



DEVELOPMENT REVIEW TRENDS REPORT

The purpose of this report is to evaluate whether the draft Zoning Ordinance responds to the recurring issues, development trends, and regulatory challenges most frequently encountered during Augusta's development review process.

To prepare this diagnostic, the project team reviewed meeting minutes, agendas, and staff report from the Augusta Commission, Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, and Historic Preservation Commission between 2021 and 2025. Recurring themes were identified based on the frequency of appearance, amount of board and commission discussion, number of requests associated with the issue, and the potential for zoning regulations to address or reduce future conflicts.

The following pages summarize the most common issues raised during development review and identify corresponding provisions in the draft Zoning Ordinance intended to address, mitigate, or reduce the frequency of these concerns. While not all issues can be resolved through zoning regulations alone, this diagnostic serves as a tool to evaluate how the draft ordinance supports more predictable, consistent, and effective land use decision-making.

Prepared By:



Augusta Commission Trends (2023-2025)

Theme	Recurring Issues	Zoning Ordinance Strategies
Housing Diversity and Residential Development	Balancing housing choice, affordability, and neighborhood expectations	- The Zoning Ordinance expands the types of housing options to include missing middle housing types, and includes new definitions for duplex, triplex, quadplex, cottage court, townhouse, tiny house, and low-rise residential buildings. - New Middle Neighborhood District and Neighborhood Residential District are introduced to facilitate rezoning process to include broader range of housing types. - New Residential Infill incentives encourage redevelopment in established neighborhoods. - New Building Design standards encourage context-sensitive design for residential buildings.
Neighborhood Compatibility and Character	Managing transitions between new development and established neighborhoods	- Enhanced buffer standards strengthen screening between incompatible uses and intensities. - New transition standards require a transition plan for nonresidential and mixed-use developments within 200 feet of a residential district or use.
Development Review Process and Regulatory Transparency	Improving predictability, clarity, and efficiency of development approvals	- All procedures are consolidated into a single Article in the Zoning Ordinance. - Approval procedures and decisions criteria are outlined with a flow chart that depicts the approval pathways.
Commercial and Industrial Expansion	Accommodating economic growth while minimizing land use conflicts	- New transition standards and enhanced buffer standards offer to add protection between incompatible uses and intensities. - New Adaptive Reuse section incentives reuse of existing buildings by relaxing zoning requirements. - New Transit-Oriented Development Overlay implements transportation priorities identified in Envision Augusta to support walkability and multimodal transportation options, increase housing along public transit corridors, and relax zoning requirements in exchange for public transit provisions.
Historic Preservation and Cultural Resources	Balancing preservation objectives with property owner flexibility	- New cross-references are added to the Zoning Ordinance to clarify preservation review procedures. - Administrative Adjustments up to 20% could help development review approvals. - New Adaptive Reuse section incentives reuse of existing buildings by relaxing zoning requirements.
Emerging Land Uses and Land Uses in Need of Modernization	Managing location, intensity, and operational impacts of emerging and potentially impactful land uses.	- New standards have been added for data centers. - New standards have been added for short-term rentals. - Lodging uses have been streamlined and updated for modern terminology. - New Corner Store use added that prohibits: alcohol and tobacco sales; drive-through facilities; gas stations; tattoo establishments. 1,000 to 1,200-foot separation requirement established for certain uses that mitigates proliferation of uses having detrimental impacts to surrounding neighborhoods. - Updated use regulations to conform to state requirements.

Augusta Commission Trends (continued)

Theme	Recurring Issues	Zoning Ordinance Strategies
Infrastructure Capacity and Growth Management	Coordinating development with public infrastructure capacity	- New Administrative Adjustment provision allows a 12% adjustment in minimum lot size reduction for underground utilities. - Utilities are allowed to occur in required open space (with proper approvals). - Townhouse Developments may be developed using 3 available options: 1] comply with minimum front yard setback; 2] Increased front yard setback where utility easement occurs; or 3] reduced front yard setback where rear-loaded parking is provided
Blight, Property Maintenance, and Redevelopment	Encouraging reinvestment while addressing nuisance properties	- New Adaptive Reuse section incentives reuse of existing buildings by relaxing zoning requirements. - New Residential Infill incentives encourage redevelopment in established neighborhoods. - Nonconformity section has been updated to include provisions addressing lots, buildings, uses, sites, and signs. - The Zoning Ordinance could include stronger enforcement provisions to address deferred maintenance and unsafe conditions.

Planning Commission Trends (2021-2023)

Theme	Recurring Issues	Zoning Ordinance Strategies
Housing Variety, Density, and Compatibility	- Concerns regarding compatibility of townhouses and multifamily housing adjacent to single-family neighborhoods - Debates over appropriate density, lot sizes, and housing intensity - Questions about transitions between attached and detached housing types - Requests for greater housing diversity while maintaining neighborhood character	- New Building Design and Transition/Buffer sections include provisions that address townhouse and multifamily residential buildings. - New residential zoning districts (namely, Middle Neighborhood and Neighborhood Residential) allow for greater density, variation in lot size, and compact configurations. Building Design section applies to missing middle housing types. - Enhanced Buffer Yard section includes new buffer yard types required between land uses.
Transportation, Access, and Connectivity	- Concerns about traffic impacts generated by new development - Need for traffic studies and roadway improvements as part of project approvals - Incomplete sidewalk and street network connectivity	These concerns are predominantly addressed through the Subdivision Ordinance; however, the Traffic Impact Analysis Section includes requirements regarding traffic analysis for certain development applications.
Buffers, Screening, and Transitions	- Requests for greater separation between differing land uses and development intensities - Concerns about privacy, lighting, noise, and visual impacts - Preservation of existing trees as neighborhood transitions	- New Transitions section requires a transition plan as part of site plan review to demonstrate how new development relates to adjacent residential areas through enhanced screening, buffering, building scale, design measures, and performance standards. - Enhanced Buffer Yard section includes new buffer yard types required between land uses.
Open Space & Amenities	- Community expectation that new development provide meaningful amenities and gather spaces - Desire for parks, trails, dog parks, pools, and recreation facilities - Perception that projects with amenities provide greater community benefit	New Open Space section establishes minimum requirements for open space for major subdivisions, multifamily uses, mixed-use developments that include residential use, and Planned Development Districts. The amount of required open space is scaled to the intensity of each zoning district, and the standards include open space types that distinguish between natural open space versus amenity areas.
Parking & Site Design	- Concerns with parking shortages and spillover parking - Difficulty accommodating guest parking in townhouse developments - Conflicts between parking requirements and desired development form	- New Residential Guest Parking Requirements have been added for all residential uses. - New Alternative Parking Plan, Remote Parking, Shared Parking. - For Townhouse Developments, applicants now have options to develop either with rear-loaded parking from the alley/private drive or front-loaded parking.
Commercial Corridor Redevelopment	- Uncertainty regarding where commercial expansion should occur, particularly along Washington Rd.; Milledgeville Rd.; Claussen Rd.; Windsor Spring Rd. - Concerns about commercial encroachment into residential areas - Questions regarding redevelopment intensity along major corridors - Need for predictable transitions between commercial and residential uses	- New Future Land Use Map and Official Zoning Map will serve as a tool for rezoning decision-making. - New Transitions section requires a transition plan as part of site plan review to demonstrate how new development relates to adjacent residential areas through enhanced screening, buffering, building scale, design measures, and performance standards. - Enhanced Buffer Yard section includes new buffer yard types required between land uses.

Planning Commission Trends (continued)

Theme	Recurring Issues	Zoning Ordinance Strategies
Building Appearance	• Requests for higher-quality building materials and architectural design • Concerns regarding facade articulation and visual character • Desire for development that complements surrounding neighborhoods • Evaluation of project appearance often occurs through rezoning conditions rather than ordinance standards	• Proposed Building Design section adds clear and consistent expectations for higher intensity residential developments including duplex, triplex, quadplex, townhouse, low-rise, mid-rise, and high-rise residential buildings including materials, variation in wall plane, and orientation of buildings.
Neighborhood Engagement & Public Participation	• Concerns that neighborhoods are not engaged early enough in the process • Requests for additional outreach and community meetings • Petitions and organized neighborhood opposition • Frequent continuances to allow additional stakeholder engagement	• Proposed Neighborhood & Community Organization Registry allows voluntary registry of neighborhood associations and community organizations to facilitate communication and notification regarding zoning applications. • Proposed Citizen Participation Plan (CCP) encourages early communication between applicants and surrounding neighborhoods prior to the submission of certain development applications (PDs; SUPs; and applications determined by Director to have potential community impacts)
Administrative Review and Coordination	• Utility, easement, and infrastructure coordination challenges • Amendments to previously approved PUDs and zoning conditions • Requests for clarification of development commitments • Interpretation of site plans and development assumptions during rezoning review	• Revised Minimum Lot Reduction for Underground Utilities (previously 2%, now 10%) to be coordinated and approved by utility company and Planning Director • New Minor Modification of Final Site or Development Plan added • New criteria added to Planned Development to aid rezoning review

Board of Zoning Appeals Trends (2021-2023)

Theme	Recurring Issues	Zoning Ordinance Strategies
Accessory Structure Dimensional Requirements	- Accessory building size limits do not reflect lot size or property context - Difficulty meeting setback requirements for detached garages, workshops, and outbuildings - Restrictions on utility connections and placement of accessory structures	The Accessory Buildings and Structures section has been updated to include: - Allowing accessory buildings/structures to occur By Right versus a Conditional Use. - New minimum setback requirements for accessory structures that align with the Building Code. - New criteria and considerations for administrative adjustments for setback adjustments for accessory structures
Irregular Lot Configurations	- Irregular shaped lots make it difficult to adhere to setback requirements - Double- and triple-frontage lots are subject to multiple front-yard setbacks	- New provision addresses non-uniform front yard setbacks - Clearer guidance for setback standards on irregularly shaped lots - Administrative adjustments for narrow, shallow, or irregular lots - Acknowledge reduced Secondary Frontage yards for double- and triple-frontage lots
Corner Lot Requirements	- Secondary street frontages function like side yards but are regulated as front yards - Corner lot setback requirements reduce flexibility for additions, garages, and accessory structures	The draft currently states “corner lots having two street frontages shall have two front yards.” It is recommended that corner lots designate a Primary and Secondary Street Frontage based on the street address. Secondary Street Frontage yard may be reduced up to 50% of the Primary Street Frontage.
Historic Property Relief	- Historic buildings were constructed prior to modern zoning standards - Existing structures occupy nonconforming locations on the lot - Preservation goals limit the ability to relocate or reconfigure buildings - Modest additions frequently require relief due to existing nonconformities - Legacy lot patterns, such as narrow urban lots, predate the current zoning standards and make it difficult to adhere to modern setback requirements	A new Neighborhood Residential (NR) District has been added to the Zoning Ordinance to serve Augusta’s in-town neighborhoods initially developed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Additionally, new Residential Infill section applies to historic neighborhoods which provide relief. However, the draft dimensional requirements are still in conflict with existing conditions and require further review for added flexibility. Some options include: - Remove zoning restrictions for these areas since they pre-date zoning and have historic commission review; - Increase flexibility with alternative setback measures for NR District to reflect existing conditions (e.g., context-based versus strict dimensional requirements). - Increase administrative adjustments for historic properties up to 20%. - Add “preservation of a designated historic resource” as a unique site condition criteria when evaluating requests for dimensional relief. - Enhance nonconformity provisions to directly address buildings and structures in historic neighborhoods (e.g., allow increases of nonconforming structures in historic neighborhoods) - Acknowledge historic lot-of-record; small/narrow lots as existing conditions that are permitted to redevelop.
Nonconforming Structures, Lots, and Uses	- Existing nonconforming structures are difficult to expand, modernize, or improve - Property owners seek reinvestment opportunities without increasing nonconformities - Redevelopment of legacy commercial and residential sites often requires dimensional relief	Nonconformity section has been revised to include: - Exemption for lots preceding the Zoning Ordinance - Relief in the form of proportionate setbacks for nonconforming lots, up to 20% deviation - Continuance of nonconforming lot size provision that allow a principal structure, accessory structure, or building addition - Expansions of a nonconforming building/structure up to 20% of the existing building footprint

Board of Zoning Appeals Trends (continued)

Theme	Recurring Issues	Zoning Ordinance Strategies
Home Occupations	- Home occupation standards do not align with contemporary business practices - Questions regarding customer visits, deliveries, and accessory structure use - Balancing neighborhood compatibility with small business flexibility	Home-based Occupations section has been revised to include: - Type 1 (HBOs of little to no impact permitted with a Zoning Compliance Permit) and Type II (HBOs of greater impact requiring a Special Exception Permit). - Clear limits on number of employees, maximum size, outward appearance, and parking/traffic.
Sign Regulations	- Visibility constraints on commercial properties - Existing sign standards do not reflect redevelopment conditions or site geometry - Requests for relief from sign area, height, and placement requirements	The Sign regulations have been significantly revised. Major changes include: - Standards are broken up into residential districts and mixed-use/commercial districts to allow signs of appropriate scale and features that relate to context. - New sign area, height, and placement standards have been adjusted based on context/district.
Fence and Wall Standards	- Privacy and security needs conflict with fence height and location standards - Visibility and sight-distance concerns - Request for fencing associated with residential, multifamily, and commercial properties	This was not identified as a priority early on the process. However, some ways in which the Zoning Ordinance can address these issues include: - Context-sensitive fence height standards by yard type, zoning district, use type, and/or adjacent land use. - Establish separate standards for Primary/Secondary street frontages on corner lots. - Expand administrative review and approval of minor deviations (up to 10%).

Historic Preservation Commission Trends (2021-2023)

Many historic preservation issues are governed by the Historic Preservation Ordinance and Historic Preservation Overlay Design Standards; however, the Zoning Ordinance can improve flexibility and reduce conflicts through coordinated dimensional, parking, and nonconformity standards.

Theme	Recurring Issues	Zoning Ordinance Strategies
Additions, Accessory Structures, and Expansion of Historic Properties	Dimensional standards (setbacks and lot coverage) constrain compatible reinvestment in historic properties	- The draft Zoning Ordinance establishes a new zoning district for historic neighborhoods called the Neighborhood Residential District. - A new Residential Infill section relaxes lot dimension and setback requirements and exempts historic properties from density and lot coverage requirements. - Nonconformities section includes a provision that allows expansion of nonconforming building or structure up to 20% of the existing footprint area. - The Zoning Ordinance could allow Administrative Adjustment up to 20% for historic properties to assist with reinvestment of historic properties.
Parking, Driveways, and Site Access on Historic Properties	Modern parking requirements conflict with historic development patterns	- Residential Infill section reduces parking requirements in historic areas by one parking space. - However, the Zoning Ordinance could waive parking requirements for historic structures and adaptive reuse projects.
Demolition by Neglect	Property maintenance and enforcement challenges threaten historic resources	This was not identified as a priority earlier on in the process; however, the Zoning Ordinance could include provisions in the Enforcement section that addresses maintenance standards for historic structure, with timelines for corrective action.