

HOW RAP WORKS IN ZONING AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

*A summary for prospective and current developers, businesses,
residents and community members.*

NOTE: *Land Use, Zoning and Historic Preservation is a complex process involving many parties and regulations. This is a high-level view and meant for a general understanding. Each project has its own particulars and timelines, so please contact us with any specific question on a project and we will seek to help answer it.*

I. ZONING

Zoning issues in Riverside Avondale tend to involve commercial properties or large residential developments. However, there are occasions when an individual residence has some zoning issues that warrant review.

GENERAL TYPES OF PROJECTS ADDRESSED

- Legislations that affect the historic district
- Conventional rezonings (for example, CCG-1 to CN zoning district)
- Planned Unit Developments (PUD) rezonings along with PUD Minor Modifications, or PUD to PUD
- Exceptions, Administrative Deviations, Variances, Waivers (mostly commercial but sometimes residential projects have ADs and variances)
- Signage that departs from the Overlay Regulations
- Zoning applications that also need approval through the Historic Preservation Planning Staff and/or Jacksonville Historic Planning Commission (see part II)

WHAT WE DON'T REVIEW

Developments that meet zoning standards and do not require any of the above applications. For many individual or more minor issues, we often do not get involved but defer to the city's decision-making processes.

ZONING COMMITTEE

The RAP Zoning Committee is comprised of approximately 6-10 volunteers, including board members and community members, plus the Executive Director. Members bring expertise in a range of areas such as planning, real estate development, architecture, construction, transportation, landscape architecture, design, and law. The 2019-20 Chair is Thad Crowe, AICP. The Committee meets monthly and as needed to monitor and review projects, to meet with developers, businesses or residents, and to assess and discuss impacts to the community. Meetings are generally held on the first Monday of each month at 6 p.m. Guests are welcome with advance notice.

RAP'S ROLE IN ZONING

RAP's role is to facilitate and advocate for neighborhood development that will maintain and promote the historic and unique character of the neighborhood. RAP seeks to balance the interests of property owners, developers and businesses with quality of life factors, with a view towards the long-term impacts on the district. RAP is not the final decision maker; this responsibility rests with the City of Jacksonville.

THE ZONING OVERLAY

Zoning laws govern what you can and cannot do with your property, and every parcel has a zoning designation. Riverside Avondale has a Zoning Overlay that was passed in 2008 to recognize that historical patterns of development are different than the suburban needs which most zoning focuses on. The Zoning Overlay, together with underlying zoning standards, determine what is allowed.

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CITY OF JAX PROCESSES FOR LAND USE AND ZONING APPROVAL

The Comprehensive Plan and Municipal Code include land use and zoning laws that govern future development. The City of Jacksonville has a variety of application review processes for proposed changes or deviations, with the City making final decisions on these requests. There are often public hearings that allow participation. Depending on the type of application, the review and public hearing process may include:

- a) the Zoning Administrator (staff member within the Planning Department);
- b) the Planning Commission (volunteer board, appointed by the Mayor); or
- c) the City Council Land Use and Zoning (LUZ) Committee, along with a final vote by the full City Council.

The Zoning Administrator makes the final decisions on actions such as administrative deviations. The Planning Commission sometimes makes final decisions, for example with Exceptions, or a combination of Exceptions, Waivers and/or Administrative Deviations. With PUDs, legislations or comprehensive plan amendments, the Planning Commission provides recommendations to the City Council. The Planning Staff makes recommendations on all actions that go before these bodies. The COJ Planning and Development Department will determine the path needed for a particular application.

HOW RAP WORKS

1. **Strategic Framework:** The RAP Zoning Committee reviews zoning applications and development projects in light of RAP's Strategic Framework. This framework supports the Zoning Overlay and key focus elements such as architectural diversity and integrity, people-friendly streetscapes, compatibility, connectivity, and walkability.
2. **Early Review:** The Committee seeks to meet with developers early in the process to understand their objectives, plans and priorities for a property, as it relates to the current and proposed plans along with potential zoning changes needed. These initial meetings sometimes include Planning Department Staff presence or communications. Ideally the developer plans include early conceptual site plans that depict size, scope and use. RAP's committee members will begin to make an initial assessment or request more information so that they can determine the potential impact. Sometimes there are multiple meetings as plans become further defined and more specifics are developed.
3. **Neighborhood input.** RAP may reach out to impacted neighbors, and often will invite neighbors to discuss the project. It is not uncommon for neighbors and RAP to jointly meet with the developer to address concerns. On large projects, RAP usually will host a community meeting in conjunction with our Council representative. There may be multiple meetings based on the details and complexity of the negotiations or issues.
4. **RAP Position/Recommendation:** Using the expertise RAP's Zoning Committee's, and upon receiving all relevant information and neighborhood input, the Committee recommends a course of action that may include project support, support with conditions, opposition, or no position. Often there are negotiated conditions that, if agreed to, would allow RAP to support the project. The RAP board is engaged in large projects and determines the scope of the Committee's decision-making authority.
5. **Community Communication.** RAP seeks to keep the community apprised of zoning developments and most often will do so via its newsletter and through social media. This includes informing the public of opportunities for the community to make their voices heard via public hearings or through correspondence with the City Council or Planning Department.
6. **Advocating RAP's Position.** RAP's zoning representative, (the Executive Director, Zoning Chair or Board Chair or other designated person), will use available channels to advocate for a project. This may include email communication to City Officials, in person meetings, and speaking at public hearings.
7. **Monitoring.** RAP monitors the completion of a project and seeks to ensure that critical items are tracked.

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II. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The City of Jacksonville Historic Preservation ordinance protects residential and commercial structures in locally designated historic districts. The residents of Riverside Avondale voted to become a historic district in 1997 and were officially designated so by the city in 1998. Prior to the designation, historic structures in our neighborhood were regularly demolished and many others were clumsily converted into “modern” buildings. RAP was founded with the goal of preserving our neighborhood buildings from these threats and it is still a key part of our core mission.

With the adoption of the historic district, structures are now protected from demolition and all new construction and exterior improvements are reviewed by the city for compatibility with historic guidelines. The historic designation protects approximately 4,200 contributing structures in our neighborhood. There are “non-contributing” structures in the district which were either built after 1947 or had lost most of their historic integrity prior to the designation of the district. Modification to these buildings is also reviewed by the city but the standards differ from those of contributing properties. The city maintains a list of all contributing and non-contributing structures. The city historic planning staff and Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission administer and enforce the ordinance, but RAP does engage on certain significant projects.

CITY PROCESSES FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The city review process is administered through the “Certificate of Appropriateness” (COA) application process. These COA’s are required before any exterior changes are made to structures in our historic district. Many COAs are processed administratively through the city historic planning staff. These COA’s may take up to a few weeks to obtain and they do not require public notice or a public hearing. More complex projects involve a full review by the Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission (JHPC) which holds public hearings on the fourth Wednesday of the month. The city staff will let the applicant know which category applies to their project. At these hearings, the public has the opportunity to advocate for or against these projects.

RAP’S ROLE IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION

RAP has no decision-making authority as it relates to COA applications. RAP serves as an advocate for upholding the guidelines which are meant to protect and preserve the historic character of the neighborhood. Increasingly, RAP seeks to communicate and clarify the process, the value of preservation, and educate homeowners, business owners, and developers through workshops, website and social media.

RAP does monitor the agenda of the JHPC and briefly reviews most submissions. Typically, on small projects, we suggest that homeowners or their contractors contact the historic planning staff directly for review and guidance. We will sometimes speak at JHPC on smaller projects if they involve issues deemed important to the wider historic district. RAP does actively engage on major projects with owners/developers during the planning phase and with the city during the review process. We encourage developers and owners to connect with our team early in the process.

TYPES OF PROJECTS RAP ADDRESSES

- New or major renovations to buildings in Historic Commercial districts
- Demolition applications
- Projects that also have Zoning implications
- Projects or guideline interpretations that may affect the entire district
- Modifications to Important historic landmarks
- Projects with multiple buildings
- New residential construction with significant deviations from the historic standards

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RAP HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

RAP's committee is comprised of volunteers with experience in design, architecture, construction and historic preservation, along with the Executive Director. The 2019-20 Chair is architect Angela Schifanella, who served on the JHPC for nine years. RAP's Historic Preservation Committee meets with the Zoning Committee on most occasions.

KEY CONTACTS

Riverside Avondale Preservation (904) 389-2449, info@riversideavondale.org

Warren Jones, executive director, warren@riversideavondale.org

Nancy Powell, board chair boardchair@riversideavondale.org

Thad Crowe, zoning committee chair

Angela Schifanella, historic preservation chair

City of Jacksonville Planning and Development Department

<http://www.coj.net/departments/planning-and-development>

Zoning – Current Planning Division: Folks Huxford, chief

<http://www.coj.net/departments/planning-and-development/current-planning-division.aspx>

904-255-7829

Historic Preservation: Christian Popoli, planning supervisor

<http://www.coj.net/departments/planning-and-development/community-planning-division/default>

904-255-7800 or historicpreservation@coj.net

Zoning Administrator

skelly@coj.net

Planning Commission

<http://www.coj.net/departments/planning-and-development/planning-commission.aspx>

City Council District 14

<http://www.coj.net/city-council>

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