Effective Airport Zoning Ordinance (AZO)

An effective AZO seeks to prevent development of land uses that are incompatible with the airspace protection requirements, noise and safety impacts, and aircraft operation annoyance created by airport operations. An AZO that is context specific and addresses the specific concerns of the airport operator and host community has a better chance of garnering local support and consistent implementation.

Strategies by Stakeholder

Airport Manager
- Spearhead the compatibility effort
- Be the trusted advisor
- Develop relationships with stakeholders
- Garner support from elected officials

Airport Sponsor Agency
- Understand the advantages/disadvantages of the organization’s structure
- Recognize the need to plan ahead
- Assess the status of current airport compatibility regulations
- Encourage collaboration
- Enhance agency communications

Community Planning Department
- Understand the issue
- Involve airport management
- Promote airport compatibility
- Consider airport in land use planning efforts

Local Governing Body (Elected Officials)
- Understand the issue
- Adopt and implement compatibility regulations
- Provide transparency

Strategies for Improving Local Processes

- Gain local support for the airport
- Promote understanding of the importance of airport land use compatibility and the consequences of incompatible uses
- Understand state airport compatibility regulations, guidance, and aviation services
- Adopt local regulations that include a map and define the compatibility review process
- Implement compatibility regulations
- Provide regular agency outreach and education

Strategies for State Agencies

- Support state airport compatibility legislation
- Provide guidance, education, and tools
- Monitor and get involved in local land use actions

What are airport compatible land uses?

A compatible land use is one that allows airports to operate safely and efficiently without exposing people that are living or working nearby to aircraft noise or other aviation-related effects. Four factors are considered for land use compatibility: aircraft noise exposure, aircraft overflight, safety, and airspace protection.

Noise/Overflight: Sensitive Uses

Airport Compatibility Concerns

Nationally, airspace protection is considered to be the most basic and critical compatibility concern. Locally, any of the other three compatibility factors may be equally important.

Overflight
Concern: Annoyance
Objective: Increase buyer/renter awareness of airport proximity

Airspace Protection
Concern: Hazards to flight
Objective: Avoid new hazards (physical obstructions, visual obstructions, wildlife attractants)

Noise
Concern: Disruption of human activities
Objective: Avoid new noise-sensitive uses in noise impacted areas

Safety
Concern: Risk to people and property
Objective: Limit number of people

Geographic extent of primary compatibility factors

Consequences of Incompatibility

Impacts to Airports
Incompatible land use can constrain an airport's operations and limit future development by:
- Impacting safe runway approach and departure procedures, especially in inclement weather
- Creating flight hazards caused by obstructions or wildlife attractants
- Causing community conflicts or negatively impacting community support for the airport

Consequence: Community opposition to airport

Who is responsible for land use compatibility?

FAA
Protects the national airspace by reviewing proposed construction via Form 7460-1 submittals. Develops standards and guidelines. Holds airport sponsors to grant assurances (Nos. 20 and 21) addressing airport compatibility.

States
Develop regulations and guidelines. Some states provide oversight, guidance, tools, and technical assistance.

Local Jurisdictions
Adopt plans, policies, and zoning ordinances to promote land uses that are compatible with airport operations and prevent ones that are not.

Airport Managers and Sponsors
Advocate for adoption of airport compatibility measures. Contribute expertise and awareness to measures for implementation and enforcement.

How is compatibility achieved?

An adopted Airport Zoning Ordinance (AZO) is the most effective and direct tool available for promoting land use compatibility. A map is essential and should be included in the AZO to define the areas subject to compatible land use policies and regulations. The AZO should provide a clearly defined review process that describes the roles and responsibilities of the FAA, state aviation, agency, airport management, and local agencies.

Who is responsible for land use compatibility?

ACRP