

Zoning Board Member Guide (ZRB or BZA)



For the project under consideration:



Is it located in an appropriate place?

This should be defined by proximity to mobility and goods/services/employment, not necessarily a comp plan.

Mobility; sidewalks, street trees, on street parking, bike-ability, bus lines, heavy rail stations.

Non-mobility; drive only with no opportunity for alternate methods of transport.



Does it increase housing supply?

Workforce or affordable housing as well? Beyond mandated minimums (if any)?



Does it prioritize people over cars?

Is the amount of parking limited, and whatever is provided is located in the right place (the rear of the site, and/or shielded from the street)?

What does the project do to support bicycle storage & infrastructure?



Does the project have positive Urban design?

Does it have good porches, balconies, doors, and windows that engage with the sidewalk and street?



How does this project address ecology?

Are existing trees, topography, streams being respected in a reasonable fashion based upon context? Are new trees provided, particularly street trees? Losing trees for housing in mobility rich areas is often a fair tradeoff. Losing trees for parking is usually a negative.



Are alleged problems with zoning requested a result of poor zoning and really not the project?

Most zoning was written 40-50 years ago with limited updates over time. It is out of step with what we need to be building in most communities. Do not trust the zoning itself to be a good guide for the type of redevelopment we need in our cities today.



Are there conflicts with the Comprehensive Development Plan(s)?

Most of these Comp plans were written 5-15 years ago. Most cities were at a very different place in their arch of housing affordability and attainability then. Comp plans have something for everyone, and Atlanta has multiple plans. This allows cherry picking certain points to support a range of positions.



Does it have Community support?

Community support is important politically, but important projects could check all the boxes above and still be opposed by a local community leaders. Just having support doesn't guarantee good outcomes. But a project that puts in significant time to work through issues with a community is probably going to be more successful.



Recognize staffs bias towards status quo, less work, less precedent setting.

Understand that Zoning staff can have a status quo bias, and are typically not looking to rock the boat.