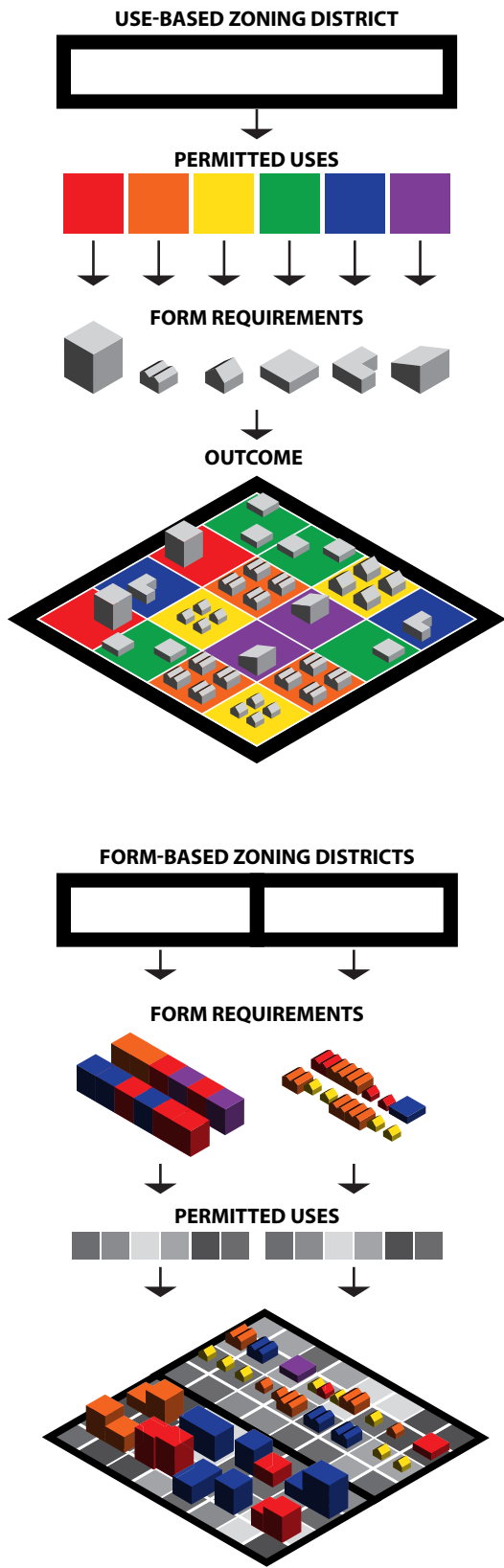
impact, or the effects of specific functions or forms.

Zoning has historically focused on the regulation of *function*. This is **use-based zoning** and is often referred to as “Euclidean” zoning.

More recently, zoning has begun to focus on the regulation of *form*. This is **form-based zoning**.

Finally, zoning can regulate the *impacts* of function and form, either on human experience (such as noise), on the natural environment (such as tree canopy coverage), or on the built context (such as density standards). This is referred to as **performance-based zoning**.

Most zoning regulations address all of these aspects regardless of focus. Differences lie in the organization and prioritization of rules. Simply stated, use-based focuses on use, form-based focuses on form, and performance-based focuses on performance.



Cartographically Delineated Geographic Boundaries

Generally, there are three methods of defining geographic boundaries for the applicability of zoning, which result in three different categories of zoning district. These are **base zones, overlay zones, and floating zones**.

These can be thought of as a *series of layers* where the base zone establishes a foundation upon which overlay and floating zones can be applied that modify or replace regulations associated with a base zone.

Any of these methods of delineating the extent and applicability of zoning may employ use-based, form-based, or performance-based regulations, or some combination of the three.

BASE ZONES

All land on which zoning is employed is delineated by a set of different **base zones**. They are applied to property and *shown on zoning maps* prior to any specific development applications, and can be thought of as *lying directly on the land*.

OVERLAY ZONES

Overlay zones are zoning districts that are *applied over one or more previously established zoning districts*, defining regulations for properties that supplement or modify those of the underlying zoning district. Like base zones, they are applied to property and *shown on zoning maps* prior to any specific development applications. Unlike floating zones, **overlay zones do not replace the underlying base zones**.

FLOATING ZONES

Floating zones are zoning districts that are *not initially implemented on zoning maps*, but rather describe *conditions that must be met* before they can be applied. They are not applicable until development applications for specific properties are approved. When applied, **floating zones replace the base zone**.

