



KEY TAKEAWAYS • LAND USE & ZONING.

WHY LAND USE & ZONING MATTER

The types of land uses allowed and where they occur influence economic, environmental, and social aspects of a community. Chicopee uses several tools to manage land development, including the zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, and site plan regulations. Chicopee has never adopted a master plan or comprehensive plan, so many of the land use decisions over the past several decades have been made on an ad hoc basis.

LAND USES

Chicopee is largely built out, and much of its land use strategy in the next 20 years will be about reusing and repurposing existing buildings or areas of the City that have already been developed, infill, and expanding and connecting the open space and recreation resources throughout the City.

Decisions about future land use are a result of all the other topics in this plan combined. Having goals for transportation, economic development, the environment, and more will drive how land is used in the future.

Land Use

What's happening on the ground, including development and natural land cover.

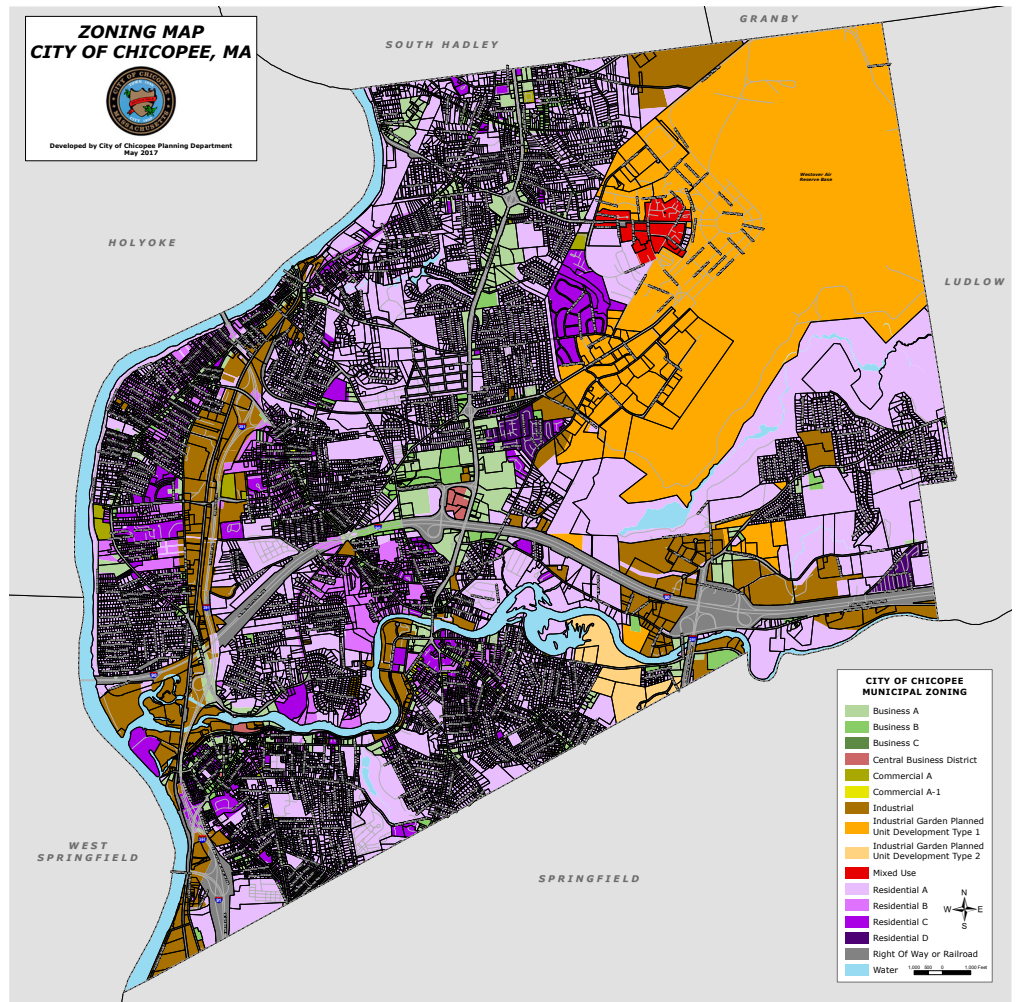
Zoning

Local regulations that determine what can be built where, how it can be used, and how big it is, among other development standards.



ZONING

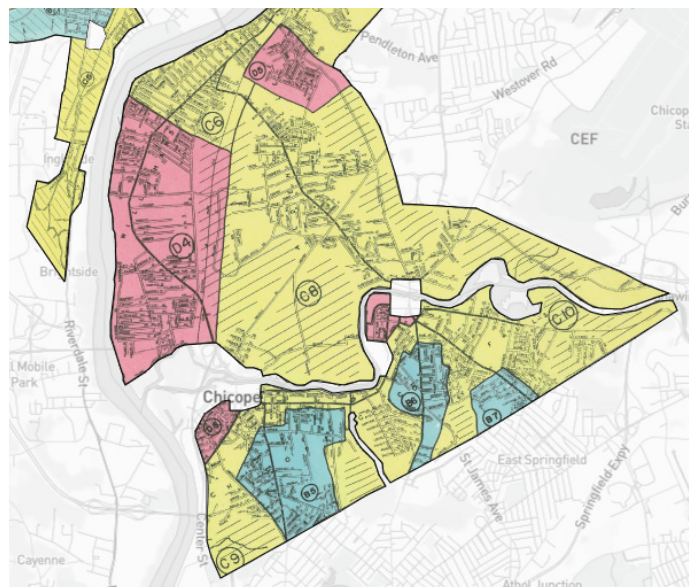
Chicopee adopted its first zoning ordinance and map in 1940 which have only received one major overhaul in 80 years, and that was in 1978. Much of Chicopee’s zoning ordinance is designed to perpetuate mid-century development trends, such as sprawling commercial strip centers, that we now know are discriminatory, expensive, and environmentally flawed. The ordinances are behind the times on issues such as parking requirements, minimum residential lot sizes, and allowances for mixed-uses in the village centers.



Zoning & Equity

Zoning has also been used to enforce racial and economic segregation. For example, in the 1930s, the federal government created the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC), which produced Residential Security Maps (commonly known as redlining maps). These maps identified areas that were considered risky for residential home loans, often based on the incomes, race or immigration status of the residents there, as well as the existing building types. In Chicopee, parts of Chicopee Center, Chicopee Falls, and Willimansett were considered “Hazardous” and banks were encouraged to deny home loans. Zoning was often used to reinforce these policies, and even decades later, these are the poorest areas of the City.

The City would like to update its zoning ordinance after Envision Our Chicopee: 2040 is completed, to make sure zoning allows for the things envisioned in the plan and meets the needs and realities of our residents today and in the future equitably.



Residential Security Map of Chicopee (1937)

Source: Mapping Inequality