

Jacksonville Citizen's Guide: Land Use, Zoning, and City Council Advocacy

This document serves as a comprehensive resource for residents navigating the City of Jacksonville's legislative processes, specifically regarding Land Use and Zoning (LUZ) and neighborhood advocacy.

1. Essential Jacksonville LUZ Acronyms

Understanding the local "alphabet soup" is the first step in decoding city documents and meetings.

Acronym	Full Name	Significance
LUZ	Land Use and Zoning	The powerful City Council committee that handles property rights and rezoning.
JPC	Jacksonville Planning Commission	The citizen body that makes advisory recommendations to LUZ.
PDD	Planning and Development Dept.	The city department that reviews applications and writes staff reports.
FLUM	Future Land Use Map	The long-term vision for city development categories.
PUD	Planned Unit Development	A customized zoning category for unique or large-scale projects.
LDC	Land Development Code	The "rulebook" containing all city zoning laws.

Acronym	Full Name	Significance
COA	Certificate of Appropriateness	Required for changes in historic districts.

Zoning & Land Use Terms

- **FLUM:** Future Land Use Map (the long-term vision for what can be built where).
- **PUD:** Planned Unit Development (a specialized zoning category for unique projects that don't fit standard rules).
- **COA:** Certificate of Appropriateness (required for changes in historic districts).
- **DRI:** Development of Regional Impact (massive projects that affect more than one county).
- **R-O-W:** Right-of-Way (public land, usually roads or sidewalks).
- **NOI:** Notice of Intent.

Development Standards

- **LDC:** Land Development Code (the "rulebook" for building in Jacksonville).
- **FAR:** Floor Area Ratio (the relationship between the total usable floor area and the total area of the lot).
- **SR:** Special Exception (a use that is permitted only if it meets specific criteria).
- **VAR:** Variance (a request to deviate from the standard zoning code due to hardship).

Agencies & Environmental

- **JEA:** Formerly Jacksonville Electric Authority (now just JEA), they handle water, sewer, and electricity.
- **FDOT:** Florida Department of Transportation.
- **SJRWMD:** St. Johns River Water Management District (often pronounced "St. Johns").
- **CON:** Concurrency (the requirement that infrastructure like roads and schools keep pace with new development).

2. The Legislative Lifecycle: 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Readings

Bills move through three formal "readings" to ensure transparency.

- **1st Reading (Introduction):** The bill is born and assigned to a committee. No vote or

debate.

- **2nd Reading (Public Hearing):** This occurs at a full City Council meeting. This is the primary time for public testimony.
- **3rd Reading (Final Action):** After committee review, the full Council takes a binding vote to approve or deny.

3. Navigating the City Council Agenda

Agendas for Tuesday meetings are typically posted the preceding Friday on the Legistar portal.

- **Reports of Committees:** Where LUZ recommendations are presented for final votes.
- **Public Hearing - Land Use:** The section where you can speak on 2nd Reading bills.
- **Quasi-Judicial:** Items where the Council acts like a jury; testimony should be factual and evidence-based.

*If you are tracking a specific piece of legislation, keep an eye on the **202X-XXX** format. The first four digits are the year the bill was introduced, and the last three are the unique filing number.*

Understanding the "Action" Codes

Next to each bill number, you will see a shorthand code that tells you what is happening with that item today.

Code	Meaning	What it means for you
PH	Public Hearing	This is your time to speak. The Council President will invite the public to the podium.
Approve	Approval	The LUZ committee recommended passing the bill; the full Council is likely to vote "Yes."
Deny	Denial	The LUZ committee recommended against it; the bill is likely to fail.
Substitute	Substitute	The original bill was changed (amended) during the committee process.

Read 2nd/3rd	Reading	Bills must be "read" three times before a final vote. No final action is taken on a 1st or 2nd reading.
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The "Request" Description

Beneath the bill number, there is a short paragraph describing the request. For LUZ items, look for these key phrases:

- **"Small-Scale Land Use Amendment"**: Changing the category of a property (e.g., from Residential to Commercial).
- **"Rezoning from [X] to [Y]"**: Changing the specific rules for what can be built.
- **"PUD"**: This indicates a **Planned Unit Development**, meaning the developer has a custom-designed site plan that doesn't follow standard zoning blocks.

5. How to Tell if it's a "Quasi-Judicial" Item

Some LUZ items are marked as **Quasi-Judicial**. This is a legal distinction.

Note: For these items, the Council acts more like a jury than a legislature. If you wish to speak on a Quasi-Judicial item, you may be required to be sworn in under oath, and your comments must be based on "competent substantial evidence" (facts and maps) rather than just personal opinion.

Pro-Tip: The "Green Sheet"

Before the meeting starts, check the back of the room or the city website for the **"Addendum"** or **"Green Sheet."** This lists any items that have been withdrawn or deferred (pushed to a later date) at the last minute, so you don't wait three hours for a bill that isn't going to be heard.

The Typical LUZ Timeline

Stage	Location	Primary Purpose
1st Reading	Full Council	Formal Introduction

2nd Reading	Full Council	Public Hearing / Gathering Input
Committee Week	LUZ Committee	Detailed Review & Committee Vote
3rd Reading	Full Council	Final Vote & Enactment

The City follows a consistent schedule for these postings:

- **Full Council Agendas:** Posted on the **Friday** before the 2nd and 4th Tuesday meetings.
- **Committee Agendas (including LUZ):** Posted on the **Friday** before "Committee Week" (the 1st and 3rd weeks of the month).

Where to find the Agenda:

1. **Online (Legistar):** You can find the various agendas on the COJ website [HERE](#).
2. **Physical Copies:** You can pick up a printed copy at **City Hall (Suite 430)** in the Legislative Services Division, and on tables in City Hall lobby and Council Chambers prior to the meeting.

4. Understanding Zoning Classes

Zoning separates incompatible uses based on intensity and nuisance factors.

Industrial Differences

- **Industrial Light (IL):** "Clean" industry; activities must be enclosed. Low impact on neighbors.
- **Industrial Heavy (IH):** Outdoor storage, heavy machinery, and significant truck traffic. High nuisance potential.

Residential Density

- **RLD (Residential Low Density):** Single-family homes (3–7 units per acre).
- **RMD/RHD (Medium/High Density):** Townhomes and apartments; higher demand on infrastructure.

5. The Neighborhood Bill of Rights (NBOR)

The NBOR provides specific protections for organized neighborhood groups:

- **Notification:** The right to be mailed notice of land use changes within 350 feet.
- **Negotiation:** The right to meet with developers to discuss project impacts.
- **Infrastructure:** The right to ensure infrastructure (roads, schools) keeps pace with development.

6. Professional Advocacy Pro-Tips

- **Show up early if you can! Getting through security can take time, and so can waiting in line to fill out speaker cards. Don't forget to put your name on the sign in sheet just inside council chambers. That is public record and it is important that you are noted as being present on behalf of yourself (or your neighborhood). If you stop by the table where they have speaker cards, they will also validate your parking for the garage at 33 W Duval St.**
- **The Consent Agenda:** Items on this list pass without individual discussion. You must ask a Council member to "pull" a bill if you wish to speak on it.
- **Speaker Cards:** Fill these out before the meeting starts to secure your 3 minutes at the podium.
- **Staff Reports:** Always check Legistar for the Planning Department's staff report. It contains the data city professionals used to evaluate the bill.
- **Evidence:** If providing photos or maps, bring 20 copies for distribution to the Council and staff.

Master the "Public Comment" Etiquette

When it's your turn at the podium, the "Green-Yellow-Red" light system will be in effect.

- **The Tip:** You usually get **3 minutes**. Do not spend 2 minutes thanking the Council for their service—they hear that all night.
- **The Strategy:** State your name, your neighborhood, and whether you are "For" or "Against" the bill in the first 10 seconds. Then, give your top 3 reasons. If you have photos or a map, bring **20 copies** to give to the Page so they can distribute them to every Council member.