

Norfolk Insider

City of Norfolk, NE

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“The Importance of City Planning and Zoning”

It's brought up in nearly every Norfolk City Council meeting and guides much of what goes on in any city. That topic is “zoning.”



Prevention and Codes Manager for the City of Norfolk.

Years ago city planners designated what areas of the city should be used for certain purposes. Some areas were set aside for use as industrial districts and others were reserved for multiple family residential structures. There are areas for service commercial uses and districts designated as single family residential.

When a citizen wants to start or relocate a business, he or she first needs to see if the district it will be in is designated for that purpose. There are cases where the city council will decide that an area can have its zoning changed. Usually the district designations remain as they are to keep a community functional and attractive to the landowners and users.

“Without zoning, a person could build a manufacturing business in the middle of a residential neighborhood. A gas station could be built in the empty lot between you and your neighbor. Zones are set up to organize a city and take into account needs for parking, lighting, storm drains, sewer and traffic,” said Trenton Howard, Prevention and Codes Manager for the City of Norfolk.

“There are cases of designated zoning districts placed in the early 1950’s which may not fit anymore due to growth or other issues which come up. The comprehensive plan is another tool which helps us to try to understand growth and development,” Howard said.

Howard added that if someone wants to use an area of land for a use not intended by its zoning designation, they need to first ask the City of Norfolk Planning Commission to consider a zoning change. An application for a site plan review would have to be filed with a zoning official. A public hearing is held so that neighbors and area property owners have an opportunity to voice their support or concern about any zoning change. The Planning Commission then submits their recommendation to approve or not approve the zoning change to the Norfolk City Council which has the final vote on the change.

An annually updated map of the city of Norfolk and how it is zoned can be found at <http://www.ci.norfolk.ne.us/mapsaerials/>.

A description of each type of zoning can be found at <http://www.ci.norfolk.ne.us/citycode/Chapters/Chapter%2027.htm>