



## Renovating the Church Building

### What does our congregation need to know about zoning and land use?

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[The Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000 \(RLUIPA\)](#) is a federal law that is intended to protect religious organizations rights for the use of their real property. It is designed to protect religious assemblies and institutions from zoning and historic landmark laws that substantially interfere with their religious free exercise.

### **Does RLUIPA immunize churches and other religious properties from land-use regulations?**

NO. All land-use regulations apply to religious buildings until a claimant makes a showing that a land-use regulation imposes a substantial burden on a sincerely held religious belief or activity.

Claimants will need to follow local land-use regulations and procedures until they are faced with a government decision that discriminates or places a substantial burden on their religious practice. They then can try to show that the Act has been violated. Even then, many zoning and building regulations regarding structural integrity and construction requirements, fire and flood safety, sanitation regulations, and similar health and safety requirements may well be found supported by a compelling governmental interest.

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