

Questions to Ask Your Local Zoning Official

Below is a list of helpful questions to ask your local zoning officer when first discussing your project.

When you first embark on a new project, understanding your local zoning ordinances and codes is one of the first things you should do so that you know what you can and can't build on your lot. When you speak to the zoning official, you'll learn early on if there are specific requirements or restrictions for your property that may affect the design, the timeline, and/or the approval process.

When you speak with your local zoning official, make sure you do the following:

- Explain your proposed project and give details such as the general size, height, and nature of the project.
- Ask questions that require more than a simple “yes” or “no” response.
- Ask for the zoning officer's business card so that if or when you have questions you can you know how to contact him/her.

Below are questions to ask your local zoning official.

1. What is the zoning for my property?
2. What are the zoning requirements I should be aware of for my [new house, addition, renovation, lot-split] project? (I.e.setbacks, height limits, parking, lot coverage, floor area ratio)
3. Where can I find the zoning map and information on zoning ordinances?
4. Does my property have a planning overlay or is it in a special zoning district? If so, where can I find information about these requirements?
5. What lot coverage is allowed, and how is it calculated? (This determines what percentage of the lot you can cover with structures. Some count decks, porches, and driveways as well)
6. Are there any restrictions due to wetlands, flood plains, water frontage, steep slopes, endangered species, historical or cultural sites, or other issues?
7. Any other restrictions I should be aware of?
8. How do I obtain zoning/planning approval? What is the process like, when do I apply, and how long does it take for review and approval?