ZoningRewrite
Prince George's
The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
Creating a 21st Century Zoning Ordinance

arts district

10 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT
MODULE 3: ZONING PROCESSES AND SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS

1 Pre-Application Neighborhood Meetings

Required Pre-Application Neighborhood Meetings are new to the zoning code. These meetings help neighboring land owners and residents learn more about a proposed development application. Meetings would take place weekday evenings at a location that is near, and accessible to, those affected by the application. After the meeting, applicants would submit a written summary that includes a list of attendees and discussion topics. Pre-Application Neighborhood Meetings would be required for certain development applications, including special exceptions, major site plans, and major adjustments.

2 Major and Minor Site Plan Applications

Module 3 proposes that the County combine the conceptual and detailed site plans to create two tiers of site plan review—Minor and Major. The Planning Director would approve Minor Site Plans and appeals would be made to the Planning Board and then the District Council. The Planning Board would approve Major Site Plans and appeals would be made to the District Council.

3 Updated Notice Requirements

How do residents find out about development proposed in their neighborhood? They use email, snail mail, sign postings, twitter and more! Module 3 proposes significant updates to the County's notification procedures and encourages the use of new technologies to connect with residents neighboring new development.

4 Being Heard

Clarion Associates proposes several new ways for citizens to have their voices heard. Module 3 recommends a Procedures Manual. This manual would require Technical Staff Reports for each application to include a summary of citizen comments received on the application. It would also provide assurance that the public can speak either in favor of, or against, an application.

ABOUT
THE MODULE

In September 2016, Clarion Associates presented Module 3, which includes updates to community input, notice requirements, special exceptions, development review procedures, zoning enforcement, and subdivision regulations.

We encourage everyone to review Module 3: Zoning Processes and Subdivision Regulations to determine how the proposals may impact your property and community. Here's a quick guide highlighting 10 key proposals made in Module 3.

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5 Who Decides What?

Module 3 addresses what the District Council decides, and what decisions the Council chooses to delegate to other bodies, such as the Planning Board, Zoning Hearing Examiner, Board of Zoning Appeals, or the Planning Department. Module 3 recommends that decisions on small projects be made at an administrative or staff level and require larger projects, or special circumstances, to be determined by the Planning Board. Master Plans, rezonings, text amendments, and other decisions would be made solely by the District Council.

6 Non-conforming Structures and Uses

Module 3 addresses existing development that is not consistent with the new zoning rules. It also addresses if, and how, those developments can be reconstructed, renovated, or enlarged. In a key change from today's process, a "Certification of a non-conformity" is no longer required. Instead, nonconformity status is determined during the normal review of development applications.

7 The Enforcers

The Zoning Ordinance not only helps us determine how land is developed, it also tells us what happens when someone violates the zoning laws and who is responsible for enforcing the law. In keeping with the current procedures, Module 3 grants the Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement, County and Municipal Police Departments, and the County's Fire/EMS Department authorization to enforce violations of the code.

8 Transitions to the New Ordinance

Module 3 includes transitional provisions that clarify how to treat pending development applications, approvals, and permits when the rewritten Zoning Ordinance is adopted. Pending permits or approvals will be processed under the laws that were in place at the time of approval. If an applicant wishes to develop under the new laws, they would need to withdraw and resubmit an application.

9 Zoning Text Amendments

The Zoning Ordinance may be modified by using text amendments. Although we will have a new code, periodically amending the code will allow us to keep our zoning laws modern and competitive. Clarion Associates proposes a formal process for initiating and adopting text amendments that would require public notice, public hearings, and review by technical staff and the Planning Board, and decision by the District Council.

10 Special Exceptions

In some cases, a use is allowed in a zone, but may need additional review to determine if it is compatible with the neighboring area. Module 3 creates clear procedures for the review of special exceptions. In each case, the proposals mandate a Pre-Application Staff Conference, a Pre-Application Neighborhood Meeting, and a public hearing with the Zoning Hearing Examiner. Appeals from these rulings would be made to the District Council.

ABOUT
THE ZONING REWRITE

The Prince George's County Planning Department is comprehensively rewriting the County's Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations. The Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations are the laws that determine how land or property in the County can be developed. The intended impact of this multi-year project is to modernize the County's zoning code into a more user-friendly document that is aligned with the County's vision for smart growth, economic development, and improved quality of life for Prince George's County residents.