

---

**Zoning Committee of the Planning Commission (ZOCO)**

**Meeting Summary**

**May 20, 2025, 7:00pm**

**Bozman Government Center**

**2100 Clarendon Boulevard**

**Conference Room 216**

**Arlington, VA 22201**

**Hybrid Meeting ([Click here for meeting recording](#))**

---

**Planning Commissioners in attendance (in-person):**

- James Lantelme
- Tenley Peterson
- Tony Striner (Chair, ZOCO)

**Planning Commissioners absent:**

- Denyse "Nia" Bagley
- Eric Berkey
- Karen Guevara
- Devanshi P. Patel
- Peter Robertson
- Sara Steinberger
- Daniel Weir

**Staff in attendance (in-person unless otherwise noted):**

- Deborah Albert, AICP, Deputy Zoning Administrator, CPHD – Zoning
  - Jill Hunger, AICP, Assistant Director, CPHD
  - Matt Mattauszek, Master Development Planner, CPHD – Planning
  - (*virtual*) Marc McCauley, Director of Real Estate Development, AED
  - Olivia Sontag, Principal Planner, CPHD - Planning
  - Nick Rogers, AICP, CZA, Principal Planner, CPHD – Planning
- 

**Strategic Amendments to Sign Regulations**

ZOCO Chair Tony Striner opened the meeting at 7:00pm.

Ms. Jill Hunger then provided an overview of proposed zoning ordinance amendments to the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance's (ACZO's) sign regulations. She summarized the intended outcomes:

- Modernize Arlington's sign regulations;
- Improve flexibility for businesses;
- Streamline administration of sign regulations; and,

- Address issues identified during implementation of the Commercial Market Resiliency Initiative (CMRI)

Ms. Hunger explained that the last comprehensive update to the ACZO's sign regulations took place in 2012. The County Board had adopted several targeted amendments since the 2012 update. She highlighted the current study's focus on strategic updates primarily intended for signs in commercial districts.

Ms. Hunger covered several proposed amendments to the ACZO's sign regulations:

- For signs located above 40 feet in height, a reorganization and clarification of the applicable regulations and specialized standards for signs affixed to buildings at 50-70 feet in height;
- Updated sign area calculation protocols for signs placed on architecturally sculpted buildings;
- Additional flexibility for signs on buildings with multiple towers;
- Allowing signs on certain landscape planters, retaining walls, screening walls, and structural walls associated with site plan and form based code developments;
- Expanded temporary sign allowances during roadway and streetscape construction activities;
- Eliminating permit requirements for certain temporary signs commonly used for construction projects, commercial real estate leasing, and sales;
- Expanded opportunities for arcade signs and certain institutional signs; and
- Reconfigurations to the ACZO's comprehensive sign plan provisions to improve clarity and ease of administration.

Ms. Hunger noted that the proposed amendments were intentionally limited in scope to avoid significant deviations from the ACZO's overall sign regulations framework.

Commissioner Striner then facilitated ZOCO's discussion on the following topics:

- *Sign Area Calculations* - Commissioners requested clarification regarding the proposed methodology for measuring sign area on buildings with setbacks, sculpted facades, and irregular building forms. Ms. Hunger explained that sign area calculations would be based on the building frontage measured between exterior corners rather than the width of upper-level architectural projections, providing a more consistent approach across different building designs.
- *Multiple Tower Buildings* - Commissioners asked how the regulations would apply to larger developments with multiple towers in areas such as Crystal City and Rosslyn. Ms. Hunger stated that the amendments would provide clear standards for such developments while acknowledging the unique configuration of larger mixed-use projects.
- *Sign Content and Visibility* – Commissioners discussed the differences between on-premises and off-premises advertising. Ms. Hunger clarified that the ACZO would continue to prohibit off-premises advertising, and that the proposed amendments would not alter those restrictions. Commissioners asked about limitations on sign content, visibility from residential neighborhoods, and signs facing federal lands. Ms. Albert explained that content-based regulation is generally restricted. She explained that existing geographic limitations for signs facing neighborhoods and federal lands would remain unchanged.

Commissioners discussed murals and public art, including situations where murals may be classified as signs when they feature products or services offered on-site. Staff explained how existing regulations distinguish between signs and murals, noting that the proposed amendments would not substantially alter those provisions.

- *Signs Displayed During Construction and Temporary Business Closures* - Commissioners expressed support for the proposed amendments that would expand temporary signage opportunities during construction. They referenced adverse impacts to business visibility and customer access that come with prolonged infrastructure or redevelopment projects.

Commissioners supported allowing businesses to utilize temporary signs to notify customers that businesses remain open during construction. They suggested further consideration for businesses temporarily relocating during construction activities. Ms. Hunger described how permit requirements for certain temporary construction-related signs would be eliminated under the proposal, which would help businesses more easily reach their customers.

- *Signs for Institutional and Community Uses* – Commissioners supported allowing additional signs for public, civic, and institutional uses. They cited examples such as religious institutions used by more than one faith group and affiliated uses operating from the same property. Commissioners agreed that the proposed flexibility better reflected modern-day operations at institutional properties.
- *Sign Size, Changeable Copy, and Digital Displays* – Commissioners sought more information on how staff landed on their specific recommendations for the proposed sign area multipliers. They were most interested in how the proposal could affect the maximum allowable sign size for larger buildings. Ms. Hunger explained that the amendments would only adjust measurement methodologies and criteria for certain signs above 40 feet and not increase maximum allowable sign area for most businesses.

Ms. Hunger further clarified that automatic changeable-copy signs would not be permitted above 40 feet under the proposed amendments. She explained the difference between signs subject to ACZO regulation and video displays that are within buildings, but visible from the street, that are not subject to ACZO regulation.

Finally, Commissioners asked Ms. Hunger and Ms. Albert how community input and other informational resources contributed to the proposed amendments' development. They explained that County staff's experience administering and enforcing the ACZO's sign standards since 2012 was an important contributor, as well as business community feedback, economic development objectives, and community conversations associated with CMRI.

Overall, Commissioners expressed general support for the proposed amendments and agreed that the recommendations appropriately balanced business flexibility with Arlington's existing urban design objectives. Staff noted that the amendments were on track for a Planning Commission public hearing in the coming months following additional outreach and revisions.

### **Columbia Pike Neighborhoods Form Based Code: Phased Development Use Permit**

Ms. Olivia Sontag provided an overview of the proposed amendment to the Columbia Pike Neighborhoods Form Based Code (N-FBC) to establish a Phased Development Use Permit (PDUP) application type and review process. Ms. Sontag explained that the PDUP was

intended to create an implementation framework for the multi-phase Barcroft Apartments Master Financing and Development Plan (MFDP).

Ms. Sontag explained that a PDUP could serve as a long-term implementation and monitoring tool to coordinate redevelopment and renovation projects throughout the approximately 60-acre Barcroft property. The PDUP could implement commitments previously established through the MFDP for the entire Barcroft property while accommodating incremental phases of redevelopment and renovation over several years.

Ms. Sontag provided several examples of the MFDP's long-term, site-wide commitments that would be ideal for a PDUP approval to encapsulate. They included the following:

- Affordable housing preservation and replacement;
- Tree canopy targets;
- Accessible housing commitments;
- Parking requirements and parking supply;
- Biophilic pedestrian pathway implementation;
- Natural areas designated for protection; and
- Site-wide public infrastructure and public space improvements.

Ms. Sontag drew distinctions between the PDUP and the Phased Development Site Plan (PDSP) process, since the PDUP would primarily track implementation of site-wide commitments from the MFDP instead of prescribing a fixed sequence of development activities. She noted that redevelopment timing would depend on tenant relocation, financing availability, tax-credit programs, and future market conditions.

Ms. Sontag explained several associated amendments to the N-FBC that would establish a PDUP application type and review process. These included specific verbiage on the PDUP and relevant review procedures, as well as provisions to allow the implementation of affordable housing commitments through designated conservation areas within an overall PDUP development area. The amendments would allow greater flexibility for when site-wide commitments for streetscape improvements should be established by a development applicant. The N-FBC would also require administrative procedures to dictate how long-term redevelopment and renovation commitments would be monitored and enforced.

Commissioner Striner then facilitated ZOCO's discussion on the following topics:

- *Parking Supply and Resident Parking* - Commissioners sought clarification regarding how parking would be provided across multiple redevelopment and renovation phases of the MFDP's implementation. They touched upon surface parking, on-street parking, and parking along future public streets. Ms. Sontag explained that most internal streets and parking areas would remain private, although certain future street segments could ultimately be dedicated as public streets.

Commissioners emphasized the importance of maintaining sufficient parking for existing and future affordable housing residents, noting that many current residents depend on private vehicles to reach employment opportunities located throughout the region. Commissioners expressed concerns with redevelopment phases reducing resident's available parking.

Ms. Sontag summarized the N-FBC's existing parking standards, explaining how different parking ratios apply to affordable housing developments, market-rate development, and other uses. Commissioners discussed both the policy rationale and public perception associated with differing parking allocations among housing types.

Commissioners also discussed parking flexibility, including shared parking resources among future development phases to ensure that Barcroft's residents maintain their access to available parking resources as redevelopment and renovation proceeds.

- *Affordable Housing Commitments* - Commissioners asked questions about the MFDP's commitment to maintain 1,335 committed affordable units (CAFs). Ms. Sontag clarified that this commitment remains in effect, and that a PDUP would facilitate the implementation of this MFDP commitment as existing residential buildings are renovated, replaced, and reconstructed through future phases.

Commissioners discussed how affordable housing obligations would be allocated among future phases and how the County would ensure that affordability commitments are maintained throughout the MFDP's multi-year implementation. Ms. Sontag explained how the affordable housing commitments were established with the execution of the MFDP agreement, and that redevelopment and renovation would occur within that broader framework.

- *Phasing and Long-Term Implementation* - Commissioners sought more background information on the anticipated plans for a Barcroft PDUP to forgo a traditional phasing sequence similar to those approved with site plans and PDSPs.

Ms. Sontag explained that redevelopment and renovation projects are expected to occur over an extended timeframe. She highlighted the MFDP's unique arrangement between the County and the Barcroft owner/developer, and that future market conditions, financing, resident relocation needs, and other factors make a traditional phasing sequence impractical for this type of long-term project. Instead, the PDUP would identify which future development areas are responsible for delivering particular site improvements while providing flexibility regarding the order in which projects proceed.

Commissioners generally agreed that the proposed framework appeared appropriate for a redevelopment effort of Barcroft's size and complexity, while emphasizing the importance of maintaining accountability for affordable-housing, infrastructure, and public-space commitments.

The ZOCO meeting was adjourned at 8:25pm.