Buying property can be both exciting and confusing, especially for first-time buyers. Being uninformed and not asking the right questions can lead to serious problems for buyers. This can include finding yourself in violation of existing land use laws or unable to establish the use you intended. To avoid these situations it is important to understand how property is regulated.

The answers depend on the policies and regulations established by the Department of Regional Planning (DRP). Each buyer must verify that the property they are buying can accommodate their needs.

This brochure summarizes the policies and regulations buyers should know when buying property in the unincorporated communities of Los Angeles County.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Department of Regional Planning
320 W. Temple Street, 13th floor
Los Angeles, CA 90012
http://planning.lacounty.gov

For general information, contact:
Land Development Coordinating Center (LDCC)
(213) 974-6411
email: zoningleddcc@planning.lacounty.gov

For questions about zoning violations, contact:
Zoning Enforcement Section
(213) 974-6453
email: zoneningenforcement@planning.lacounty.gov

Z-NET (zoning and land use information)
http://planning.lacounty.gov/znet

Planning and Zoning Code (Title 22)
http://planning.lacounty.gov/luz

Frequently Asked Questions
http://planning.lacounty.gov/faq

REGIONAL PLANNING / BUILDING & SAFETY FIELD OFFICES

Antelope Valley
335A E. Avenue K6 #A
Lancaster, CA 93535
(661) 524-2390

Calabasas/Malibu
26600 Agoura Road #110
Calabasas, CA 91302
(818) 880-4150

East Los Angeles
4801 E. Third Street
Los Angeles, CA 90022
(323) 881-7030

La Puente
1600 E. Central Avenue
La Puente, CA 91744
(626) 961-9611

San Gabriel Valley
125 S. Baldwin Avenue
Arcadia, CA 91007
(626) 574-0941

Santa Clarita
23757 Valencia Boulevard
Valencia, CA 91355
(661) 222-2940

South Whittier
13523 Telegraph Road
Whittier, CA 90605
(562) 946-1390

Southwest
1320 W. Imperial Highway
Los Angeles, CA 90044
(323) 820-6500

* Please contact each office for hours

BUYING PROPERTY?
WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE YOU BUY

DEPARTMENT OF REGIONAL PLANNING
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

“PLANNING FOR THE CHALLENGES AHEAD”
**KNOW YOUR JURISDICTION**

In LA County there are 88 incorporated cities and numerous unincorporated communities outside the boundaries of these cities. Services for these unincorporated communities are provided by LA County departments and the Board of Supervisors.

- The Department of Regional Planning (DRP) is responsible for regulating land use in the unincorporated communities only. If you are buying property within an incorporated city, you will need to contact that city for information.
- Use “Z-NET” or contact DRP to verify the jurisdiction if you are unsure.
- Do not rely on a property’s mailing address to determine jurisdiction. For example, a “Los Angeles” mailing address can refer to properties in the City of Los Angeles or various unincorporated communities.

**KNOW THE ZONING CODE**

Title 22 of the LA County Code, known as the Planning and Zoning Code, details the types of uses permitted in each zone and the requirements to establish those uses. An online version of the Zoning Code is available on our website: [http://planning.lacounty.gov](http://planning.lacounty.gov).

Permitted uses are listed under each zone in Title 22. Uses are divided into four categories:

- Permitted Uses
- Accessory Uses
- Uses Subject to Director’s Review
- Uses Subject to Permit

**KNOW IF IT IS LEGAL**

One of the most unfortunate occurrences is when a buyer unknowingly purchases a property with an unpermitted use or structure. Buyers need to take steps to ensure the property they are purchasing is free of zoning violations.

- **The County does not inspect properties when they are sold.** Home inspections conducted as part of a sale are not done by County officials and often do not verify legality of existing structures or uses.
- **Call our Zoning Enforcement Section and local Building and Safety (B&S) Office to see if there are open enforcement cases.** If there are no open cases it does not guarantee your property is free of violations, but it is a good start to your research.
- **Verify that existing structures have permits.** You can obtain copies of building permits from the local B&S Office without being the current owner.
- **Assessor records are not building permits.** The Assessor’s Office does not verify the legality of structures or uses when a property is assessed. Do not use these records to verify legality.
- **Once you purchase a property, you are responsible for correcting any existing violations, even if the violations existed before you bought the property.**
- **Failing to correct a violation after you are cited will result in a referral to the District Attorney’s Office.** Most zoning violations are misdemeanors.
- **Purchasing a property with violations is risky.** There is no guarantee you will be able to legalize an unpermitted use or structure.