


Why Zoning?



The whine of chainsaws almost drowns out the deep rumble of the bulldozer. Your quiet, peaceful bay will be forever changed – your worst nightmare. The new neighbors are clearing their property, converting it to a lakeside tavern with a parking lot in the rear and a big lakeside deck for dancing and music. A big new dock and lots of lighting complete the picture...

CUT... STOP!

Don't worry – this can't happen on most lakes in Wisconsin. We have zoning regulations that protect our properties against such intrusions.

Zoning ordinances are regulations that control development, detailing building size and density, lot sizes, setbacks from property lines and more. Most important, they make sure that development is compatible with its surroundings. So, no taverns in the residentially zoned area on your peaceful bay. And no single-family homes in an industrial park.

For over a century Wisconsin has used zoning regulations. In 1933, Oneida County was the first county in the nation to adopt a comprehensive rural zoning ordinance. These ordinances protect not only private property rights but public property rights, as well. For over two centuries Wisconsin's lakes and rivers have been considered public property – they belong to all of us.

Zoning is a working balance between public and private rights. The same regulations that preclude your neighbor's tavern also limit, to some extent, what any one of us can do with our property. For example, shoreland zoning helps keep our lakes and rivers healthy and beautiful.

In return for limitations on our own activities, we all benefit from high-quality water resources, and the economic growth and enhanced property values that go with them. Wisconsin's waters are fragile and irreplaceable. Let's do our part to preserve them. Shoreland zoning helps us do that. It serves us extremely well.

One in a series of articles sponsored by the Oneida County Lakes and Rivers Association (www.oclra.org). For more information, contact Bob Martini at 715-282-5896 or email to webmaster@oclra.org. OCLRA encourages the use and distribution of this material by lake associations, their members, and other parties concerned about water quality.

"We did not inherit the land from our forefathers – we are borrowing it from our grandchildren."

—Anonymous

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ONEIDA COUNTY
Lakes and Rivers Association