



March 5, 2026

TECHNICAL STAFF REPORT

TO: Prince George's County Planning Board

FROM: Natalia Gomez Rojas, AICP, Planner IV - Planning Director's Office

SUBJECT: Legislative Drafting Request LDR-24-2026
Definitions - Corrections Facility, Detention Center, and Prison.

The Prince George's County Planning Department's legislative team has reviewed the proposed legislative amendment to the Zoning Ordinance and presents the following evaluation and findings leading to a recommendation on **SUPPORT** as described in the Recommendation section of this technical staff report.

I. BACKGROUND

- A. Purpose:** To add new definitions to the Zoning Ordinance for "Corrections Facility," "Detention Center," and "Prison" in order to clarify that such uses are prohibited in all zones in the Regional District.
- B. Impacted Property:** This bill will impact all properties in the Regional District.

II. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposed legislative amendments to the Zoning Ordinance are reviewed under the requirements of Section 27-3501, Legislative Amendment, of the Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance. The Planning Department has considered the following in reviewing this proposed legislative amendment:

- A. The Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance;
- B. *The Plan Prince George's 2035 Approved General Plan;*
- C. The current area master plans, sector plans, and functional master plans for Prince George's County;
- D. The Prince George's County Climate Action Plan; and
- E. Referral comments.

III. COMPLIANCE WITH LAW, ASSESSMENT OF TECHNICAL DRAFTING CONVENTIONS, AND PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

The Department has determined that the proposed bill was drafted in a manner consistent with the legislative style and conventions of the current Zoning Ordinance.

IV. POLICY ANALYSIS

LDR-24-2026 proposes to add three definitions for uses currently prohibited in the Zoning Ordinance. More specifically, this bill will add definitions of “Corrections Facility”, “Detention Center”, and “Prison” to section 27-2500 – Definitions.

Section 27-11001(a)(4) of the Zoning Ordinance expressly prohibits prisons, detention centers, and corrections facilities unless owned or operated by Prince George's County. The Zoning Ordinance does not, however, contain definitions for these prohibited uses which may lead to confusion.

The proposed legislation adds clear and precise definitions for the uses referenced in Section 27-11001(a)(4). By establishing precise terminology, the legislation ensures consistent interpretation and administration of the existing prohibition while preserving the County’s longstanding policy framework governing these facilities.

From a policy perspective, introducing definitions for these prohibited facilities promotes consistency in application and enforcement by reducing ambiguity in interpretation. Clear definitions mitigate the risk of inconsistent administrative determinations, strengthen the defensibility of County decisions in the event of judicial review, and provide greater transparency to property owners and community stakeholders regarding the scope of prohibited uses.

For clarity purposes, the proposed bill does not create new development entitlements, nor amend the land use tables in Section 27-5101(c) – 27-5301(e). The substantive prohibition mentioned above remains intact unless the facility is owned and operated by Prince George’s County. In addition, when such facilities are proposed by a federal or state governmental entity, state law prohibits the County from imposing its zoning laws on the project and instead requires such projects go through Mandatory Referral Review. Section 27-1405 of the Zoning Ordinance also states that developments owned and used by the State of Maryland or the federal government are exempt from the provisions of the Zoning Ordinance. Accordingly, the proposed amendments do not expand zoning exemptions in any way. Rather, it ensures that the defined terms are consistent with the existing legal framework that applies to governmental facilities.

In sum, the proposed legislation is administrative and interpretive in character, enhances regulatory clarity, and does not substantively modify the County’s zoning authority or existing exemption structure.

V. COMPLIANCE WITH EVALUATION CRITERIA

Pursuant to Section 27-3501(c)(2)(B), staff finds the following with respect to the proposed amendment:

- (i) Is consistent with the goals, policies, and strategies of Plan Prince George's 2035 (or any successor General Plan), area master plans, sector plans, functional master plans, and any other applicable approved plans;**

Neither Plan 2035 nor any approved master, sector, or transit district development plans address any of the proposed definitions.

- (ii) Addresses a demonstrated community need;**

"Identified community need" is not defined by the Zoning Ordinance and is subjective. There is no community need identified in this legislation.

- (iii) Is consistent with the purpose and intent of the zones in this Ordinance, or would improve compatibility among uses and ensure efficient development within the County;**

LDR-24-2026 aligns with the purpose and intent by clearly defining certain uses that are prohibited in all zones outlined in the Zoning Ordinance. By establishing precise terminology, this legislation ensures consistent interpretation and enforcement of the existing prohibitions, thereby enhancing compatibility among different uses and promoting efficient development within the County.

- (iv) Is consistent with the implementation of the strategies and priority recommendations of the Prince George's County Climate Action Plan;**

Staff have not identified any policies or recommendations in the Climate Action Plan related to LDR-24-2026.

- (v) Is consistent with other related State and local laws and regulations; and**

LDR-24-2026 complies with this criterion.

- (vi) Would avoid creating significantly adverse impacts on the natural environment, including but not limited to water, air, noise, stormwater management, wildlife, vegetation, wetlands, and the natural functioning of the environment.**

LDR-24-2026 complies with this criterion.

VI. PLANNING BOARD PUBLIC HEARING

Section 27-3501(c)(2)(D) requires the Prince George's County Planning Board to hold a public hearing and make comments on the proposed legislative amendment within 30 days of the date of the transmittal of the Clerk of the Council. Said public hearing must be

noticed by electronic mail at least 21 days prior to the public hearing, sent to every community organization in the County registered pursuant to Section 27-3407(b)(3) of the Zoning Ordinance, and to any person or organization registered pursuant to Section 27-3402(d) of the Zoning Ordinance.

Notice for the public hearing on LDR-24-2026 was sent on February 26, 2026 as required by the Zoning Ordinance. The Planning Board public hearing will be held on March 19, 2026, thus meeting the notice requirement of the Zoning Ordinance.

Comments offered by the public prior to and during the Planning Board's public hearing will be summarized, along with the Planning Board's comments, in the Board's recommendation to Clerk of the Council.

VII. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Following review of LDR-24-2026 the Department is not recommending any proposed technical or substantive amendments.

VIII. RECOMMENDATION

Based upon the foregoing evaluation and analysis, the Planning Department's legislative team recommends that the Planning Board adopt the findings of this report and recommend the Planning Board **SUPPORT** LDR-24-2026.