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## Uses and Use Categories in the New Zoning Ordinance



### Uses (Activities and Operations) Allowed in Each Zoning District

All land in the County is placed in a zone, and that zone determines what uses are allowed. Today's Zoning Ordinance has more than 1,100 uses; the approved ordinance reduces the number of uses to approximately 250. The current Zoning Ordinance includes seven permitted use tables for residential, commercial, industrial, comprehensive design, and mixed-use zones. In addition, nearly all of the County's 18 development district and transit district overlay zones contain separate, modified permitted use tables. The new Zoning Ordinance greatly simplifies the use tables, reduces the total number of uses, and adds a more logical format.



#### WHAT IS A USE? WHAT IS A USE TABLE?

Generally, a use is an activity, occupation, business, or operation occurring in a building or on a parcel of land within a specific zoning district. It is very important to understand that uses do not address the form of the buildings or the design quality of a neighborhood. Uses are controlled by the zoning of the property. One of the easiest and most user-friendly ways to show which uses are permitted on a parcel of land, within a building, or on a structure is to develop a table. This table frequently referred to as a use table, shows which uses are allowed within each zone.

#### ORGANIZATION OF USE TABLES

Our current Zoning Ordinance mixes different types of uses into seven use tables in multiple sections of the code, including the zone sections, temporary use sections, and the definitions sections. The new Zoning Ordinance clearly distinguishes between the three major use types –principal uses, accessory uses, and temporary uses–by using separate use tables for each type. Each use-table in the new Zoning Ordinance is organized in a three-tiered hierarchy. This is done to help the reader navigate through the use table. The first tier of the use-table is the Use Classification, which is a general description (e.g.,

Commercial). The second tier, Use Categories, represents major subgroups of the use classifications that have common functional product, or physical characteristics (e.g. Retail Sales). The third tier is Use Type. The Use Type identifies specific principal land uses whose characteristics are considered to fall within the various use categories (e.g. Consumer Goods Establishment).

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#### HOW TO GET INVOLVED

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## CONSOLIDATION OF USES

The old Zoning Ordinance has multiple use tables which result in duplicative uses while creating slight variations of the same basic use. Throughout the hundreds of pages of use regulations in the code and the hundreds more in separate documents, there are over 1,100 uses, making it very difficult for the public, and potential County investors, to make sense of the code. The new Zoning Ordinance consolidates duplicated uses, removes obsolete uses, and classifies all the uses into a straightforward organization in one location in the code. The new ordinance reduces the total number of uses to approximately 250. This consolidation recognizes that small differences among similar uses can be broadly grouped together. Broader uses will significantly improve the utility of the ordinance.

## USE-SPECIFIC STANDARDS

The new Zoning Ordinance includes use-specific standards, or additional requirements for a particular use regardless of the zone where it is allowed. Specific standards are proposed to be applied for certain permitted uses, regardless of how that use may be approved (either a detailed site plan or a use and occupancy permit). Use-specific standards are proposed for uses that are classified as principal, accessory, or temporary.



## SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS

A special exception is a use that necessitates certain findings or requirements that must be satisfied through a separate process and approved by the Zoning Hearing Examiner or the County Council before development can begin. The current Zoning Ordinance contains an entire section devoted to special exception criteria and identifies more than 125 special exception uses, with specific additional requirements. The Council retained about 70 current special exceptions uses in the new Zoning Ordinance. The permissions and requirements for these uses are identical to the current ordinance but are appropriately translated to the new zone structure and names. A separate section at the end of Part 5 includes the special exception requirements for these uses.

## ABOUT THE ZONING ORDINANCE AND SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS REWRITE

On October 23, 2018, the Prince George's County Council adopted a new Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations, completing a four-year journey to update the County's land use regulations. The Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations determine where and how land can be developed, helping shape how communities grow. The new 21st Century zoning code is aligned with Plan Prince George's 2035, the shared vision for the future of our County. Updating the County's development codes was necessary to create regulations that support the County's vision for smart growth, economic development, and improved quality of life. The next step of the process is to comprehensively update the County's Zoning Map, which geographically applies the new laws to the County.

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