

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA: ZONING REVIEW AND REWRITE (ZRR) STATUS UPDATE: ANC 3/4G – December 12, 2011

WHY UPDATE THE ZONING REGULATIONS?

- Last major revision completed in 1958
- Comprehensive Plan calls for “substantial revision and reorganization, ranging from new definitions to updated development and design standards, and even new zones”
- Revisions needed to implement Comprehensive Plan and policy objectives
- General direction from Zoning Commission to make code:
 - Clearer
 - Easier to use
 - More effective policy implementation tool

THE ZRR PROCESS

- Process began in January of 2008
- Twenty subject areas, generally consistent with land uses, e.g., Low to Moderate Density areas
- Some subject areas focused on all zones generally, e.g., Sustainability and Design Review
- Two consecutive stages of work: conceptual recommendations and text drafting
 - Conceptual recommendations, three steps: Public Working Group, Citizen Taskforce, Zoning Commission
 - Text drafting, four steps: Citizen Taskforce, Zoning Commission (preliminary), General Public, Zoning Commission (final)
- All background information available at: www.dczoningupdate.org

WHERE ARE WE RIGHT NOW?

- Code has been re-organized to facilitate improved zoning based on geographic goals
- Drafting has begun on “general regulations” and “land use subtitles”
- General:
 - Height, Green Area Ratio, Parking Regulations: preliminary approval by Zoning Commission
- Land use subtitles:
 - Production, Distribution & Repair zones: preliminary approval by Zoning Commission
 - All other zones (Residential House, Residential Apartment, Mixed-Use, Downtown) – draft text being prepared

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Full draft of new code available for Task Force and Zoning Commission: January 2012
- **Outreach to general public and public comment: Spring/Summer 2012**
- Zoning Commission hearings: Fall/Winter 2012

POST ZRR

- New organization facilitates local changes and standardized regulations will be in place; however the process of local zoning changes will occur after ZRR completion.

WHAT TO EXPECT?

Code Structure

- Focus on Subtitles – The proposed code structure will group similar zones together. The first three subtitles (Administration, General Rules, and Procedures) are designed to orient people to the code, explain how it is organized, and provide information about rules of measurement (e.g., building height) and zoning processes (BZA). Each of the remaining subtitles consists of a group of similar zones: Residential House (low density residential), Residential Apartment, Mixed Use Transit, Downtown, etc... arranged by common characteristics (e.g., proximity to transit, density, mixed uses).
- Tables vs. Text – The new code will use tables and illustrations more frequently, as opposed to long lists and text. We've added more graphics throughout to help illustrate how things are measured and improve clarity about new and existing terms in the regulations.
- Use Categories - We've consolidated the extensive list of individual uses to a couple dozen use categories. Uses will be either permitted (P), permitted with conditions (C), allowed by special exception approval (S), or not permitted (N) and these codes will be used in a table format to illustrate use permissions by zone.

Setbacks and Yards

For existing R-1 and R-2 zones, yards equal to the greater of a 5 ft. minimum or 10% of lot width will be required. The combined total of both side yards must be at least 30% of the lot width. These changes are proposed to provide greater conformity with the existing character of most residential neighborhoods.

Accessory Dwelling Units

Accessory dwelling units will be permitted by-right in low density residential zones (R1-R2) by right, with conditions, either inside the house or in a detached structure. Conditions include a required minimum house size, a limit on unit size, and a requirement that the property is owner-occupied. When permitted in a separate structure, conditions also include limits on height and footprint, limitations on decks and balconies, and requirements for separation from the main building. In R-3 zones, accessory dwelling units would be permitted only by special exception, whether inside or outside the main structure.

Non-residential Land Uses in Residential Zones

A limited number of non-residential uses will be allowed in some low density residential zones, with conditions. The number of non-residential uses would be limited by conditions prohibiting them in locations close to mixed-use zones (to avoid drawing energy away from established commercial corridors) and restricting how close they can be to one another (to avoid over-concentration). The types of non-residential uses that would be permitted fall in the Retail, Service, Arts Design & Creation, and Food & Alcohol Service categories. These uses would only be permitted in rowhouse zones, which traditionally were often built with corner stores. They would be encouraged in corner locations, only be allowed on the ground floor, and have limits on their overall size and hours of operation.