



# **An Overview of the Development Review Process Within Commercial Revitalization Districts and Areas**

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Community Revitalization Section**



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## WHAT IS A COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION DISTRICT/AREA?

On October 12, 1998, the [Fairfax County Board of Supervisors](#) amended the Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance to create five Commercial Revitalization Districts (CRDs) within Fairfax County; in addition, two areas of the county were designated as Commercial Revitalization Areas (CRAs) within the Comprehensive Plan, but not designated as overlay districts in the Zoning Ordinance. In 2018, the Comprehensive Plan was amended establishing a Lincolnia Commercial Business District within the Lincolnia Planning District and was also designated as a Commercial Revitalization Area (CRA). The purpose of these designations is to encourage the improved economic viability, appearance, and function of the designated areas through quality new development, rehabilitation and/or redevelopment.

The CRDs are Zoning Ordinance overlay districts that provide for greater flexibility in applying certain zoning regulations, allow for the use of facilitated administrative procedures to expedite the development review process, and establish distinct urban design measures for streetscape and landscaping, see [Article 3, Section 3102](#) of the Fairfax County [Zoning Ordinance](#).

The CRAs do not have separate zoning overlay districts but are eligible for the Facilitated Development Process for Commercial Revitalization Areas as endorsed by the Board of Supervisors on October 12, 1998. Also, CRAs can take advantage of certain of the CRD Zoning Ordinance provisions relating to identification signs and parking reductions.

On March 23, 2021, the Board of Supervisors adopted a new and modernized Zoning Ordinance as a part of the [Zoning Ordinance Modernization \(zMOD\)](#) project. This new Ordinance, which replaced the previous 1978 Ordinance, became effective on July 1, 2021. A new Article 3 was created that consolidated and, in some instances, modified the CRD regulations. Since that time, amendments to other Articles of the Zoning Ordinance have been adopted, and those that have implications for the CRDs and CRAs are also cited in this guide.

The five Commercial Revitalization Districts and three Commercial Revitalization Areas within Fairfax County are as follows:

### Commercial Revitalization Districts

Annandale  
Baileys Crossroads/Seven Corners  
McLean  
Richmond Highway  
Springfield

### Commercial Revitalization Areas

Lake Anne  
Lincolnia  
Merrifield

For more information on CRAs and CRDs, please contact CRS. See Appendix I, of this publication for development services contact information.

Maps designating the land area contained within each CRD and CRA are available from the Department of Planning and Development (DPD), Community Revitalization Section (CRS), as well as from other county agencies involved in the review of development proposals, including Land Development Services (LDS). Visit the [CRS website](#) to download these maps.



## **BACKGROUND – REGULATORY PROVISIONS**

In an effort to enhance opportunities for redevelopment and new investment and to accommodate renovations and changes to existing developments in older commercial areas, changes to the Zoning Ordinance and development processes were adopted by the Board of Supervisors in October 1998.

Redevelopment and rehabilitation efforts in these areas are especially challenged by parcels that may be encumbered with underutilized or dilapidated structures; lot configurations and size, which may require special consideration to alleviate constraints and/or require consolidation to become suitable for development; and the need for appropriate transitions to adjacent residential areas.

The adopted regulations allow flexibility for administrative approvals of reduced front yard setbacks and increased building heights in certain revitalization districts; allow for administrative reductions of parking requirements for certain uses; allow modifications to transitional screening and parking lot landscaping requirements; and permit Special Exception approval for increases in FAR, building height, and office use in certain districts if such are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan (see [Article 3, Section 3102.3.B](#) for the specific Zoning Districts).

## SUMMARY OF COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION DISTRICT REGULATIONS

- Reduces the minimum required front yard setback in all commercial districts to 20 feet or to the dimension specified in the Comprehensive Plan and any recommended streetscape or other plantings or amenities are provided in accordance with the Plan
- Allows an increase in building height to a maximum of 50 feet by-right in the C-6 and C-8 Districts; however, a greater height is permitted if the Comprehensive Plan specifies a height greater than the underlying zoning district
- Provides that minimum open space requirements do not apply to expansions or enlargements of existing uses (limited to an increase less than 100% of the total GFA), provided there is no decrease in the amount of existing open space
- Reduces the parking requirement for all non-residential uses by 20 percent in all CRDs, CRAs, as well as in Community Business Centers (CBCs) and Richmond Highway (RH) Corridor Suburban Neighborhood Areas (SNAs)
- Reduces parking requirement for Dwelling, Single-Family Attached to 1.8 spaces per unit from 2.7 spaces per unit in all CRDs, CRAs, and CBCs and RH Corridor SNAs
- Reduces parking requirement for Dwelling, Stacked Townhouse to 1.8 spaces per unit from 2.3 spaces per unit in all CRDs, CRAs, and CBCs and RH Corridor SNAs
- Reduces parking requirement for Dwelling, Multifamily by 15 percent per unit in all CRDs, CRAs, and CBCs and RH Corridor SNAs
- Allows for an additional ten percent reduction in the minimum off-street parking requirement if the use is located within 1,000 feet walking distance of a transit stop in all CRDs, CRAs, CBCs and RH Corridor SNAs
- Allows ground-level parking to be located closer than 10 feet to the front lot line
- Allows for the removal and replacement of nonconforming signs with signs that are reduced in height or size
- Allows signs, erected by a public agency or appropriate organization in partnership with the Board, to be located within or in proximity of a CRD or activity center as shown on the adopted Comprehensive Plan with Board approval (for more details see [Section 7100.3.B \(6\)](#))
- Allows specific reductions or modifications to interior and peripheral parking lot landscaping, screening and barrier requirements for expansions or enlargements of existing uses (for more details see [Section 3102.3.E \(4\)](#))

- Allows modifications to required site plan improvements for dedication and construction of service drives and other roads dedications, and certain structural or building expansions

For additional information on the CRD regulations, contact the Department of Planning and Development (DPD), Zoning Ordinance Administration Branch (ZAD). For information related to site plans, contact Land Development Services (LDS), Site Development and Inspections Division (SDID).

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

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 CRDs and CRAs. With concurrent processing, the Fairfax County [Planning Commission](#) and the [Board of Supervisors](#) can consider a zoning application in the same time frame as they are considering the merits of an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors' public hearings for the zoning application will be scheduled to occur soon after the Board of Supervisors' public hearing on the Comprehensive Plan amendment. Concurrent processing is initiated upon a motion by the Board of Supervisors and is reserved for specific development proposals where a zoning application has been filed that has Comprehensive Plan conflicts, that is committed to occur in the near term, and that addresses at least one of the following revitalization objectives:

- Eliminate a blighted property identified on the county's blight abatement inventory
- Increase employment by at least 25 full-time employees
- Consolidate two or more parcels totaling at least two acres
- Advance revitalization goals, objectives, or policies, as set forth in the Policy Plan element of the Comprehensive Plan

# CONSIDERATIONS PRIOR TO FILING A ZONING APPLICATION

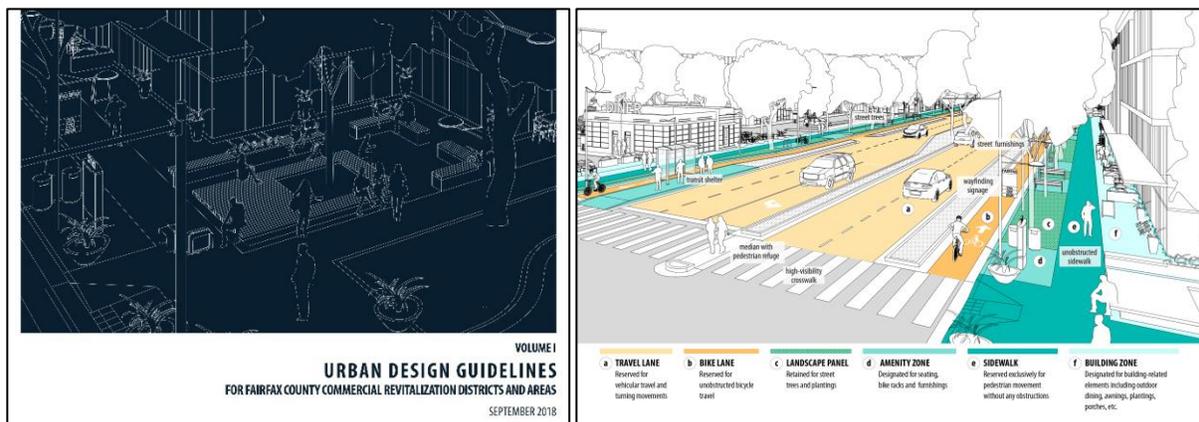


## Pre-Application Consultation

A Pre-Application Consultation is a service that the Zoning Evaluation Division (ZED) of DPD offers to those who need to file a zoning application, who have reviewed the Comprehensive Plan recommendations for compliance and who have a conceptual layout of the proposal. A pre-application consultation may be requested through the Fairfax County PLUS System ([PLUS - Accela Citizen Access](#)). Once the request is received, Staff meets internally to review the request. Then, Staff contacts the requester to provide advice and discuss issues that may be necessary to address before filing a zoning application. Follow up correspondence and/or meetings may be offered at that time. Find more information on the [Pre-Application webpage](#).

## Urban Design Guidelines

Each CRD and CRA has [Urban Design Guidelines](#) (Guidelines) to guide the design aspects of a development application. The Public Facilities Manual (PFM) ([Sec. 2-1100](#)) allows the Guidelines to be used as an alternative to the PFM. The Guidelines include recommendations for streetscapes, public spaces, building design, and placemaking elements and should be consulted prior to preparing a development proposal.



## **Economic Incentive Program**

An applicant proposing to develop in a CRD or CRA should determine if they may qualify for Fairfax County's Economic Incentive Program (EIP) prior to filing a zoning application. The EIP offers regulatory and financial incentives, including a ten percent reduction in site plan fees and a partial real estate tax exemption, to encourage the private sector to purchase, assemble, revitalize, and redevelop real property suitable for economic development consistent with the vision contained in the Comprehensive Plan. All CRDs and CRAs are eligible areas, except for the Merrifield and Lake Anne CRAs. Additional eligibility criteria, such as property assemblage and minimum acreage, must also be met. Qualifying properties are automatically eligible for Land Development Services' Project Management Program, which helps guide applicants through the land development process. However, applicants must still fill out the Project Management Program application to be enrolled. Find more information on the [EIP webpage](#).

## **Outreach to District Representatives**

It is further recommended that, prior to filing a zoning application, prospective applicants also 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. The Supervisor may request that applicants make a presentation to a designated citizen committee and/or one or more civic associations located near a proposed zoning application. Also, each CRD or CRA has its own commercial revitalization district or area committee comprised of local business owners, citizens, and other interested persons who may review and offer recommendations on proposed zoning applications. Thus, prospective applicants should also coordinate with the corresponding district or area revitalization committee. For names and phone numbers of the Planning Commissioner, Supervisor, and revitalization committee contacts, please visit the [CRS website](#).

When filing an application for a property located within a CRD or CRA, be sure to identify it as a CRD or CRA on the application. Zoning application information is available on the [DPD website](#)

## **PRIORITY PROCESSING AND FACILITATED REVIEW OF ZONING APPLICATIONS**

The filing and acceptance of a zoning application that is located within a CRD or CRA is given priority processing as follows:

- Priority processing and review for application acceptance by ZED, as well as extra assistance in rectifying any submission related deficiencies

Additional distribution of zoning application information to the Chairman of the applicable commercial revitalization district or area committee. A facilitated process utilizing a "team" approach has been established for the review of all zoning applications, including those located within a CRD or CRA. The staff coordinator from ZED heads a staff team, which is comprised of experts in various areas of professional responsibility (land use, environment, transportation, and revitalization). The team will work closely with the applicant throughout the process. Meetings between the applicant and the team will be held to discuss the results of the inter-departmental reviews and analyses and to negotiate resolution of identified issues. The team will be able to respond to technical questions and to provide detailed information to the applicant. This approach should result in a faster, more comprehensive review, with issues being identified earlier in the process.

## **EXPEDITED SCHEDULING OF ZONING APPLICATIONS**

All zoning applications located within a CRD or CRA are given priority scheduling and are automatically expedited so that the Board of Supervisors' public hearing date is scheduled concurrently with the scheduling of the Planning Commission public hearing date. No motion by the Board of Supervisors is required to obtain this expedited status. This concurrent scheduling of the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors' public hearing dates not only saves time, but also means that a single, concurrent written legal notification may be prepared by the applicant (rather than two separate notices).



## CONCURRENT PROCESSING OF A SITE PLAN AND A ZONING APPLICATION

The concurrent filing and review of a site plan or minor site plan with a rezoning, special exception, or special permit application is permitted in all of the county's CRDs and CRAs. However, no site plan or minor site plan can be approved by the Director of LDS until the concurrent rezoning, special exception, or special permit application has been approved by the Board of Supervisors or the [Board of Zoning Appeals \(BZA\)](#), respectively. This concurrent processing does not relieve the applicant from complying with the provisions of any applicable ordinances, regulations or adopted standards, and does not prejudice the consideration of the application by the Board of Supervisors or the BZA. If filing a site plan before the associated zoning case is approved, the applicant should consult with staff to ensure all major issues have been resolved with the zoning cases.

## FACILITATED REVIEW OF SITE PLANS



Throughout the site plan process, a CRD coordinator is available as an additional resource to applicants of projects located within CRDs and CRAs. The CRD Coordinator may serve as a point of contact to the applicant and their design team in navigating the land development process and systems. They can assist in answering questions and will provide key points of contact for various phases of the process. The CRD Coordinator is available to help resolve questions or issues that may arise involving multiple reviewers or agencies and will follow up on the status of project tasks to ensure the process is progressing efficiently. Finally, after final site plan approval is granted, the CRD Coordinator is available to help provide guidance on any revisions that might be required during the construction phase.

Also, when a CRD or CRA site plan is filed, an electronic notification to that effect goes to the chair of the local revitalization committee so that the committee is aware of the filing and can review the site plan and make comments on it. The SDID Reviewer coordinates closely with the developer's 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 SDID Reviewer coordinates the review with an emphasis on resolving all remaining issues required for approval.

The SDID Reviewer coordinates the review and approval of any waivers, record plats, notices and other associated actions as may be required. On receiving all necessary approvals from other branches and agencies, the SDID Reviewer, at the direction of the SDID Division Chief, will recommend approval or disapproval of the plan. If recommended for approval, the applicant will be required to post all necessary bonds, agreements and meet all approval conditions to obtain a land disturbance permit. It is noted that the timing of final approval of a site plan is the responsibility of the developer and his engineer, as this approval can be obtained only after all conditions are addressed, the bond is established, and fees and escrows are paid.

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

Building plan review can be concurrent with the site plan process or can be a stand-alone process. Building plans are submitted online as described on the [LDS website](#). The plans are reviewed by the Building Division of LDS for conformance with the [Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code](#) (USBC), including input on structural, mechanical, plumbing, electrical, and fire protection issues.

### **The following programs are available to CRD/CRA projects:**

- **[Fast Track Building Plan Review](#)**: Construction-ready plans for non-complex commercial and residential projects are reviewed by dedicated county staff on a first-come, first-serve basis. The speed at which a plan is reviewed is commensurate with the number of plans submitted at any given time.
- **[Modified Processing](#)**: Allows for issuance of Rough Grading Permits, partial (footing and foundation) permits and extensions of those partial permits prior to full approval of site and building plans. Note, that modified processing thresholds for projects located in CRDs/CRAs are more liberal than in other areas of the County.
- **[Expedited Building Plan Review](#)**: Offers building permit applicants an opportunity for their plan review times to be cut in half while ensuring their plans are code compliant through the use of peer reviewers.



### **Helpful time saving hints for constructing projects in revitalization districts and areas:**

- Work closely with the CRD Coordinator throughout the Land Development process and inform staff at the time of every submission that your project is located in a CRD or CRA
- Coordinate with [Building Plan review staff](#) using these options to meet before or after submitting
- Schedule a pre-submission meeting with SDID prior to submitting a site plan.
- Provide your design team with the Fire Marshal [Code Reference Package](#) and Office of the Fire Marshal [Submittal Requirements](#)
- Ensure that you are familiar with all proffers, development conditions, or Urban Design Guidelines that apply to the project, and when they will be triggered

## Appendix I. DEPARTMENT AND AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

All offices are located in the Herrity Building  
12055 Government Center Parkway  
Fairfax, Virginia 22035-5505

### Department of Planning and Development (DPD)

703-324-1380

#### Zoning Evaluation Division (ZED), DPD, Suite 801

703-324-1290 or [dpzzed@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:dpzzed@fairfaxcounty.gov)

#### Zoning Administration Division (ZAD), DPD, Suite 807

703-324-1314 or [ordadmin@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:ordadmin@fairfaxcounty.gov)

#### Sign Permits, DPD, Suite 829

703-324-4300 or [dpdzoningpermits@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:dpdzoningpermits@fairfaxcounty.gov)

#### Zoning Permit Branch (ZAD/ZPB), DPD, Suite 250

703-324-1082, 703-324-1359, or [dpdzoningpermits@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:dpdzoningpermits@fairfaxcounty.gov)

#### Planning Division, (PD), DPD, Suite 730

703-324-1380 or [dpzpd@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:dpzpd@fairfaxcounty.gov)

#### Community Revitalization Section (CRS), DPD, Suite 755

703-324-9300 or [revitalization@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:revitalization@fairfaxcounty.gov)

### Land Development Services (LDS)

703-222-0801

LDS Customer Information Center

#### Engineer of the Day

703-324-2268 or [sitequery@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:sitequery@fairfaxcounty.gov)

#### Commercial Revitalization Districts (CRD) Coordinator, Suite 444

[LDSCRDCoordinator@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:LDSCRDCoordinator@fairfaxcounty.gov)

#### Building Plan Review, LDS, Suite 324

703-222-0114 or 703-324-9591 (Commercial, Critical Structures)

703-324-2529 (Residential)

#### Fire Marshal Plan Review, 3rd Floor

703-324-1780 (Commercial and Residential)

