

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty Co.

272 U.S. 365 (1926) · No. No. 31 · Decided November 22, 1926

SUMMARY

The Supreme Court upheld the Village of Euclid's comprehensive zoning ordinance against a challenge under the Fourteenth Amendment. The Court held that zoning regulations separating residential, commercial, and industrial uses may constitute a valid exercise of the police power when their validity is fairly debatable and they bear a rational relation to public health, safety, and general welfare.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of the United States
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Justice Sutherland
JURISDICTION	Federal
DECIDED	November 22, 1926
DOCKET	No. 31
DISPOSITION	reversed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Ambler Realty Company appealed directly to the Supreme Court from a decree of the United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio that held Euclid's zoning ordinance unconstitutional and enjoined its enforcement.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	A zoning ordinance may be invalidated under the Due Process Clause only when its restrictions are clearly arbitrary and unreasonable and have no substantial relation to the public health, safety, morals, or general welfare. When the legislative classification is fairly debatable, the legislative judgment controls.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published, precedential decision of the Supreme Court of the United States.
PARTIES	Village of Euclid et al. v. Ambler Realty Company

TOPICS

- zoning
- due process
- constitutional law
- municipal law
- real estate

PRACTICE AREAS

constitutional law

real estate

municipal law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Ambler's challenge to the zoning ordinance was premature because it had not sought a building permit or relief from the zoning board of appeals.
2. Whether Euclid's comprehensive zoning ordinance, including restrictions excluding industrial, commercial, retail, apartment-house, and similar uses from designated districts, violated the Fourteenth Amendment by depriving Ambler of property without due process or denying equal protection.
3. Whether the ordinance could be challenged in its entirety based on its general effect on the property rather than through a provision-by-provision challenge to specific applications.

HOLDINGS

1. The challenge was not premature because the alleged present reduction in property value and marketability caused by the ordinance's existence and threatened enforcement constituted a present invasion of property rights, and the attack was directed at the ordinance as a whole.
2. Euclid's zoning ordinance was valid in its general scope and dominant features because its restrictions had a substantial relation to public health, safety, morals, or general welfare and were not clearly arbitrary or unreasonable.
3. The Court would not invalidate the ordinance in its entirety based on speculative or unparticularized objections to provisions not shown to cause Ambler a concrete injury; those provisions could be addressed in cases involving their direct application.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"If the validity of the legislative classification for zoning purposes be fairly debatable, the legislative judgment must be allowed to control." (388)

"at least, the reasons are sufficiently cogent to preclude us from saying, as it must be said before the ordinance can be declared unconstitutional, that such provisions are clearly arbitrary and unreasonable, having no substantial relation to the public health, safety, morals, or general welfare." (395)

"the ordinance in its general scope and dominant features, so far as its provisions are here involved, is a valid exercise of authority, leaving other provisions to be dealt with as cases arise directly involving them." (397)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Ambler Realty owned a vacant 68-acre tract in the Village of Euclid, an Ohio suburb of Cleveland, abutting Euclid Avenue and the Nickel Plate railroad. Euclid adopted a comprehensive zoning ordinance dividing the village into use, height, and area districts and restricting portions of Ambler's tract to residential and limited other uses while reserving other areas for industrial uses. Ambler alleged that the restrictions materially reduced the property's value and marketability for industrial, commercial, and residential development.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Ambler Realty challenged the Village of Euclid's comprehensive zoning ordinance as violating the Fourteenth Amendment and the Ohio Constitution. The district court held the ordinance unconstitutional and void and enjoined its enforcement. The Supreme Court reversed.

DISPOSITION

reversed

CASES CITED

- Terrace v. Thompson, 263 U.S. 197, 215
- Pierce v. Society of Sisters, 268 U.S. 510, 535
- Sturgis v. Bridgeman, L.R. 11 Ch. 852, 865
- Radice v. New York, 264 U.S. 292, 294
- Welch v. Swasey, 214 U.S. 91
- Hadacheck v. Los Angeles, 239 U.S. 394
- Reinman v. Little Rock, 237 U.S. 171
- Cusack Co. v. City of Chicago, 242 U.S. 526, 529-530
- Hebe Co. v. Shaw, 248 U.S. 297, 303
- Pierce Oil Corp. v. City of Hope, 248 U.S. 498, 500
- Purity Extract Co. v. Lynch, 226 U.S. 192, 204
- City of Aurora v. Burns, 319 Ill. 84, 93-95
- State v. City of New Orleans, 154 La. 271, 282-283
- Jacobson v. Massachusetts, 197 U.S. 11, 30-31
- Turpin v. Lemon, 187 U.S. 51, 60
- Railroad Commission Cases, 116 U.S. 307, 335-337
- Opinion of the Justices, 234 Mass. 597, 607
- Inspector of Buildings of Lowell v. Stoklosa, 250 Mass. 52
- Spector v. Building Inspector of Milton, 250 Mass. 63
- Brett v. Building Commissioner of Brookline, 250 Mass. 73
- Lincoln Trust Co. v. Williams Bldg. Corp., 229 N.Y. 313
- Deynzer v. City of Evanston, 319 Ill. 226
- State ex rel. Beery v. Houghton, 164 Minn. 146
- State ex rel. Carter v. Harper, 182 Wis. 148, 157-161
- Ware v. City of Wichita, 113 Kan. 153
- Miller v. Board of Public Works, 195 Cal. 477, 486-495
- City of Providence v. Stephens, 133 A. 614

- Goldman v. Crowther, 147 Md. 282
- Ignaciunas v. Risley, 98 N.J.L. 712
- Spann v. City of Dallas, 111 Tex. 350
- State ex rel. Lachtman v. Houghton, 134 Minn. 226
- State ex rel. Roerig v. City of Minneapolis, 136 Minn. 479
- Vorlander v. Hokenson, 145 Minn. 484

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