



# AVONDALE ESTATES ZONING ORDINANCE AND RELATED DOCUMENTS REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Avondale Estates, Georgia

**Client:**  
City of Avondale Estates

**Project Status:**  
Completed in August 2013

- Project Overview:**
- Review of Avondale Estate's existing development regulations for usability and compliance with Lifelong Communities principles
  - Recommendations of changes or additions to support Lifelong Communities principles and improve usability

Through the Lifelong Communities program, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) supports local communities to foster a high quality of life for all residents, regardless of age or ability, by promoting housing and transportation options, encouraging healthy lifestyles and expanding access to information and services. Through a grant from the ARC, TSW was retained by the City of Avondale Estates to review their existing Zoning Ordinance and other associated documents, and to provide recommendations and action items to further support the Lifelong Communities program.

To understand how well development regulations supported Lifelong Communities principles, TSW first interviewed stakeholders and conducted a detailed review of the regulations. Through the review, TSW noted the regulations' content, usability, and format, and summarized the findings in a summary document. A mark-up of the Zoning Ordinance, noting specific areas where language could be improved, was also included.

To better align their development regulations with the Lifelong Communities program and best practices, TSW also provided detailed recommendations for the City's consideration, including:

- Over a dozen small text amendments to improve code consistency and usability;
- A new approach to regulating housing in the downtown area through allowances for smaller units, more flexible building types, lower parking ratios, and elimination of a district-wide unit cap;
- Expanding housing options citywide, including live-work and cottage courts;
- Updates to zoning and subdivision regulations to incorporate streetscapes, smaller blocks, and meaningful open space with redevelopment;
- Removal of an unrealistic size restriction on pharmacies that prevented one from opening in the City; and
- Opportunities for the long-term consideration of form-based coding, including the advantages and disadvantages of such an approach.

TSW also provided examples of new types of housing the City should explore allowing.

### PART 3: USABILITY ANALYSIS

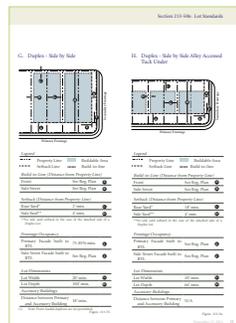
To assess the usability of the Zoning Ordinance TSW staff read the entire document from front to back, focusing on its clarity, consistency, and structure. In general, Avondale Estate's Zoning Ordinance is average in terms of its usability. Specific pros and cons are summarized in this part, with a page by page review of specific weaknesses identified in the Appendix.

#### Strengths

- Generally speaking the code, excluding the newer MD and CBD districts, is easy to understand and internally consistent.
- There is a relatively clear and concise list of definitions that can be understood without the use of graphics.
- The general language of the code is easy to understand and avoids excessive use of "legalese."
- The use of tables, especially Article 9: Table of Permitted uses, is user-friendly.
- The summary tables at the beginning of each district are helpful to get an overview of regulations.
- Given the size of the community and the responsiveness of the government, it is relatively easy and quick to seek variances and conditional use permits.

#### Weaknesses

- There is an inconsistent use of defined terms, especially in CBD and MD. For example, "townhouse" and "single family attached dwelling" are used, yet both identify the same type of housing.
- There are items referenced by use classification in Article 8, but not shown in Article 9.
- Most of the uses permitted by conditional use permit do not list standards for approval other than a reference to the general provisions of Sec. 1401.
- Some items in Article 7: General Provisions and Article 12: Development Standards have not been updated to reflect the CBD and MD districts.
- There are inconsistencies between MFR and PD uses that are referenced in Article 11 but not Article 9.
- The PD district lists uses in the district text, while other district references Article 9.



Many newer zoning ordinances make more use of graphics and charts than Avondale Estates' does

- Sidewalk and supplemental zone general requirements are repeated in PD, MD, and CBD regulations when it might be more efficient to list them together and not the districts they apply to.
- The summary tables at the beginning of MFR does not adequately reflect the text that follows it.
- There are no provisions for administrative variances in CBD or MD, which are often used in districts with greater design standards in other communities.
- The general graphic layout of the Zoning Ordinance is somewhat messy.
- There is limited use of graphics.

### Townhouse over Flat

Prepared by Tunnell-Spangler-Walsh & Associates, August 15, 2013



Key Metrics	
Typical Lot Width:	23 ft
Typical Unit Width:	23 ft
Typical Unit Size:	1,000 sf; 2,200 sf
Typical Bedrooms:	2 bedrooms; 3 bedrooms
Typical Building Height:	4 stories
Typical Front Setback:	5 ft
Typical Side Setback:	0 ft
Typical Density:	46 units/acre
Parking Treatment:	Private alley and garage*
Other:	



\*Attached, private garage. Alleys typically 12 ft wide for one-way travel and 24 ft for two-way.



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