



An Overview of the  
Planning, Zoning &  
Development Review  
Process Within

**COMMERCIAL  
REVITALIZATION  
DISTRICTS AND AREAS**

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DEPARTMENT OF  
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## **WHAT IS A COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION DISTRICT?**

On October 12, 1998, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors amended the Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance to create five (5) Commercial Revitalization Districts within Fairfax County; two (2) Commercial Revitalization Areas were also designated. The purpose of these designations is to encourage economic development activities in the older commercial areas of the County by providing for specific regulations and administrative procedures to promote the continued viability and redevelopment of these districts/areas by providing more flexibility within certain zoning regulations and by having urban design measures such as streetscape and landscaping. The facilitated administrative procedures apply to all properties within the five (5) Commercial Revitalization Districts and the two (2) Commercial Revitalization Areas.

The Zoning Ordinance contains separate provisions for each of the five (5) Commercial Revitalization Districts, which are designed to overlay the other zoning districts. This means that a parcel of land is subject to the zoning regulations of the zoning district in which it is located, as modified by the regulations of the Commercial Revitalization District.

The five (5) Commercial Revitalization Districts and two (2) Commercial Revitalization Areas within Fairfax County are as follows:

**Commercial  
Revitalization Districts**

**Zoning  
Ordinance Section**

Annandale	Sect. A7-100
Baileys Crossroads/Seven Corners	Sect. A7-200
McLean	Sect. A7-300
Richmond Highway	Sect. A7-400
Springfield	Sect. A7-500

**Commercial  
Revitalization Areas**

Lake Anne  
Merrifield

Maps outlining the parcels of land contained within each Commercial Revitalization District or Area are available for inspection in the Department of Planning and Zoning as well as other County agencies involved in the review of development proposals, including the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services and the Department of Housing and Community Development. While the Board has not yet adopted Commercial Revitalization Districts for the Lake Anne and Merrifield Commercial Revitalization Areas, staff will provide the facilitated administrative procedures in these areas according to boundaries outlined by staff.

Additional background information on the Commercial Revitalization Districts and Areas (staff reports, information handouts, etc.) is also available from the Department of Planning and Zoning.



## ZONING ORDINANCE PROVISIONS

In an effort to enhance opportunities for development and redevelopment in older commercial areas, changes to the Zoning Ordinance and development processes were adopted by the Board of Supervisors. The adopted Zoning Ordinance revisions recognize that redevelopment and rehabilitation efforts in these areas are especially challenged by parcels that may be encumbered with underutilized or dilapidated structures; lot configurations which may require special consideration to become suitable for development; and, the need for appropriate transitions to adjacent residential areas. It is believed that these revisions to the Zoning Ordinance, as well as the other changes to the development review process described below, will facilitate reinvestment activity for the revitalization areas, thereby improving the appearance and economic vitality of these areas. As experience is gained from implementation of these regulations, other modifications to the Zoning Ordinance and development review processes may become apparent and will be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors for consideration.

The provisions of the Commercial Revitalization Districts are intended to accommodate renovations and changes to existing developments, as well as to foster redevelopment and new development. The provisions are designed to alleviate constraints posed by a lot pattern in the commercial revitalization areas that is generally of small irregularly shaped parcels. The adopted regulations also allow flexibility for administrative approvals of reduced front yards, parking requirements, transitional and parking lot landscaping requirements, and greater building heights in certain districts consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Commercial Revitalization

District so as to facilitate much needed renovation or redevelopment. The adopted Zoning Ordinance amendments primarily focus on changes in regulations which would be effective in the retail commercial districts of the Zoning Ordinance (C-5 through C-8), which are the predominant zoning districts of the five revitalization districts. Since the predominant zoning in Merrifield is industrial and residential, and the zoning in Lake Anne is Planned Residential Community (PRC), a different approach is required for these areas. Special planning studies are on-going in these two areas. As these two areas progress in their Special Studies, appropriately tailored Zoning Ordinance modifications will be considered.

**A summary of the recently adopted changes are as follows:**

- Allows a height increase by right from 40 to 50 feet in C-6 and C-8 Districts.
- Reduces the minimum required front yard in all commercial districts to 20 feet or if a yard dimension is specified in the Comprehensive Plan which is the same or less than the underlying zoning district requirement, the Comprehensive Plan dimension applies.
- Provides that open space requirements do not apply to expansions/enlargements of existing uses provided the expansion/enlargement does not decrease the amount of existing open space on the lot.
- Allows 20% by right reduction in the parking requirement for all nonresidential uses in the Richmond Highway Commercial Revitalization District.
- Allows Director of Department of Public Works and Environmental Services approval of off-site parking for nonresidential uses 500' walking distance of building entrance or with the use of valet/shuttle service.

- Provides that the requirement for ground level parking spaces to be 10 feet from front lot line is not applicable.
- Allows nonconforming signs to be removed and replaced with smaller signs.
- Allows specified reductions and modifications in parking lot landscaping, screening and tree cover requirements for expansions/enlargements of existing uses.
- Allows specified modifications for certain required improvements on minor site plans.
- Allows an abbreviated Best Management Practice exception process with no application fee for certain minor site plans.
- Establishes a new Category 6 special exception use to allow consideration of all requested modifications/waivers or uses, to include requests related to site development waivers such as open space, FARs and building heights as well as uses allowed by special exception. New flexibilities allowed under this special exception use include allowing a greater percentage of office use in the C-8 District and modifications/waivers of all minimum yard requirements.

For additional information on the Commercial Revitalization District regulations, contact the Zoning Administration Division at **(703) 324-1314**.



**CONCURRENT PROCESSING OF  
A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
AMENDMENT AND A ZONING  
APPLICATION**

Concern has been expressed that significant opportunities for reinvestment in older commercial areas may at times be negatively impacted due to the time it takes to have amendments to the Comprehensive Plan considered. This delay may discourage proposals that further implementation of revitalization objectives. As a result, a process for the concurrent review and consideration of a Comprehensive Plan amendment with a zoning application has been established for all of the County's Commercial Revitalization Districts and Areas.

By using concurrent processing, the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors can consider an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan in the same time frame as they are considering the merits of a rezoning or special exception applications. In this instance, the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors' public hearings for the rezoning or special exception application will be scheduled to occur soon after the Board of Supervisors' public hearing on the Comprehensive Plan amendment.

The concurrent processing of a Comprehensive Plan amendment with a zoning application is reserved for specific development proposals requiring a zoning application which address at least one of the following revitalization objectives:

- Elimination of a blighted property identified on the County's Blight Abatement Inventory;
- New development that will increase employment by at least 25 full-time employees;
- Consolidation of two or more parcels totaling at least two (2) acres for a new development or redevelopment project; or
- A proposal that may not meet the objectives listed above, but which significantly advances the

Revitalization Goal, Objectives, or Policies, as set forth in the Policy Plan element of the Comprehensive Plan.

Concurrent processing will be undertaken based on a motion that is approved by the Board of Supervisors. It is intended that concurrent processing will be reserved for specific development proposals that have been filed (rezoning or special exception application, for example), have been identified to have Comprehensive Plan conflicts, and are committed to occur in the near term.

For additional information on the Comprehensive Plan amendment process, contact the Planning Division in the Department of Planning and Zoning at **(703) 324-1210**.



## **PRIOR TO FILING A ZONING APPLICATION**

The Zoning Evaluation Division is responsible for processing zoning applications. Within the Zoning Evaluation Division, a "lead planner" has been assigned to each Commercial Revitalization District and Area. The lead planner works with a team of specialists from other review agencies to process the zoning application. The lead planner is also available to conduct pre-application meetings with prospective applicants, to answer questions, and to provide additional information, as required. To contact the lead planner for a Commercial Revitalization District or Area, call the Zoning Evaluation Division at **(703) 324-1290**.

Application Acceptance staff in the Zoning Evaluation Division are also available to answer questions and provide assistance to prospective applicants interested in filing a zoning application. They may also be contacted at **(703)**

**324-1290.** Zoning application information packets are available for pick-up at the Zoning Evaluation Division or can be mailed to prospective applicants upon request.

Prior to filing a rezoning or special exception application, it is recommended that prospective applicants contact the Planning Commissioner and Supervisor of the Magisterial District in which the proposed application is located to gain feedback on the proposal and to learn more about the citizen review process in that district. Please refer to the back panel of this brochure for the names and phone numbers of the Planning Commissioners and Supervisors.



## **FILING AND ACCEPTANCE OF ZONING APPLICATIONS**

Helpful time saving hints for filing a zoning application:

- Arrange for a pre-application meeting with the lead planner as early as possible so that applications can be tailored to meet submission requirements and to address anticipated development related issues.
- Note on the application that it is located in a particular Commercial Revitalization District or Area.
- Ensure that the application submission is complete and accurate.
- Ensure that all parts of the application submission are filed at the same time.

The filing and acceptance of an application that is located within a Commercial Revitalization District or Area is given priority processing in the following manner:

- Priority review and acceptance; extra assistance in rectifying any submission related deficiencies.
- Once an application is accepted, the file is flagged to identify it as a Commercial Revitalization District /Area application for priority processing.
- Priority distribution of application information to other review agencies for comments.
- Additional distribution of application information to the Chairman of the applicable Commercial Revitalization District Committee (see External Coordination) and to the Site Review Branch of the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (see Facilitated Review of Zoning Applications) for rezoning and special exception applications.



## **EXPEDITED SCHEDULING OF ZONING APPLICATIONS**

All rezoning and special exception applications must go through a two (2) step public hearing process. The first public hearing is held by the Planning Commission, which makes an advisory recommendation to the Board of Supervisors. The second public hearing is held by the Board, which makes the actual decision on the application. Special permit and variance applications are heard and acted on by the Board of Zoning Appeals.

The Zoning Evaluation Division is responsible for the scheduling of all zoning application public hearings before the Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors, and Board

of Zoning Appeals. All accepted applications located within a Commercial Revitalization District/Area are given priority scheduling, as follows:

- All such applications are automatically expedited. No motion by the Board of Supervisors or Board of Zoning Appeals is required to obtain this expedited status. Every effort will be made to schedule applications in the shortest time frame possible.
- The scheduling of the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors' public hearing dates for all rezoning and special exception applications will be such that the Board of Supervisors' public hearing date will be scheduled immediately following the Planning Commission public hearing date, thus saving time. This will require only one concurrent written legal notification to be completed by the applicant (instead of two separate ones).



## EXTERNAL COORDINATION

Applicants should also be aware of the following coordination that occurs outside of the County staff review for rezoning and special exception applications. As previously mentioned, applicants should coordinate closely with the applicable Supervisor's office early in the process to determine appropriate coordination efforts.

- Applicants should coordinate with the Commercial Revitalization District Review Committee that has been established for each district/area. The Committee is comprised of local business owners, citizens, and other

interested persons who review all proposed rezoning and special exception applications and make recommendations.

- Applicants may be requested to make presentations to one or more civic associations located near a proposed rezoning or special exception application.



## **FACILITATED REVIEW OF ZONING APPLICATIONS**

A facilitated process has been established for the review of zoning applications that are located within a Commercial Revitalization District or Area. This process utilizes a "team" approach for the review of such applications. Experts in various areas of professional responsibility (land use, environment, transportation, etc.) will work together under the lead planner from the Zoning Evaluation Division. A site reviewer from the Environmental and Facilities Review Division of the Office of Site Development Services in the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services will be a member of the team so as to identify engineering issues that may impact site plan review and approval. This approach should result in a faster, more comprehensive review, with issues being identified earlier in the process.

The review team will work closely with the applicant throughout the process. Meetings between the applicant and the staff team will be held to go over the results of the staff's review and analysis and to negotiate resolution of identified issues. The staff will be able to respond to technical questions and provide detailed information to the applicant since all members of the team will be present at meetings, as required. This will facilitate the review process and eliminate the need for additional meetings that might otherwise be required to resolve issues.

In addition to the team approach described above, several concurrent processing opportunities are available to facilitate the review of development proposals. These include:

- Concurrent processing of a Comprehensive Plan Amendment with a rezoning or special exception application, if such is necessary (see Concurrent Processing of a Comprehensive Plan Amendment and a Zoning Application).
- Concurrent processing of a site plan with a rezoning or special exception application.
- Addressing waivers and modifications typically related to site plans at the time of zoning approval to save time and money.

After a zoning application has been approved, the lead planner will continue to coordinate closely with the Environmental and Facilities Review Division of the Office of Site Development Services in the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services. The lead planner will inform the Environmental and Facilities Review Division of the outcome of the approval, including any issues that may have surfaced during the public hearing process. In addition, the lead planner will be available, in order to facilitate the implementation of the project through the engineering and building plan approval processes.



## **SITE REVIEW PROCESS**

After approval of a zoning application, the next step in the development review process is the submission of a site plan

to the Office of Site Development Services within the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPW&ES). Development that does not require a zoning action can proceed to this step immediately. A facilitated process has been developed to assist applicants in the site review process. This facilitated process is known as the Project Management Program.

One key aspect of the Project Management Program is the designation of a Project Manager for each project that is submitted for review. The main duties of the Project Manager are as follows:

- Serves as the plan advocate through all phases of processing from zoning application to bond release.
- Serve as DPW&ES's primary point of contact and liaison to the applicant on all questions related to the plan.
- Serves as the DPW&ES's customer service representative addressing all the questions and concerns of the public and developers with regard to plans submitted for review under Project Management Program.

Another key aspect of the Project Management Program is the involvement of the Project Manager in the review and processing of zoning applications by the Department of Planning and Zoning. Early involvement by the Project Manager in the zoning application review process is designed to yield the following benefits:

- Potential engineering and code related problems can be identified and addressed at the earliest stage.
- Proffers and development conditions can be formulated to reflect engineering and code constraints.
- The Project Manager is provided with the opportunity to

identify potential Project Management plans at the same time as gaining the background knowledge that will be required during the DPW&ES's review of the associated construction plans.

Another key responsibility of the Project Manager is overseeing the facilitated review process for site plans by DPW&ES. A team approach is being utilized with the Project Manager serving as the team leader. The Project Manager will coordinate all aspects of the review of the plans and will ensure that the plans are reviewed as efficiently and completely as possible. The Project Manager will coordinate closely with other reviewing agencies to ensure that the review schedule is met and will hold team meetings to gather input and resolve issues.

The Project Manager will also coordinate closely with the submitting engineer to obtain additional information when required, answer questions, and transmit the results of the first submission review. When the second submission occurs, the Project Manager will coordinate the review with an emphasis on resolving all remaining issues required for approval. On receiving all necessary approvals from other branches/agencies, the Project Manager, at the discretion of the Site Review Branch Chief, will recommend approval of the plan which will then be forwarded to the Bonds and Agreements Branch.

While the plan is in the Bonds and Agreements Branch, the Project Manager will assist where possible in obtaining resolution of all the conditions necessary for the final approval of the plan. In this area, the Project Manager will coordinate the review and approval of any waivers, record plats, notices and other associated actions which may be required. However, it should be understood that at this point the timing of final approval of a plan is primarily the responsibility of the developer and his engineer, as this approval can only be obtained after the bond is established, and fees and escrows are paid.

After final approval is granted, the Project Manager will coordinate the review and approval of all revisions, preliminary updates, waivers, grading plans, and plats that might be required during the construction phase.

For additional information on the site review process, call the Environmental and Facilities Review Division at **(703) 324-1720**.



## **BUILDING PLAN REVIEW, PERMIT AND INSPECTION PROCESS**

After an applicant has completed the rezoning and special exception application process and has submitted a site plan to the Office of Site Development Services, building plans may be filed for permit and submitted for review to the Building Plan Review Division. The Building Plan Review Division is responsible for reviewing all building plans for residential and commercial construction in Fairfax County. The plans are reviewed for conformance with the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code and include input on structural, mechanical, plumbing, electrical, and fire protection issues. The following programs are available to help expedite a revitalization project:

### **Commercial Walk-thru Program**

Individuals making alterations to existing buildings in a commercial revitalization district may utilize the expanded walk-thru program. The walk-thru program allows projects to be reviewed by County staff while the customer waits. The program is available on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of every week from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Plans that require Health Department review such as child care centers or

restaurants must have that review completed prior to beginning the walk-thru. The existing commercial walk-thru program limits a project size to 4500 square feet. The expanded square footage for projects in commercial revitalization districts are:

- Up to 10,000 square feet for assembly, educational, or institutional uses
- Up to 15,000 square feet for business, mercantile or storage uses

### **Team Inspections**

Individuals who have an existing building and are proposing to change the use of the space may apply for a team inspection. For a fee of \$280, a team of reviewers will inspect an existing facility and provide a written report listing major code and permit requirements prior to submittal of building plans.

### **Annual Permit Program**

Allows building owners or tenants to apply for an annual permit to perform minor renovations to existing multi-tenant commercial buildings. This program authorizes a limited scope of construction work at a specific location prior to applying for the associated permits. The annual permit program facilitates the issuance of permits by eliminating waiting time associated with obtaining individual permits.

### **Modified Plan Processing for New Construction and Additions**

This initiative allows new commercial construction projects and additions to existing commercial buildings to benefit from modified plan processing status when the associated plans are peer reviewed. The process allows projects to start construction faster and facilitates completion in a timely manner. Modified processing is a program currently adopted by

the Board to facilitate the review of large, complex buildings. This program allows for issuance of partial building permits and extensions of partial permits prior to full approval of site and building plans. The Expedited Building Plan Review Program (Peer Review) allows private sector Peer Reviewers, to conduct a preliminary review of building plans prior to submission to the County. Staff process the plans submitted under peer review on a priority basis saving up to 50% of the normal review time. The advantage of the modified plan processing status is the ability to begin construction quickly and continue in phases without awaiting full design approvals.

Helpful time saving hints for individuals constructing projects in revitalization districts:

- Take advantage of the revitalization resource center in the Permit Application Center. Inform staff that your project is located in a revitalization district.
- Request a preliminary meeting prior to submitting plans for a permit. A multi-disciplined team of reviewers will pre-review plans for code issues so that corrections can be made prior to plan submission. This service is provided at no charge.
- Request a pre-construction meeting. A multi-disciplined team of inspectors will discuss the construction of your project and provide advice on the scheduling of inspections and other issues.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Audrey C. Clark, Director of the Building Plan Review Division at **(703) 324-1645**.

**FAIRFAX COUNTY  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

The following is a list of the members of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and their office phone numbers.

<b>Supervisor</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Phone</b>
Gerald E. Connolly, Chairman	At-Large	(703) 324-2321
Sharon Bulova, Vice Chairman	Braddock	(703) 425-9300
Joan DuBois	Dranesville	(703) 356-0551
Michael R. Frey	Sully	(703) 814-7100
Penelope A. Gross	Mason	(703) 256-7717
Catherine M. Hudgins	Hunter Mill	(703) 478-0283
Gerald W. Hyland	Mt. Vernon	(703) 780-7518
Dana Kauffman	Lee	(703) 971-6262
Elaine McConnell	Springfield	(703) 451-8873
Linda Q. Smyth	Providence	(703) 560-6946

**FAIRFAX COUNTY  
PLANNING COMMISSION**

The following is a list of the members of the Fairfax County Planning Commission. All Planning Commissioners may be reached by phone by calling the Planning Commission Office at (703) 324-2865.

<b>Planning Commissioner</b>	<b>District</b>
Peter F. Murphy, Jr., Chairman	Springfield
John R. Byers, Vice Chairman	Mount Vernon
Suzanne F. Harsel, Secretary	Braddock
Walter L. Alcorn	At-Large
Frank A. de la Fe	Hunter Mill
Janet R. Hall	Mason
James R. Hart	At-Large
Nancy Hopkins	Dranesville
Ronald W. Koch	Sully
Kenneth A. Lawrence	Providence
Rodney L. Lusk	Lee
Laurie Frost Wilson	At-Large

For additional information, contact:

**Department of Planning and Zoning  
12055 Government Center Parkway  
Fairfax, Virginia 22035-5505**

Zoning Evaluation Division, Suite 801  
Telephone: **(703) 324-1290**

Planning Division, 7th Floor  
Telephone: **(703) 324-1210**

Zoning Administration Division, Suite 807  
Telephone: **(703) 324-1314**

**Department of Public Works and  
Environmental Services  
12055 Government Center Parkway  
Fairfax, Virginia 22035**

Environmental & Facilities Review Division,  
Suite 529  
Telephone: **(703) 324-1720**

Building Plan Review Division, Suite 316  
Telephone: **(703) 324-1645 or 1640**



Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):  
Reasonable accommodation is available upon 7  
days advance notice. For additional information  
on ADA call (703) 324-1334.

