



El Paso County LDC

Website FAQ's

TERMS

LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE

A Land Development Code (LDC) – sometimes called a “zoning code” or “land use code” – is a set of regulations that establish how development should occur. This includes zoning, the uses that are allowed in each zone, subdivisions, landscaping, signs, parking, lighting, and other topics to ensure that new development in El Paso County meets community expectations.

El Paso County's existing LDC is available online, here:

https://library.municode.com/co/el_paso_county/codes/land_development_code?nodeId=LADECOCOELPACO

MASTER PLAN

A Master Plan (sometimes called a “comprehensive plan,” “general plan,” or “community plan”) is a long-range planning document that looks at the relationships between land uses, infrastructure, such as roads and utilities, and community needs to guide how the community handles growth, development, protection of community assets, and provision of services. A Master Plan is used to:

- Develop consensus on community visions and goals;
- Guide decision-making, local regulations, and capital improvement projects;
- Inform individual development approvals; and
- Open new funding opportunities and grants.

El Paso County's Master Plan is available online, here:

<https://epcdevplanstorage.blob.core.windows.net/project/d9c8fab6-3e79-4d33-9127-1e4ffa274d37/963947c6-f6b1-4c02-b89c-7e67f70a504b.pdf>

IMPLEMENT/IMPLEMENTATION

Fulfilling the El Paso County's vision and goals – as outlined by the Your El Paso Master Plan – requires implementation. That means using the tools that the County has to ensure the Master Plan is accomplished. One set of tools the County can use to implement the community's goals for growth and development is the LDC.

REGULATIONS/STANDARDS

Regulations and standards in the LDC generally describe the same thing – rules for what can be developed in which locations in El Paso County. Additionally, the LDC includes development standards about landscaping, parking, fences, exterior lighting, and others that ensures that new development is a good neighbor to what is already there and minimizes impacts to the characteristics that make El Paso County special.

ZONING

Zoning refers to the creation of districts within a community that establish different standards or regulations for what can or cannot be developed there. For example, a residential zone (or zoning district) could allow a variety of types of housing and supportive businesses but restrict the development of land uses that the County thinks would negatively impact the health and safety of the people that live there. Different zones also often have different standards for the size and scale of buildings.

SUBDIVISION

Subdivision means the division or separation of a parcel of land into two or more parcels, lots, blocks, tracts, or sites. This is often required as part of the development process when a larger area of land is intended to be developed into a neighborhood with homes, businesses, and community amenities.

FAQS

WHY IS EL PASO COUNTY UPDATING THE LDC?

Following the successful completion of the County's new master plan ([Your El Paso Master Plan](#)), updating the current LDC will allow the County to implement the vision and goals of that plan. With clear direction from the master plan about how and where the community wants to grow, it's important to have regulations that help make that a reality.

Updating the LDC could mean adding new standards to reflect new land use challenges and development opportunities, removing standards that work as a barrier to plan implementation, and updating other standards to reflect new technology and development trends. The key issues that will be addressed in the update will be identified in the LDC Review and Issue Identification Report that will be completed in May.

WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF THE UPDATED LDC?

In addition to implementing the County's new master plan, the LDC update will focus on modernizing the LDC. That means that the project will work to reflect changes in technology, industry trends, best practices for land use regulations, and state and federal law since the last comprehensive review and update of the LDC in 2007.

Since that time, short-term rentals, food truck parks, tiny houses, coworking spaces, e-fulfillment centers, rideshare, and many other land uses have become more common – in addition to a shift towards more remote work and online shopping. In El Paso County, outdated land use permissions may present unnecessary barriers to creating a small home business or repurposing underutilized office and retail space to address other commercial and residential needs.

Other LDC changes may come from taking a different look at development costs and community investments. For example, despite the shifts in the way people live, work, shop, and do business, existing parking and infrastructure standards may require costly investments that aren't necessary based on market trends and create barriers to development. As a result, the updated LDC needs to address gaps in regulations for new types of development, increase flexibility so the LDC can adapt to future land use changes, and remove regulations that don't advance community priorities.

Lastly, the updated LDC will need to be tailored to reflect the diverse neighborhoods and landscapes in El Paso County – from forested peaks to suburban neighborhoods and from urban settings to agricultural production. Prior to making updates to the LDC, the project team will complete a full assessment of the current regulations with the goal of guiding how a new LDC that is simplified, streamlined, and improved in keeping with regulatory best practices.

HOW WILL UPDATING THE LDC AFFECT MY PROPERTY?

The updated LDC will continue to only apply to *unincorporated* areas of El Paso County. This means that the regulations generally do not apply to areas that are owned by the State or Federal government (e.g., Cheyenne Mountain State Park, Fort Carson) or areas within incorporated cities and towns (Calhan, Colorado Springs, Fountain, Green Mountain Falls, Manitou Springs, Monument, Palmer Lake, and Ramah). Note that there are pockets of unincorporated areas within some cities and town (e.g., Cimarron Hills) where the LDC applies.

In unincorporated areas of El Paso County, the rules that are set in the LDC will apply to both new development and redevelopment. This means you will need to build or change to a structure or start, change, or expand a use for the LDC's new standards to apply. The updated LDC will influence what new development is possible as the County grows, what new development looks like, how it fits into the community, and how it can help the County ensure a strong economy, resilient environment, and high quality of life. So, if you live, work, own land, own a business, or plan to relocate to El Paso County, the updated LDC is worth caring about!

WILL THE LDC CHANGE ZONING ACROSS THE COUNTY?

With updates to the LDC the names and standards of zoning districts may change. Some zoning districts may be eliminated, consolidated with another zoning district, or repurposed. As a result, although the LDC may change, this project will not result in any rezoning of property (e.g., from residential to commercial, from a predominantly residential neighborhood to a small-scale mixed-use neighborhood).

The County may explore rezoning of property in a separate process following adoption of the LDC, based on policy direction from the Your El Paso Master Plan. Although the LDC provides a description of the zoning districts and the standards that apply to them, the County's master plan provides the basis for what type of development is best suited in each area of the county.

WHO'S INVOLVED IN UPDATING THE LDC?

Everyone! Updating development regulations requires input from all kinds of people – residents, neighborhoods, businesses, non-profits, schools, retirees, the development community, other agencies and service providers, and many others.

UPDATING THE LDC DOESN'T SEEM TO IMPACT ME DIRECTLY - WHY SHOULD I CARE TO PARTICIPATE?

If you don't own property or run a business in El Paso County you may think that the effort to update the LDC isn't important. The reality is that everyone should care about the updated LDC! Here's why:

- Because the LDC determines what types of development can occur in different areas, changes to the LDC impact the availability and cost of new housing. That impacts the cost of rent and real estate, and the impacts of new and existing development on infrastructure.
- Because the LDC determines
- The LDC determines where commercial development occurs – and what type of businesses are permitted in different areas. This means that where you work, shop, and dine

The LDC influences what type of housing is available in El Paso County – whether you rent or own – and determines where different types of housing are allowed to be built. Although there are many factors that impact housing affordability, how much and what type of housing is built does impact the cost of housing (for you and future generations).

The LDC determines where commercial and industrial development occurs, which means that your ability to walk to a local business, how far you commute to work, and how easy it is for you to establish a business are impacted by what the updated LDC allows.

Think about the age of your house, a local business, and the roads that you drive on. Although some structures are new, many are more than 100 years old and even recently repaved streets are often much older underneath. Because the LDC impacts what development and infrastructure is built today, it will also impact where your children and grandchildren live, work, and get around.

You should participate if you care about how El Paso County grows!

IS THIS PROJECT DIFFERENT FROM THE YOUR EL PASO MASTER PLAN?

The Your El Paso Master Plan is the County's policy document that directs how and where the County expects growth and development to occur. The LDC is a tool for implementing the land use

policies from the Master Plan through regulations. Additionally, the Master Plan is often referenced in the LDC to inform zoning decisions.

DO I HAVE TO BE AN EXPERT TO CONTRIBUTE IDEAS?

Absolutely not! By living, working, owning land, owning a business, or caring about the future of El Paso County, you know so much about your community. Your input and ideas are vital to the success of the LDC. Whether you have just moved to the community or are a life-long resident, your perspective is important.

WHO IS LEADING THE LDC PROJECT?

El Paso County's Planning and Community Development Department is leading the process with support from a consultant team. The consultant team is being led by Clarion Associates, a Denver-based consulting firm that specializes in comprehensive planning and land use regulations.

WHAT IS THE TIMELINE FOR THE LDC PROJECT?

The project is expected to take about two years to complete, with final adoption in March 2026, largely because it takes time to provide everyone in the County with enough opportunity to share their ideas and feedback before the Land Development Code (LDC) is adopted. Please view the About the Project page to see the timeline for project.

- **Phase 1: Project Kickoff** *May 2024*
 - Background Research
 - Stakeholder Interviews
- **Phase 2: Code Assessment** *May – August 2024*
 - Draft Code Assessment
 - Kickoff Meetings
- **Phase 3: Code Drafting** *September 2024 – June 2025*
 - Districts & Uses
 - Development Standards
 - Administration & Procedures
 - Consolidated Draft
- **Phase 4: Code Adoption** *June – December 2025*
 - Adoption Draft
 - Final Draft
- **Phase 5: Implementation Support** *January – April 2026*

- Staff Training
- Community Workshops

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED OR LEARN MORE?

Start by signing up for project updates on the project website! We will keep you posted on upcoming events, meetings, opportunities to review and comment on LDC drafts, and other major announcements.