The Need for a Zoning Handbook

Zoning is a significant legal tool that municipalities utilize to manage development. Despite its importance, a lot of people have a hard time understanding it. Many zoning ordinances are difficult to read, lack illustrations that assist in visualizing their concepts, and use phrases that are specific to the urban planning profession.

This document was created to help mitigate the local misunderstandings of zoning. It is a zoning handbook for Champaign that makes use of clear explanations and visually engaging graphics to better inform individuals on the basic components of the area's land use regulations. The handbook was constructed with the intention of assisting people to better understand zoning and how it is used to promote an orderly pattern of growth.

Purpose

There are 20 zoning districts and 2 overlay districts within Champaign. Every single one of them has an intended purpose for being established. The handbook includes comprehensive summaries that explain to readers the purpose, use requirements, and development standards for all of the districts.

Use Requirements

Each zoning district has a list of uses that are either permitted by right, allowed provisionally, or considered a special use. By right uses comply with all of the regulations. Provisional and special uses are generally compatible, but must meet certain conditions or require some sort of discretionary review.

Development Standards

Furthermore, every zoning district has a distinct set of development standards. These are regulations that specify the way in which a structure must be built or placed on a lot. The standards include a minimum lot width, a maximum height, minimum setback distances, a maximum floor area ratio (FAR), and a minimum open space ratio (OSR).

Visualizing the Regulations

It is often hard to envision the development standards from just reading about them. Models like these are provided within the handbook to illustrate the regulations while also showing what a hypothetical structure within a specific zoning district might look like.

The Location of Districts

The handbook's maps assist readers in seeing where all of Champaign's zoning and overlay districts are located. They are also helpful in showing how the act of zoning separates land uses that are incompatible with one another.

Do You Speak Plannerese?

Constructing a Handbook to Better Articulate Champaign’s Zoning Ordinance