

# Palm Beach Daily News

---

## LOCAL

# 'Can't-miss public event of the season': zoning review workshops in Palm Beach

**Kristina Webb** Special to Daily News

Published 5:55 a.m. ET Jan. 10, 2023

Mark your calendars: It's time to talk about zoning.

Workshops to discuss updates to Palm Beach's nearly 50-year-old zoning code are scheduled for the week of Feb. 27 to March 2 in the Fieldhouse at the Recreation Center. A kickoff event will be held at 9:30 a.m. Jan. 17 in the council chambers at Town Hall to provide more information about the workshops.

"We're calling this 'Design Our Palm Beach Week' because it really is going to provide a valuable, once-in-a-generation opportunity to think through and get broad input on Palm Beach for the next generation," said Sean Suder with ZoneCo, the town's lead consultant on the zoning code review project.

Because of confusion about the town's zoning laws, developers, residents and property owners often have to request special exceptions, called variances, to allow many projects to proceed. Residents speaking at past Town Council meetings have said the confusion has allowed some developers to build huge homes that tower over smaller, older houses.

**Previous coverage:** 'Custom-tailored is the key,' says consultant as Palm Beach moves to revise zoning codes

**More:** Palm Beach officials target new state law that 'blows up' town's landmark program

"We're dealing with a zoning code that was largely adopted in the early 1970s, so it's really not serving the vision of Palm Beach because it was written so long ago," Suder said. "It's outdated, it's unclear, it's inconsistent and it's not user-friendly. The vision of what Palm Beach is in 2023 is being regulated by a code that reflects the vision from the early 1970s, so that is where the friction is occurring."

The consulting team – which includes ZoneCo, Joe Corradino of The Corradino Group and Joe Nickol of Yard & Co. – began its work in May of last year, Suder said. The team spent the first four months touring the island and having one-on-one meetings with residents, elected and appointed officials, and town staff. The consultants also met with 35 people in the fields of architecture, design and historic preservation.

“That was a great way to get information from people who use the zoning code on a daily basis,” Suder said.

Those who attend the kickoff meeting and the workshops won’t need to bring anything except “their opinions and their knowledge of Palm Beach,” he said.

With the extremely high value of land real estate in Palm Beach – “some of the most expensive and valuable real estate on Earth,” Suder said, there is more development pressure than ever to tear down and rebuild older homes, especially on the North End.

“That is replacing traditional Palm Beach houses from the ‘50s, ‘60s and ‘70s, with very large, in some instances speculative houses that don’t really reflect the character of the town,” Suder said.

That has led to some friction between long-time residents and developers and newcomers.

“The idea here is to modernize the code to reflect the current vision, and the vision of the next generation in Palm Beach,” Suder said.

The consulting team hopes to receive more input on the current zoning districts, and if they still make sense for Palm Beach. “Do we need to create additional zoning districts, or separate the current zoning districts?” Suder said.

He pointed to the town’s R-B zoning district, which stretches from the North End south toward Midtown. While much of it is residential, it includes a mix of traditional quarter-acre lots, cottages on smaller parcels and massive waterfront properties.

“We’re asking, this is a one-size-fits-all zoning district. Does that make sense?” Suder said of his consulting team.

Every community has its unique challenges, he said, and the goal is to custom-tailor zoning codes.

“The particular challenges in Palm Beach have to do with the fact that it’s a very narrow island, along with sea level rise and environmental issues,” he said.

That's why public engagement is so important to the process, Suder said. He hopes everyone understands the importance of participating.

"I hope it makes this the can't-miss public event of the season," Suder said.

For more information, go to [www.pbzoning.org](http://www.pbzoning.org).