

Zoning Laws

Zoning laws violate a basic human right, the right to own property. Ownership includes the right to use or dispose of the property as the owner wishes, providing he does not use it to initiate physical force against another person. Zoning laws are written to prevent a person from using his property as he wishes. The enforcement of a zoning law against an owner of property is done by the initiation of or the threat of physical force against the owner of the property by others. They may prevent him from building a particular structure, or from operating his property in certain ways, such as in using it as a factory, or as a multiple apartment building, or as a basement workshop in his house to supplement his income. If an owner tries to use his property as he wishes, the zoning enforcers may forcibly stop him from using it or may tear his property down. His rights are clearly being violated.

But what of his neighbors who may not like the way he uses his property? As long as he is not initiating force against them, they have no right to prevent his use of the property as he wishes. A person who prefers that the property be used in a different way is free to attempt to purchase the property and then use it as he wishes.

If a person uses his property in such a way that it produces noises, odors, etc, which cause physical discomfort or harm to others, he is violating their rights, and they have the right to defend themselves by forcibly, if necessary, reducing the noise, odors, etc, to an acceptable level. This could be done through agreement of court action.

Zoning laws began in 1916 in New York City, and have spread since then to most cities throughout the country. They have not made the cities better places to live in since then. They have made the cities less livable. They have led to increasing traffic jams, urban blight, and uneconomic uses of land and buildings. In Los Angeles and Washington zoning laws prohibit buildings of more than 13 stories, making it impossible to develop sufficient downtown work-population to support a rapid transit system. Thus terrible traffic jams are created.

If a zoning law should happen to agree with the way people want to use their property, it would be of no effect. It only has effect in prohibiting people from using their property as they want to. In this way zoning thwarts economic use and insures waste of resources.

Since zoning laws are a violation of property rights, and since they lead to uneconomic use of land and resources, and since they generally make life unnecessarily difficult, they should be completely repealed.

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