

What Is The Difference Between Development Code and Building Code?

By Roxy Traxler, County Administrator

The Development Code, sometimes called a zoning code, establishes how land is to be used; it does not address building requirements. The Mille Lacs County Board, Planning Commission, and Development Code Update Steering Committee are in the process of revising the Development Code – one of the significant tools that will help the County in implementing the Comprehensive Plan that was adopted in November 2013.

The Development Code identifies zoning districts by type of land use. Those districts are applied to various areas of land, which is what determines how that land can be used. Typical districts include residential, commercial, and industrial. Districts are established to keep like or similar land uses in close proximity to each other, and dissimilar uses away from each other. For example, a residential subdivision should not be situated next door to a heavy industrial use, like a trucking terminal or slaughterhouse. The Development Code is designed, implemented, and enforced by the County, as it is considered a local land use document. There are State mandated provisions which impact land uses adjacent to lakes (shoreland) and the Rum River (Wild & Scenic River).

In addition to identifying what uses are allowed, and where they are allowed, within the County, districts also identify how close a use can be placed to property lines (such as set-back limits for yards), whether a use should have access to a County road versus a gravel township road, and if screening might be required to reduce impact of a use on adjacent uses. There is a limit on impervious surfaces in shoreland districts, which is mandated by State Statute.

The County is asking for feedback from residents to help shape the updated Development Code, through completion of surveys in July and/or attendance at public meetings in September. You can access the survey online at www.co.mille-lacs.mn.us or pick up a print copy at your local library or County office. The deadline for submittal of surveys is July 31, 2014.

In contrast, the Uniform Building Code (or State Building Code, as it often referred to) is regulated by the State of Minnesota and enforced by the County. Its purpose is to limit the loss of life in occupied buildings and reduce insurance losses by regulating how buildings are constructed; plans are reviewed for wind and snow loads; footing requirements; smoke, fire, carbon monoxide, and radon detectors; egress windows; and a whole host of other requirements. At this time, due to Minnesota Statutes, the County is not able to rescind or opt out of enforcing the State Building Code; this change took effect in 2008.

If you would like to learn more about the differences between the Development Code and the State Building Code, please visit the County's website at www.co.mille-lacs.mn.us.