

Spot Zoning

Spot zoning is when a rezoning decision results in a single parcel, or small island of property, with restrictions on its use different from those imposed on the surrounding property. Spot zoning can be valid if there is a reasonable basis to treat the spot-zoned property differently from the surrounding property. For example, a parcel or two designated as neighborhood commercial in a residential area is perfectly appropriate if it provides needed retail services to residents. However, zoning is not appropriate if it is for the financial benefit of an individual property owner but detrimental to the surrounding area. According to the Iowa courts, the factor of primary importance is whether the rezoned tract has a peculiar adaptability to the new classification as compared to the surrounding property. Spot zoning for the sole benefit of the landowner and contrary to the comprehensive plan is unreasonable.

The case for creating these “spot zones” is best made through the comprehensive planning process, where the community can explain the benefits that such differential treatment brings to the area.

