



An Overview of the  
Development Review Process  
Within  
**COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION  
DISTRICTS AND AREAS**

Prepared by



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Revitalization & Reinvestment

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Commercial Revitalization District/Area Defined .....	2
Summary of Commercial Revitalization District Regulations .....	3-4
Concurrent Processing of a Comprehensive Plan Amendment and a Zoning Application .....	5
Considerations Prior to Filing a Zoning Application .....	5-6
Priority Processing and Facilitated Review of Zoning Applications .....	6-7
Expedited Scheduling of Zoning Applications .....	7
Concurrent Processing of a Site Plan and a Zoning Application .....	7
Facilitated Review of Site Plans .....	8
Building Plan Review, Permit and Inspection Process .....	10-11
Department and Agency Contact Information .....	12

## 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 (5) Commercial Revitalization Districts (CRDs) within Fairfax County; in addition, two (2) 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. 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. The CRAs do not have separate zoning overlay districts, but are eligible for the facilitated administrative procedures and can take advantage of certain of the CRD Zoning Ordinance provisions.

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

<b>Commercial Revitalization Districts</b>	<b>Zoning Ordinance Section</b>
Annandale	A7-100
Baileys Crossroads/Seven Corners	A7-200
McLean	A7-300
Richmond Highway	A7-400
Springfield	A7-500
<b>Commercial Revitalization Areas</b>	
Lake Anne	N.A.
Merrifield	N.A.

Maps designating the land area contained within each CRD and CRA are available from the Office of Community Revitalization and Reinvestment (OCRR), as well as from other county agencies involved in the review of development proposals, including the Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) and the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES). Maps of the CRDs and CRAs may also be downloaded from the OCRR website at <http://www.fcrevit.org>

**For more information on Commercial Revitalization Districts and Areas, please contact OCRR. For other agency contact information, please consult the last page of this publication.**

## 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 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 yards and parking requirements in certain revitalization districts; allow modifications to transitional screening and parking lot landscaping requirements; and permit increases in FAR, building height, and office use in certain districts if such are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Some of these provisions apply only in the retail commercial districts (C-6 through C-9), which are the predominant zoning districts found in the CRDs (see Section 9-622 and Part 10 of Article 7 of the Zoning Ordinance).

### SUMMARY OF COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION DISTRICT REGULATIONS

- Allow (by special exception) an increase in office use up to 100 percent of the maximum permitted gross floor area when located in the C-8 District
- Reduce the minimum required front yard in all commercial districts to 20 feet or to the specified dimension contained in the Comprehensive Plan (if that dimension is less than the requirement of the underlying zoning district)
- Allow an increase in building height from 40 to 50 feet by-right in the C-6 and C-8 Districts

- Waive minimum open space requirements for expansions or enlargements of existing uses, provided there is no decrease in the amount of existing open space
- Reduce the parking requirement for all non-residential uses by 20 percent in the Richmond Highway CRD, and allow the same reduction in all other CRDs and the Lake Anne CRA with administrative approval by the Board of Supervisors
- Allow ground-level parking to be located closer than 10 feet to the front lot line
- Allow for administrative approval by the Director of DPWES of off-site parking for non-residential uses when such spaces are located within 500 feet walking distance of a building entrance or are accessed with the use of valet or shuttle service
- Allow for the removal and replacement of nonconforming signs with smaller signs, even if new signs exceed current regulations
- Allow freestanding signs (up to a maximum of 60 square feet in area and 20 feet in height) within, or in proximity to, the boundaries of a CRD or CRA that identify the area or give directions and/or distances to commercial areas or centers within the CRD or CRA
- Allow banners within a CRD or CRA up to a maximum of 20 square feet in area and 20 feet in height
- Allow specific reductions or modifications to parking lot landscaping, screening and tree cover requirements for expansions or enlargements of existing uses
- Allow modifications to required site plan improvements for construction of service drives, road dedications, and certain structural or building expansions
- Allow an abbreviated Best Management Practice (BMP) exception process for water quality, with no application fee for certain minor site plans



**For additional information on the CRD regulations, contact the Zoning Administration Division (ZAD), Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ). For information related to site plans, contact the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES).**

## 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 Planning Commission and 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

The Zoning Evaluation Division (ZED) of DPZ is responsible for processing zoning applications. It is recommended that prospective applicants schedule a pre-



application meeting with a ZED Branch Chief prior to filling a zoning application. During the pre-application meeting, the prospective applicant will be able to meet with a Branch Chief and an interdepartmental team of county staff who can answer questions about the zoning process, determine if an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan is needed, and identify potential issues.

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 OCRR website at: <http://www.fcrevit.org>

**When filing an application for a property located in a CRD or CRA, be sure to identify it as a CRD or CRA on the application. Zoning application information packets can be downloaded from the ZED website at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/zoning/devoverview.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/zoning/devoverview.htm) and also are available for pick-up at ZED, DPZ.**

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

The filing and acceptance of a zoning application that is located within a CRD or CDA 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
- Priority distribution of application information to other reviewing agencies for comments
- Additional distribution of zoning application information to the Chairman of the applicable commercial revitalization district or area committee



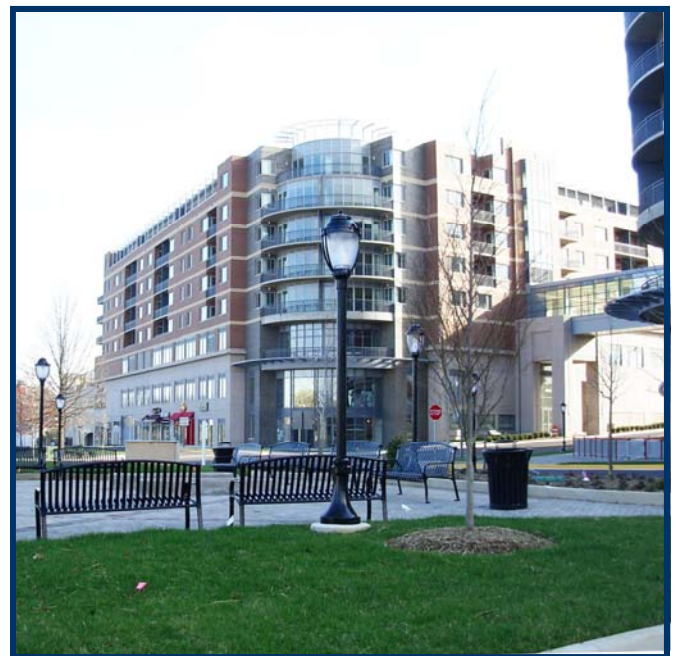
A facilitated process utilizing a "team" approach has been established for the review of all zoning applications, including those located within a CRD or CRA. The staff coordinator from ZED heads a staff team, which is comprised of experts in various areas of professional responsibility (land use, environment, 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 DPWES 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.



## FACILITATED REVIEW OF SITE PLANS

After a zoning application has been approved by the Board of Supervisors or BZA, the lead planner will coordinate closely with the Site Review Engineer from Land Development Services (LDS) Division of DPWES on the site plan to resolve any issues that may have surfaced during the public hearing process, and will be available to facilitate the implementation of the project through the engineering and building plan approval processes.

A facilitated process, called the Project Management Program, has been established for the review of site plans located within a CRD or CRA. Under this program, a designated Project Manager serves as the team leader for each project.



The main duties of the Project Manager are to:

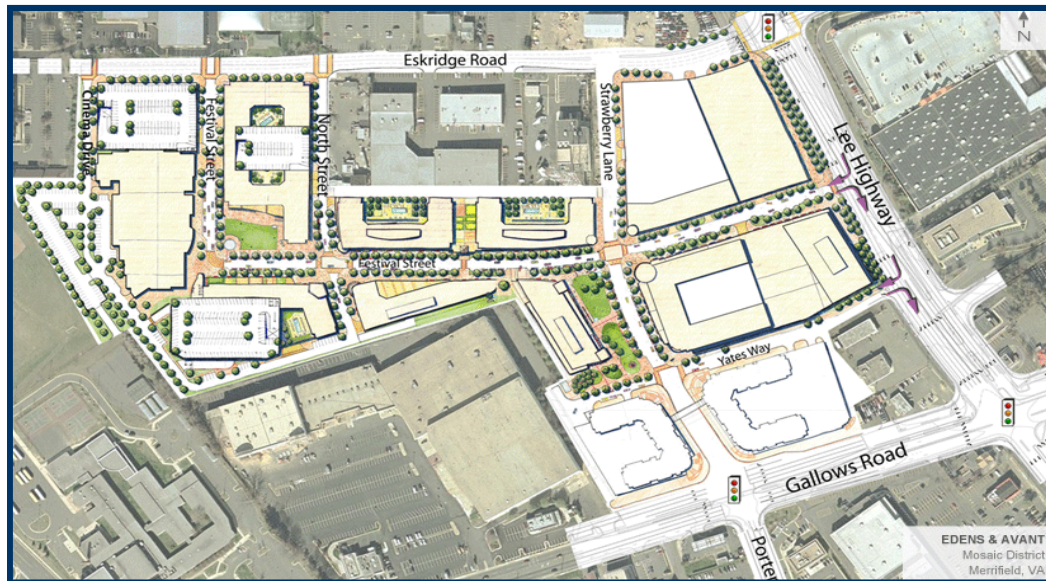
- Serve as the plan advocate through all phases of processing from plan submission to bond release
- Serve as DPWES' primary point of contact and liaison to the applicant on all questions related to the plan
- Serve as the DPWES' customer service representative addressing all the questions and concerns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

The Project Manager coordinates all aspects of the review of the site plans and ensures that the site plans are reviewed as efficiently and completely as possible. The Project Manager coordinates closely with other reviewing agencies to ensure that the review schedule is met and holds team meetings to gather input and resolve

issues. Also, when a CRD or CRA site plan is filed, a letter 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 Project Manager also 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 Project Manager coordinates the review with an emphasis on resolving all remaining issues required for approval.

On receiving all necessary approvals from other branches and agencies, the Project Manager, at the direction of the Site Review Division Chief, will recommend approval or disapproval of the plan. If recommended for approval, the plan will be forwarded to the Bonds and Agreements Branch of DPWES. While the plan is in the Bonds and Agreements Branch, the Project Manager will assist in resolving all of the conditions necessary for the final approval of the site plan. The Project Manager coordinates the review and approval of any waivers, record plats, notices and other associated actions which may be required. 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.



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

## 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 for review to the Permit Application Center, Suite 230 of the Herrity Building. The plans are then forwarded to the Building Plan Review Division of DPWES. This Division is responsible for reviewing all building plans for residential and commercial construction in Fairfax County for conformance with the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code, and includes 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 CRD or CRA may utilize the 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. on the third floor of the Herrity Building, Suite 324, Building Plan Review. Note: a restaurant plan that requires a Health Department review cannot be done as a “walk-thru.”

A “walk-thru” project size is limited as follows:

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

### Annual Permit Program

The 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 more expansive associated permits. This program facilitates the issuance of permits by eliminating waiting times associated with obtaining individual permits.

### Modified Plan Processing for New Construction and Additions

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. The process allows projects to start construction faster and thus facilitates completion in a timely manner. This program can be used for the review of large,

complex commercial buildings, and either new construction or additions to existing buildings. This program allows for issuance of partial building permits and extensions of partial permits prior to full approval of site and building plans. Staff process the plans submitted under peer review on a priority basis, saving up to 50 percent of the normal review time. The advantage of the modified plan processing status is the ability to begin construction quickly and to continue in phases without awaiting full design approvals.



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

- Inform staff that your project is located in a revitalization district or area
- Request a preliminary meeting with the Building Plan Review Division 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 with the Building Plan Review Division. A multi-disciplined team of inspectors will discuss the construction of your project and provide advice on the scheduling of inspections and other issues

**For additional information on these programs, contact:**

**Department of Planning and Zoning**

12055 Government Center Parkway  
Fairfax, Virginia 22035

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/>

Planning Division, Suite 730  
Telephone: (703) 324-1210

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

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

**Department of Public Works and Environmental Services**

12055 Government Center Parkway  
Fairfax, Virginia 22035  
703-324-5033

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/>

Building Plan Review Division, Suite 324  
Telephone: (703) 324-1029

Bonds and Agreements Branch, Suite 334  
Telephone: 703-324-1950

Land Development Services, Suite 444  
Telephone: (703) 324-1780

Permit Application Center, Suite 230  
Telephone: 703-324-1555

**Office of Community Revitalization and Reinvestment**

12055 Government Center Parkway  
Suite 1048

Fairfax, Virginia 22035  
703-324-9300

<http://www.fcrevet.org>

Fairfax County is committed to nondiscrimination on the basis of disability in all county programs, services, and activities. Special accommodations will be provided upon request.

For information call 703-246-6500 or TTY 711

