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Georgia Association of Zoning Administrators




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From Codes to Community: Writing Ordinances That Actually Work

Brice Wood: Director, Rome/Floyd County Planning Department
Angel Gray, President, Georgia Association of Code Enforcement


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Director, Rome/Floyd County Planning
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Is Your Code Creating a Community That Your Citizens Are Proud of?

- Comp plan should establish a broad community vision.
- Zoning ordinance should implement that vision.





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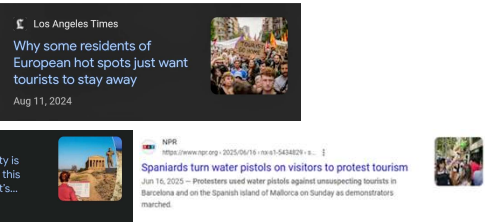
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- Zoning Ordinances Frequently Focus Solely on the Use**
- Can easily rob an area of established or desired character
 - Kills quality of life for residents and marketability for tourism efforts



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Compare That To Other Countries:



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The Disaster Scenario:

- Imagine your community is destroyed, would you build it back the same way?
 - If yes, would your code allow it?
 - If yes, then congrats, you're done.
 - If not, then revise your code.
- If no, does your code require the necessary changes to achieve the desired vision?
- Might require angering some people but can be framed as a positive.

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Is Your Code Reflective of Evolving Societal Trends?

- E-commerce vs. brick-n-mortar
- Digital advertising vs. traditional signage



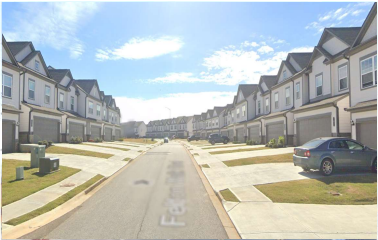





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What Areas of Your Code Cause Problems?

- Problem may be due to lack of standards
 - “Show me in your code where that’s required.”
- May be poor verbiage
- May be due to lack of enforcement of existing standards






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
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Braves Blvd Case Study:

Lessons learned:

- If you want people to hang out, don’t allow businesses that that tell them to spend money and go away!
- Rights come with responsibilities!
- Placemaking!





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River District Case Study:

- “New Broad Street”
- Urban Mixed Use

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Best Practices:

- Break changes into smaller code revisions
 - Comprehensive code reform is overwhelming for everyone
 - Ex: setbacks, signage, minimum parking requirements, landscaping/buffers, lot sizes, lighting
- If necessary, implement major changes in phases

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Best Practices:

- Build a coalition of support for reform
- Fellow staff, industry professionals, citizens, planning commission members, elected officials

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Marketing The Benefits:

- Include pictures, graphics, stats, etc.
- Give & take
 - Reduced parking - greater landscaping
 - More mixed use - design restrictions
 - Fewer SUPS - more things by right with limitations

Worry about your “product”, not a developers



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Things to Consider:

- Is it enforceable?
 - Is it legally enforceable?
 - Not arbitrary & capricious
 - Work with city/county attorney to craft verbiage
 - Is it practical to enforce?
- Is there enough political will to enforce it?



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A Picture/Graphic is Worth 1,000 Words:

[illegible]

5.4.2. ADDITIONAL SIGNAGE

In addition to the specific signs permitted in each district, the following signs shall be allowed in all zoning districts (or in the zoning districts as indicated) under the conditions noted for each type of sign.

6. Project entrance signs:
- Two monumental signs may be located at each entrance into a residential subdivision or into an office or industrial park consisting of two or more buildings. Each project entrance sign shall not exceed:
- (1) 32 square feet in sign face surface area.
 - (2) 96 square feet in sign structure area.
 - (3) 2' feet in height if located within a sight-visibility triangle (see Sections 8.5) or 8' feet in height otherwise.

Permitted Discharge

[illegible]

- Must have verbiage to support it
- Be prepared to explain additional length

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Don't be afraid to use AI and other software*

- Can assist with pictures, graphics, formatting, etc.



*Use with caution





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Do This Repeatedly And on a Schedule

- Minor changes every 1-3 years
- Larger updates every 5-10 years
- Do in conjunction with comp plan updates
- Don't forget the public realm
- A bad street can ruin neighborhood success.




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President, Georgia Association of Code
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What Will Be Discussed

- The importance of local ordinances.
- The Authority of Ordinances.
- Reveal the most common conflicting ordinances.
- The effects of conflicting ordinances.
- Methods of educating and enforcing local ordinances.




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The Importance of Local Ordinances

- Establish specific rules and regulations that govern communities to ensure:
 - Public Health and Safety
 - Maintaining Order
 - Preserve Character
 - Foster Economic Development
 - Identify and Meet Unique Local Needs

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The Authority of Local Ordinances

Title 36 - LOCAL GOVERNMENT (§§ 36-1-1 — 36-93-1)
PROVISIONS APPLICABLE TO COUNTIES ONLY (§§ 36-1-1 — 36-23-01)




Chapter 1 - GENERAL PROVISIONS (§§ 36-1-1 — 36-1-27)
Section 36-1-20 - Ordinances for governing and policing of unincorporated areas of a county

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The Authority of Local Ordinances

Title 36 - Local Government Chapter 35 - Home Rule Powers

§ 36-35-3. Adoption of Ordinances, Rules, and Regulations; Amendment of Charters and Amendment or Repeal of Ordinances, Rules, and Regulations by Petition and Referendum






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Common Conflicting Ordinances

- Zoning Ordinances v/s Nuisances
 - Inoperable vehicles
 - Junked vehicles
 - Storage (outdoor)
- Zoning Ordinances v/s Animal Control
 - Domestic Fowl
 - Livestock
 - Kennels
- Zoning Ordinances v/s Buildings and Building Regulations
 - Setbacks
 - Space & Size Requirements
 - Building Types






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Effects of Conflicting Ordinances


- Citizen Confusion (the he said she said situation)
- Difficult to Educate and Enforce
- Creation of Inter-Departmental Conflicts
 - Code Enforcement
 - Animal Control
 - Fire/Police
 - Building Inspectors




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Methods of Effective Education & Enforcement of Local Ordinances



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METHODS of Education & Enforcement

➤REACTIVE


- Complaint Driven
- Limited Staffing
- Limited Staffing Education/Training
- Navigation of Conflicting Ordinances
- Often results in repeat offences

➤PROACTIVE


- Adequate Staffing
- Trained Staff/Experience
- Pulse on the community needs and character
- Updated & non-conflicting ordinances
- Fewer repeat offences encountered



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GAZA

The Georgia Association of Zoning Administrators, also known as GAZA, was founded in 1985 to provide education, training and networking opportunities in order to support and promote professional development in zoning and related fields. GAZA has been created to be a resource specifically to the local planning and zoning professional throughout the state of Georgia.

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