

Land use refers to how land is utilized for various purposes, such as residential, commercial, agricultural, industrial, recreational, and conservation. It encompasses the management and organization of land resources to meet societal needs while considering environmental impacts. Effective land use planning helps ensure sustainable development, balancing economic growth with ecological preservation and community well-being.

Several types of laws and regulations affect land and water use, including:

1. **Environmental Protection Laws:** Regulations that protect natural resources and ecosystems, such as the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act in the U.S. and associated federal rules and statutes (state laws).
2. **Preservation and Conservation Laws/Regs:** Regulations aimed at protecting or conserving agricultural land, forests, wetlands, and other important natural areas, often through statutes, ordinances, easements and conservation programs. Michigan's Right to Farm Act is an example.
3. **Property Laws and Court Decisions:** Often overlooked laws governing ownership rights, land transfers, and property disputes – as well as published court decisions - influencing how land can be developed or altered.
4. **Historic Preservation Laws:** Regulations that protect sites and structures of historical and cultural significance.
5. **Affordable Housing:** Policies that encourage or laws which require the development of affordable housing, usually relating to specific locations, and sometimes integrated with or impacting zoning and land use plans.
6. **Urban Growth Boundaries:** Regulations that limit urban development in certain areas to preserve open space and promote efficient land use.
7. **Transportation Laws:** Regulations governing infrastructure planning and development for various transportation modes, which influence land and water use patterns as well as access to property
8. **Planning Enabling Acts:** Statutes that require cities and townships to develop comprehensive plans and maps that outline long-term land use goals, sub-area plans, and related objectives.
9. **Zoning:** State-backed local regulations that dictate how land can be used in specific areas (residential, commercial, industrial, etc.), including parcel sizes, structure location and dimensions, stormwater management, etc.
10. **Building Codes:** Standards that govern construction practices to ensure safety, accessibility, suitable materials, and sustainability in buildings.

These laws collectively shape how land is developed, managed, and preserved, balancing various interests and community needs.

The tenets of sustainable land use include:

1. **Long-term Planning:** Creating plans and implementation strategies that consider land management over 20+ years, ideally focusing on resilience to climate change, water management, and other environmental challenges.
2. **Public Engagement:** Encouraging community involvement in land use planning to ensure that diverse voices and perspectives are considered.
3. **Regulatory Frameworks:** Creating and implementing policies and regulations that promote sustainable practices, protect natural resources, and guide land use development. This includes statutes and local ordinances and codes, including zoning and in some lucky places...
4. **Integrated-Coordinated-Concurrency Laws:** Progressive statutes requiring coordination of land use with transportation and other infrastructure and public services to create cohesive and functional communities. These are found in west coast states and Canada.
5. **Waste Reduction:** Minimizing land waste through recycling, reuse, and efficient land development practices.
6. **Ecosystem Preservation:** Preserving natural habitats and biodiversity by avoiding practices that harm ecosystems and promoting conservation efforts.
7. **Resource Efficiency:** Using land, water, and materials in a way that maximizes benefits while minimizing waste and environmental impact.
8. **Sustainable Agriculture:** Promoting farming practices that maintain soil health, reduce chemical inputs, and support local food systems.
9. **Social Inclusion:** Ensuring equitable access to land and resources for all community members, addressing social disparities, and involving local communities in decision-making. This may be formal or informal.
10. **Adaptive Management:** Being flexible and responsive to changing conditions, using monitoring and feedback to adjust practices as needed.

These tenets help balance land uses that support the unrelenting increase in human population and its enterprises with economic development, private property rights, social equity, and environmental health.

