

Zoning and Land Use Feasibility Guide for Houses of Worship & Nonprofits

OFBI Sustainable Development
Planning Grant

Why Zoning & Land Use Matters

- Determines if affordable housing can be built on your property
- Identifies rules, limits, and approvals needed
- Prevents costly mistakes early
- Provides clarity before hiring architects or engineers

What Zoning Tells You

- What the land can legally be used for
- Whether housing is permitted
- How many units may be allowed
- Parking, height, and setback requirements
- Whether variances or rezoning are needed

Physical Site Considerations

- Wetlands or flood zones
- Steep slopes
- Road access and traffic flow
- Utility availability (water, sewer, electric)
- Easements or rights-of-way

Municipal Approval Pathways

- Planning Board approval
- Zoning Board of Adjustment (if use is not permitted)
- Redevelopment designation if applicable
- Public hearings and community engagement

Why This Step Is Done Early

- Ensures your project is realistic and allowable
- Guides discussions with partners and funders
- Avoids spending money on designs that can't be approved
- Helps determine financial feasibility

Cost Range in New Jersey

- Low Range: \$3,500–\$7,000 for basic zoning review
- Mid Range: \$7,000–\$15,000 for deeper analysis
- High Range: \$15,000–\$30,000+ for rezoning or variances
- Costs depend on complexity, location, and required approvals

Low Range Services

- Basic zoning ordinance review
- Simple feasibility memo
- Identifying allowed uses
- Best for uncomplicated sites

Mid Range Services

- Concept massing or early sketches
- Planner + attorney review
- Meetings with town officials
- Most common range for first-time developers

High Range Services

- Variance or rezoning preparation
- Redevelopment plan evaluation
- Land-use attorney involvement
- Detailed site and constraint analysis

Outputs You Receive

- Clear understanding of what you can build
- List of required approvals
- Timeline for zoning process
- Early cost implications
- Roadmap for next steps

Summary

- Zoning feasibility is essential for early planning
- Helps prevent delays and unexpected barriers
- Clarifies legal, physical, and community factors
- Positions your project for funding and design phases