# LAND USE PLANNING AND THE ENVIRONMENT: A CASEBOOK

by

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and

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To our children:

Jeremy and Susan and Daniel and Rachel

"Fortunate is the man who has his quiver full of them."

—Psalm 127:5

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#### **Preface**

As our subtitle states—simply and directly—this is a casebook. While other authors choose to provide students with ample excerpts from law review articles and treatises, along with generous explanatory passages that are commonly found in hornbooks, we move the cases—and judicial analysis—back to center stage. The basic reason for this choice is that even in an area largely delineated by local ordinances and state statutes, judges remain key makers and interpreters of land use planning law. The central inquiries of this discipline are disputed in legal briefs and oral arguments, and are addressed in judicial opinions: What is the nature of the comprehensive plan? How close a fit is required between zoning decisions and the plan? When does regulation go so far that it amounts to a taking requiring invalidation or compensation? When do constitutional rights such as free speech and the free exercise of religion trump the police power? What kinds of behavior amount to unreasonable interference with one's neighbor's use and enjoyment of real property? How do we know if a zoning or planning decision constitutes unlawful, invidious discrimination? How do we decide which local regulatory decisions are legislative and which are quasi-judicial, and what are the legal and practical implications of that definitional choice? When does local innovation fall beyond the bounds established by state-enabling legislation?

We have spent several decades engaged in land use planning and environmental law not only as teachers and scholars, but as partners to private- and public-sector participants involved in acts and decisionmaking at the cutting edge of these fields—from urban renewal and Model Cities, through enterprise zones and inclusionary zoning, to New Urbanism and green building. The bulk of our writing—separately and as a team—has been intended for instructors, practitioners, and students who are fascinated by the issues at the core of land use planning law: (1) zoning; (2) comprehensive planning; and (3) eminent domain. To us, a casebook is not an extended advocacy piece designed to advance one legal, jurisprudential, or political strategy regarding the regulation of land use and development. We have one overriding obligation—to consider in an evenhanded and thorough manner the chief challenges facing lawyers and planners who, on a regular basis, are tasked with finding the correct balance between the needs and rights of private landowners and the protection and advancement of the public interest, between the urgencies of the present and the anticipated impacts on future generations. Given this orientation, it is not surprising that cases, not commentary, remain the central teaching and learning tool of Land Use Planning and the Environment.

While other casebook authors identify one case to represent each issue in the casebook, we are uncomfortable with this practice. Therefore, throughout the book, we include cases and selections from cases that illustrate competing or complementary approaches. In this way, we have tried to craft a casebook with jurisdictional and analytical depth, making it a better match for the complex world of land use planning law "on the ground." We provide guidance to our readers (teachers and

students) through informative introductions that ask provocative questions about the materials that follow and, when appropriate, we offer insights from leading commentators in law and planning. However, we envision that these materials will play a supportive role.

The separation between traditional land use planning law and environmental regulation, while never exactly a "bright-line" distinction, has become more cloudy over the past few decades. Increasingly state and federal officials find themselves engaged in legislative, regulatory, and bureaucratic activities regarding the use of private land. Moreover, local and state governments have shared environmental regulatory responsibilities with their federal counterparts to a much greater extent in the early 21st century than ever before. For this and many other reasons, it no longer makes sense either to ignore environmental law topics or to segregate them into an "autonomous" chapter. Land Use Planning and the Environment offers a pervasive approach by addressing overlapping and, at times, conflicting administrative regimes. Throughout the casebook, we identify and explore intersections between land use planning law and environmental laws such as the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act. While some of the connections are obvious—for example in the areas of nuisance law and wetlands regulation we also identify more subtle interconnections, such as the hidden environmental "agenda" behind exclusionary zoning. Moreover, our discrete regulatory takings chapter (Chapter Five) is organized chronologically and by the nature of the environmental regulation of land that is under attack. One of the important lessons taught by environmental law—that is not yet fully heeded by local land use regulators—is that some of the most serious problems cross artificial political boundaries, necessitating regional and metropolitan strategies. The rapidly growing numbers of professors and students with strong backgrounds and exposure to "traditional" environmental law courses will find these intersections a wonderful opportunity to examine familiar topics from a different, though intimately related, perspective. For other classroom users, this casebook will serve as a valuable introduction to the world of federal, state, and local environmental controls.

Traditional height, area, and use regulation—that is, Euclidean zoning—has of late fallen out of favor among a growing number of planners, architects, and lawyers who gravitate toward Smart Growth or form-based paradigms. Moreover, the national debate over the nature and implications of urban and suburban sprawl is attracting page-one media coverage and the attention of national policymakers and candidates for America's highest political offices. The planning law reflections of these social and political shifts appear not only in our collection of cases and notes on growth management in Chapter Seven, but also throughout most of the previous chapters, often in contrast to the Euclidean tools that still dominate the decisional law.

This casebook, like many of the works that appear in our bibliographies, reflects a deep regard for planning as an art and a science, with theories, vocabulary, and tools worthy of respect by coprofessionals. More than 50 years ago, in the preface to his first casebook, Professor Haar expressed the hope "that this volume will be of interest to the planner as well as the lawyer" and the belief that "the case method is a vivid way of introducing the planner to the legal and institutional implications of a conscious fashioning of the physical environment." Today, we are pleased to highlight the deep historical and contemporary connections between these two complementary disciplines, and we hope to eliminate the unfortunate message that is often conveyed to budding lawyers that attorneys are the key, if not sole, players in the decisionmaking and implementation process.

The organization of the seven chapters that follow is fairly straightforward. The opening chapter introduces the reader to the structure and ideas of American planning and to the central concept of the comprehensive plan. Chapter Two explores the major private law methods for reconciling incompatible land uses, chiefly private and public nuisance. The mechanics of Euclidean and post-Euclidean zoning are addressed in Chapter Three; while Chapter Four contains a collection

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of cases regarding departures from and within the zoning ordinance, such as nonconforming uses, zoning amendments, and variances. Chapter Five, with its heavy component of constitutional law, closely examines the brooding omnipresence of land use planning and environmental regulation—regulatory takings. The constitutional law focus continues into Chapter Six, which studies the legal constraints on the exclusion of people and of specially protected uses. The closing chapter reviews various growth management tools and the potential pitfalls their proponents may encounter.

Editorial Notice: Throughout this volume, we have routinely omitted most of the citations, footnotes, and headings from quoted materials, in order not to disturb the flow of the material. In those instances in which we have decided to include the original footnotes, we have maintained the footnote numbers contained in quoted materials. We have numbered our own footnotes, beginning with 1 at the start of each chapter. Whenever our footnotes are appended to quoted material, we have indicated such by beginning the footnote with "Authors' note."

Internet Links: Throughout this volume, we have provided links to Internet web pages that contain illustrations, photographs, charts, monographs, and other documents of interest to the reader. Because, unfortunately, it is common practice to move, shift, or replace material on the web, we anticipate that some of the links that we have provided in this printed book will become unusable. Therefore, we have made the following web page available to users of this book, not only to keep web addresses updated, but also to provide our readers with information regarding new developments in the area of land use and the environment: http://www.landuseplanningcasebook.com/.