The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY
Planning Department
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March 26, 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-14-2026
Use Regulations – Day Care Center for Children

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 of **SUPPORT** with amendments as described in the Recommendation section of this technical staff report.

I. BACKGROUND

A. Purpose: To increase access to childcare facilities by eliminating special exception approval for day care center for children in all zones; exempting day care center for children from detailed site plan approval; providing for community notification of a proposed day care center; removing minimum parking requirements from certain transit-oriented zones; reducing minimum parking requirements in certain activity zones; and providing for alternative parking compliance in certain zones

B. Impacted Property: This bill would impact all properties in the Rural and Agricultural Base Zones, the Residential Base Zones, the Nonresidential Base Zones, and the R-PD and IE-PD Zones.

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

To ensure consistency with the technical drafting conventions of the Zoning Ordinance, the Planning Department offers the following suggested revisions:

- Page 5 in Table 27-5101(e): Bracket out "and refer to special exception standards" in the use-specific standards cell since this use will no longer require a Special Exception in any Zone.

- Include Table 27-5101(f) – Add Principal Use Table for Overlay Zones, even if there are no modifications in the table. Also, bracket out "and refer to special exception standards" in the use-specific standards cell. When amending the Table of Uses, to ensure consistency across all Zones, we recommend all four Tables be included (27-5101(c)-(f) even if one or more of the Tables are not being amended.

- Delete page 6, Lines 22-24 and renumber subsequent clauses accordingly.

    - Detailed site plan review is currently not required for developments comprising less than 25,000 square feet and day care centers for children typically do not meet or exceed this threshold (which is approximately the size of the Lidl Grocery Store in Woodmore Town Center. Accordingly, this exception is not necessary but if a day care center for children is so large as to exceed 25,000 square feet, it would be appropriate for detailed site plan review.
    - A plat or site plan is already required for a building permit application. See 27-3611(c)(3).

- Page 6-7 lines 31-1 - should read "the" proposed site of the day care center.

Lastly, the purpose of the bill in page 1 lines 2-8, inaccurately states that the bill will be "removing minimum parking requirements **in all** transit-oriented zones" –see page 8, parking minimums are retained for both the TAC and NAC zones. The purpose clause should be revised to "removing minimum parking requirements from certain transit-oriented zones."

Analysis of the Legislative Amendment Decision Standards are contained in a separate subsection of this technical staff report below.

IV. POLICY ANALYSIS

LDR-14-2026 proposes to: (i) permit “Day Care Center for Children” as a use by right in all zones by eliminating the Special Exception requirement; (ii) exempt such uses from Detailed Site Plan (“DET”) approval, where otherwise applicable; (iii) require community

notification; and (iv) modify parking requirements by eliminating minimums in certain zones and reducing them in others, including provisions for alternative compliance.

In general, the proposed bill is consistent with the policy direction established by the Zoning Rewrite (CB-15-2024), particularly its emphasis on reducing discretionary review processes, expanding administrative approvals, and improving predictability in the development review process.

One of the objectives of the Zoning Rewrite was to eliminate special exceptions to the maximum extent practicable, as these are lengthy processes that sometimes place disproportionate weight on subjective testimony, rather than technical planning analysis or established standards. LDR-14-2026 advances this objective by allowing day care center for children use as permitted by right, subject to applicable standards. In doing so, the proposed bill restores alignment with the original intent of the Zoning Rewrite and promotes a more predictable and efficient entitlement process across all zones.

In light of the proposed deletion of the special exception provisions, the associated standards in Section 27-5402(x) governing play areas and related protections should be incorporated into the requirements applicable to permitted principal uses in Section 27-5102(d)(2)(A). These standards are intended to ensure that day care facilities are sited in locations that minimize children's exposure to adverse nearby impacts, and that adequately designed outdoor areas are provided to support their well-being in compliance with applicable State regulations.

Similarly, the Department considers that the exemption from Detailed Site Plan ("DET") review is appropriate since the Zoning Ordinance already provides use-specific standards for day care center for children, which adequately address site design, operational characteristics, and compatibility considerations.

Like special exception review, DET review introduces an additional layer of discretionary oversight that is not necessary where objective standards are sufficient to mitigate potential impacts. Administrative review, in this context, is a more efficient and appropriate mechanism. It reduces redundancy, shortens review timelines, and advances the County's broader goal of streamlining development approvals, as requested by the County Executive, the County Council and other stakeholders.

In addition, and as mentioned above, the day care center for children use has specific standards to ensure both accessibility and compatibility with surrounding uses. This structure outlined in the Zoning Ordinance reflects best practices in zoning, wherein predictable standards replace subjective review, thereby reducing risk for applicants while maintaining enforceable protections for neighboring properties.

The Department, however, recommends reconsideration of the proposed community notification requirement. Under the Zoning Ordinance, public notice is required in connection with applications that involve a public hearing to inform interested parties of an opportunity to present testimony for or against a proposal. In contrast, administrative approvals—such as building permits—do not involve a public hearing process. When an application meets the requirements, the permit is issued and there is no requirement that notice be given. If notice is required simply to inform residents that a day care center is

coming to their neighborhood, it may create confusion and frustration among residents, who will reasonably expect an opportunity to be heard. Without a mechanism for public input or appeal, however, such notice will not serve any meaningful procedural purpose and may undermine public confidence in the County's processes.

Regarding the proposed alternative parking compliance as currently drafted, it lacks sufficient specificity and enforceable standards. More exactly, page 6, line 31 simply says on street parking "may" be allowed without any considerations as to whether the specific location is appropriate. Instead, the Department recommends the sponsor refer to the existing provisions that allow on-street parking under Section 27-6307(e) of the Zoning Ordinance that allow applicants to apply for on-street parking as an alternative when it will not adversely affect neighborhood parking conditions.

In addition, the Department recommends that the proposed bill considers critical operational elements—such as pick-up and drop-off areas and emergency access—be accommodated on-site where appropriate.

Lastly, LDR-14-2026 presents an opportunity to update the definition of "day care center for children" to ensure clarity and internal consistency within the Zoning Ordinance, and alignment with State licensing requirements. As such, the Department recommends the following definition:

> "An establishment in which a program is operated that is designed to provide care and activities for nine (9) or more children not located in a dwelling unit [, ~~or thirteen (13) or more children in a dwelling unit~~,] on a regular schedule (more than once a week). This term shall not include recreational program, before- and after-school, "private school" or "small group child care center."

This revision removes language suggesting that such facilities may operate within a dwelling unit, allowing for a clear distinction between day care center for children as a principal use and accessory childcare facilities in a dwelling are defined separately as family child care home, small and family child care home, large. Retaining overlapping language creates ambiguity between principal and accessory uses. Since the Zoning Ordinance does not permit multiple principal uses on a single-family lot in the R-PD Zone or lower-intensity zones.

In conclusion, LDR-14-2026 is consistent with the intent of the Zoning Rewrite and reflects sound planning practice. By permitting Day Care Centers for Children by right, the legislation expands access to essential services while eliminating unnecessary procedural barriers associated with discretionary review.

With the proposed amendments and recommendations, the proposed bill provides a coherent, administrable framework that advances both community needs and regulatory simplicity.

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;

LDR-14-2026 is "consistent with the goals, policies and strategies of Plan Prince George's 2035 ("Plan 2035") (or any successor General Plan), area master plans, sector plans, functional master plans, and any other applicable approved plans" pursuant to Section 27-3501(c)(2)(B)(i) of the Zoning Ordinance".

Consistency with General Plan

The first critical initiative identified in Plan 2035 is to "undertake a comprehensive update of the County's Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances to modernize, streamline, and simplify the County's regulatory environment" (Plan 2035, p. 252). Plan 2035 further recommends establishing "a by-right development approval process and fast track permit process for the Downtowns with clear and consistent regulatory standards and processes and shortened review periods." (Plan 2035, p. 256). Most initiatives to reduce the time, costs, and complexity of the development review process to align with the County's competing jurisdictions are generally consistent with these recommendations. Any initiative to eliminate Special Exception and/or Detailed Site Plan review of a development application implements this critical initiative and better positions Prince George's County to implement the vision, goals, policies, and strategies of Plan 2035 by reducing costs and uncertainty on applicants.

Policy HN1 of Plan 2035 states "Concentrate medium- to high-density housing development in Regional Transit Districts and Local Centers with convenient access to jobs, schools, child care, shopping, recreation, and other services to meet projected demand and changing consumer preferences." (Plan 2035, p. 187, emphasis added)

The subject legislation addresses this policy by making it easier to locate child care services throughout the County, including within Regional Transit Districts and Local Centers.

Consistency with Area Master and Sector Plans

Efforts to streamline the application review and approval process have been recommended in several area master, sector, and transit district development plans, including those identified in Table 1:

Table 1: Relevant Recommendations of Area Master, Sector, and Transit District Development Plans (Streamlining the Development Approval Process)

Plan	Page	Policy/Strategy	Recommendation
2006 *Approved Master Plan for the Henson Creek-South Potomac Planning Areas*	94	Community Character: Revitalization: Policy 3	Streamline the development process for projects within designated revitalization overlay areas and other suitable locations.

Plan	Page	Policy/Strategy	Recommendation
		Community Character: Revitalization: Policy 3, Strategy 2	Explore innovative new zoning tools and review procedures designed to facilitate development in targeted locations.
		Community Character: Revitalization: Policy 3, Strategy 3	Expedite the development review and permitting process. Encourage developers to meet with both the Prince George's County Planning Department and Department of [Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement] before the design phase begins to ensure projects meet the minimum standards of the Zoning Ordinance and other applicable requirements.
2009 *Approved Landover Gateway Sector Plan*	114	Chapter 6: Community Development Elements: Market Potential, Policy 6	Streamline the review process and provide incentives for private investment.
2009 *Approved Marlboro Pike Sector Plan*	96	Chapter VII: Economic Development Strategies: E. Development Regulations, Policy 2	Streamline the development review approval process to ensure a more timely approval by the Planning Board and County Council to help projects move more rapidly toward implementation.
		Chapter VII: Economic Development Strategies: E. Development Regulations, Policy 2, Strategy 1	If necessary, revise and amend development review procedures to expedite approval of projects.
2010 *Approved Subregion 4 Master Plan*	374	Part V: Plan Implementation: Growth Centers: Financing and Funding Assistance	Streamlined/Fast-Track Development Review: The length of time spent in the review of plans can influence the cost of redevelopment, with speedier time frames for review associated with more cost effective redevelopment. To the extent that jurisdictions can offer "fast track" permitting for growth centers in Subregion 4, such streamlining of review could serve as an indirect incentive for redevelopment.

Plan	Page	Policy/Strategy	Recommendation
2013 *Approved Largo Town Center Sector Plan*	92	Chapter 5: Implementation: Public-Private Partnerships	The county has shown a willingness to help facilitate economic development by providing incentives and identifying opportunities for joint development that will leverage and strengthen public-private investment, such as expedited site plan and permit processes and analyzing various innovative financing mechanisms and techniques.
2013 *Approved Greenbelt Metro Area and MD 193 Corridor Sector Plan*	195	Table 35: Recommended Implementation Actions: Development Regulations (DR), DR3	Streamline development procedures and approval processes
2015 *Approved College Park-Riverdale Park Transit District Development Plan*	154	Implementation: Action Table: Development Regulations (DR), DR3	

Table 2: Relevant Recommendations of Area Master, Sector, and Transit District Development Plans (Increasing Access to Childcare)

Plan	Page	Policy/Strategy	Recommendation
2010 *Approved Subregion 4 Master Plan*	374	Part V: Plan Implementation: Economic Development: Goal 5	Support the continued revitalization of neighborhood-serving retail and service centers at appropriate locations… commercial activity in the living areas likely will focus on businesses that serve everyday needs of a typical resident. These businesses include convenience stores, child care, laundry services, and restaurants, among others. Focusing these business types into select areas accessible by all residents will spur investment due to the pedestrian and consumer activity that can be generated. In addition, this effort can act as a catalyst for the revitalization of a community.

Plan	Page	Policy/Strategy	Recommendation
2017 *Approved East Riverdale-Beacon Heights Sector Plan*	92	Strategy EP 5.1	Explore opportunities to establish a one-stop employment and workforce development center in the sector plan area where job seekers can participate in post-secondary, job training and certification programs, English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, and high school graduation equivalency (GED) programs. The center should seek to locate near a Purple Line station in order to serve residents from other communities, and include on-site child care for program participants.
		Strategy EP 5.6	Workforce development programming should be available during both day and night, with child care provided as needed.
	171	Healthy Communities Goal 3	Child care is available, accessible, and affordable.
	173	Policy HC 6	Increase opportunities for child care services within the sector plan area
		Strategy HC 6.1	Identify opportunities to incentivize the provision of child care and early education facilities, especially at the Purple Line stations, workforce development centers, and employment hubs.
2017 *Approved East Riverdale-Beacon Heights Sector Plan*	173	Strategy HC 6.2	Promote and utilize community partnerships with local nonprofits and the private sector to meet child care and early education needs.
		Strategy HC 6.3	Coordinate with local child care and early education referral/resource agencies to distribute resources and informational materials to child care and early education providers, employers, parents, developers and local businesses.
		Strategy HC 6.4	Work with property owners to ensure child-care facilities at the Purple Line stations.

(ii) Addresses a demonstrated community need;

"Identified community need" is not defined by the Zoning Ordinance and is subjective. This proposed legislation addresses a need identified in Plan 2035 and several other Area Master and Sector Plans, the need for accessible child care.

(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;

As mentioned above in this staff report, LDR-14-2026 will impact all properties in the Rural and Agricultural Base Zones, the Residential Base Zones, in the Nonresidential Base Zones and the R-PD and IE-PD Zones in the Regional District. This change is consistent with the purposes of the affected zones. Specifically, the LDR is consistent with the purposes and intent of the residential base zones, and nonresidential base zones, which promotes developments that provide for the public services and facilities needed to serve residential development, and appropriately locates lands for the full range of business uses needed by the County's residents, businesses, and workers, consistent with the goals and policies of the General Plan and the applicable Area Master Plan or Sector Plan to support quality economic growth.

(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-14-2026.

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

LDR-14-2026 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-14-2026 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-14-2026 was sent on March 19, 2026 as required by the Zoning Ordinance. The Planning Board public hearing will be held on April 9, 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-14-2026 the Department has offered the necessary technical drafting convention edits that are necessary for this proposed bill in Section II, above. As to the substantive aspects of the bill, the Department does not offer additional 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-14-2026 with amendments.