



## **Washington County Planning Office**

### **Information regarding countywide zoning, effective December 15, 2007**

On November 8, 2007, the Washington County Quorum Court passed countywide zoning in the unincorporated areas of Washington County. Unincorporated areas are areas of the County that lie outside of City limits.

As development continues to bloom in the more rural areas of the County, it has become evident that there needs to be some protection for people's sense of home and the ability to enjoy their rural and residential property. Zoning also provides some way to assure that the property values of surrounding areas can be taken into consideration when new and non-rural uses are proposed within the County.

The zoning ordinance is set up in an extremely simple and user- friendly format that promotes the continuation of traditional rural and agricultural characteristics within the unincorporated areas of the County. This allows the consideration of other types of uses under a Conditional Use Permit process. This process looks at the proposed use individually and considers the community's needs.

County zoning now allows the neighbors and residents of a community to comment on the future direction of their neighborhood. Before the passage of countywide zoning, the residents in unzoned areas had no comment on the future direction of their community and neighborhood area.

This zoning will not affect the typical farmer or agricultural resident of the County. Single-family residential uses (generally a minimum lot size of one acre) and all agricultural uses are allowed by right. Other uses such as commercial, duplexes, and apartments are required to go through the Conditional Use Permit Process.

For instance, if you want to build a barn, chicken house, or other type of agricultural building, no permit or approval is needed. If you want to build a single-family home on their property (at least one acre in size), no permits or approvals are needed.

The Conditional Use Permit would come into play only if you want to develop your land in some way that is not traditionally rural.

The following are examples of proposed uses would need a Conditional Use Permit:

- If you want to develop your land into a subdivision with lots less than 1 acre in size.
- If you want to develop your land with apartments or duplexes.
- If you want to put in a commercial business
- If you want to put in an industrial use such as a red dirt pit or quarry.

Countywide zoning requires that the applicant for the Conditional Use Permit notify by mail all property owners within 300' of the proposed use. A comment form is also sent out with the mailing to allow the response of the neighbors to the proposed use and an invitation to attend the upcoming public hearing.

The zoning ordinance requires that the proposed use be examined in terms of compatibility with the surrounding uses, as well as the ability of others within the area to continue to enjoy their property for their rural residential and agricultural uses.

All existing commercial and multi-family development will be grandfathered in and will not require a conditional Use Permit at this time. Countywide zoning becomes effective December 15, 2007.

**Please feel free to contact County staff with any questions you may have about the new zoning ordinance and how it may affect you. We are glad to assist you in this time of transition! Office hours are Monday- Friday, 8:00 a.m.- 4:30 p.m. Zoning maps are available to view at the County Planning Department website, [www.washingtoncounty/planning](http://www.washingtoncounty/planning)**