



Zoning Administrator Certificate Program

Hybrid

This comprehensive program is designed to reduce legal risk for zoning administrators and communities. It is essential training for new and experienced zoning administrators, planners, consultants, code enforcement officials, and related administrative staff.

Participants must complete the Citizen Planner Program, or be recognized by the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), before starting this course.

The program covers the following topics:

- » Job descriptions, responsibilities, and ethics
- » Preparing files, reports, and record keeping
- » Interactions with other professionals and agencies and performing departmental duties
- » Legal issues
- » Application forms and review processes

- » Customer service and counter behavior
- » Inspections and violations
- » Reviewing site plans

The program includes a webinar; self-paced online learning modules; and in-person lectures, learning activities, and networking opportunities. Total instruction time is about 18 hours. To earn the Zoning Administrator Certificate, participants must complete the entire program and pass an open-book exam.

Find Out More

Ongoing training is essential for planning and zoning officials to help minimize legal risk and plan for a community's future! To learn more about or register for the courses described here, or to discuss hosting an in-person course in your community, contact:

Program Coordinator

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Web: <https://extension.msu.edu/planning>



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Land Use Planning & Zoning Certificate Courses

MSU Extension offers a variety of land use certificate courses for appointed and elected planning and zoning officials, government staff, and interested community members.

In-person, self-paced online, and hybrid courses are available.





Citizen Planner Program

In Person

This course on zoning and planning roles, responsibilities, and best practices is suitable for new and experienced planning officials and interested community members. It is hosted several times a year across the state. Sessions meet once a week for six weeks. The three-hour sessions include lectures and hands-on learning exercises that cover:

- » **Understanding the planning and zoning context:** Learn the legal sources and limitations of local planning and zoning authority and explore your understanding of ethical decision-making.
- » **Planning for the future of your community:** Recognize the function and importance of a master plan, know the process for developing one, and its relationship to zoning.
- » **Implementing the plan with zoning:** Discover the importance of zoning, learn how

zoning is administered, and gain confidence in your zoning reviews, including site plans.

- » **Making zoning decisions:** Learn how to adopt and amend a zoning ordinance, understand the role of the zoning board of appeals, and learn about basic property development methods.
- » **Using innovative planning and zoning:** Strategize about placemaking and design-based solutions to address new challenges our communities face.
- » **Successfully fulfilling your role:** Strengthen your ethical decision-making skills, develop your public engagement toolkit, and gain insights on when to ask for help.

Participants who complete Citizen Planner have the option to earn the Master Citizen Planner credential.

Citizen Planner Online Course

Self-Paced

This online, self-paced version of Citizen Planner is designed for people who cannot attend an in-person program or who prefer to learn at their own pace.

The course is highly interactive, with engaging stories, videos, and activities. Most participants complete the course in about 15 hours.

Zoning Board of Appeals Online Certificate Course

Self-Paced

This course covers the roles and responsibilities of the zoning board of appeals (ZBA),

effective decision-making, and due process. The curriculum features ZBA-specific content, engaging activities, case studies, and the latest Michigan case law.

The self-paced course is designed for local government ZBA members, local government staff, managers, municipal attorneys, and interested community members. The course includes six modules that can be accessed in any order:

- » Understanding basic ZBA roles and responsibilities
- » Effective decisions and ordinance interpretations
- » Hearing appeals of administrative decisions
- » Issuing variances from ordinance standards
- » Nonconformities and other responsibilities
- » Circuit court review and standards

Most participants complete the coursework in about seven hours.

Equipment Needs

Participants in courses with online components will need an internet connection and a computer or internet-enabled mobile device. Larger screens will provide a better viewing experience.

Certificates of Completion

To earn a course certificate, participants must attend and complete all modules.