The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY
Planning Department
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July 14, 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-30-2026
Community Service and Commercial Uses

The Prince George's County Planning Department's legislative team has reviewed the proposed legislative amendment to the Zoning Ordinance and supports the intent of allowing adaptive productive reuse of commercial buildings within residential neighborhoods, but opposes the legislative approach proposed in LDR-30-2026, as described in the Recommendation section of this technical staff report.

The sponsor presented a version of this LDR to the Planning Department earlier in the year and met with Department staff. The Department's advice was consistent with the recommendation in this Staff Report except that it was also recommended the impacted property owner proceed with Planned Development approval given the site-specific nature of the proposal, the multiple proposed uses, and the specific development guidelines.

I. BACKGROUND

A. **Purpose:** To permit the following uses by right in the Residential, Single-Family-Attached (RSF-A) zones:

a. Place of worship located on a lot less than 1 acre in size; and
b. Alcohol production facility, small-scale; shared commercial kitchen; Restaurant; and Restaurant, quick-service (without drive-through)

and to create use standards for these uses to "promote the productive reuse of existing buildings and ensure compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods in which these uses are proposed.

B. **Impacted Property:** This bill would impact properties located in the Residential, Single-Family-Attached Zone (RSF-A).

Properties in the RSF-A Zone were classified by the 2021 Approved Countywide Sectional Map Amendment (CMA) or by subsequent Sectional Map Amendment. The CMA was an administrative rezoning to apply the new Ordinance. Pursuant to the County Council's Guide to New Zones, properties previously classified within the RMF-20 and R-T Zones were classified in the RSF-A Zone. Past Sectional Map Amendments contained justification statements for particular rezonings that further illustrate the District Council's intent in rezoning these properties.

Examples of this language include, but are not limited to:

a) "Rezoning [existing commercial parcels on the west side of Shadyside Avenue] to R-T because this area is too dense to be outside of a center or corridor node. This is to encourage less dense residential development in areas not adjacent to a center or corridor node. This zoning category is more compatible with the adjacent single-family neighborhoods." (*2010 Approved Subregion 4 Sectional Map Amendment: Zoning Change LF 2 Discussion, p. 477*.)

b) "Rezone the undeveloped portions of the property to R-T. This is consistent with the goals, policies, and strategies of the General Plan and the Subregion 4 Master Plan. It will reduce spot commercial zoning and encourage commercial development in the Donnell Drive opportunity area located across Pennsylvania Avenue." *(2010 Approved Subregion 4 Sectional Map Amendment: Zoning Change LF5 Discussion, p. 478 and Zoning Change LR8 Discussion, p. 482.)*

c) "Rezoning [Penn Southern Apartments and the shopping center at 4125 Southern Avenue SE] to R-T because this area is too dense to be outside of a center or corridor node. We want to encourage less dense residential development in areas not adjacent to a center or corridor node. This zoning category is more compatible with the adjacent single-family neighborhoods." (*2010 Approved Subregion 4 Sectional Map Amendment, Zoning Change LD8 Discussion, p. 456.*)

d) "Rezoning from the C-A, C-M, and R-55 Zones to the R-T Zone will permit the redevelopment of these properties with townhome uses that are an appropriate buffer between lower-density, single-family residential uses and higher-density commercial and mixed use." *(2008 Approved Capital Heights Transit District Overlay Zoning Map Amendment, Zoning Change 7 Discussion, p. 56.)*

e) "The R-T Zone is recommended [at 4800 Indian Head Highway] in accordance with the plan's recommendation for low-urban residential density and will provide for the introduction of new residential development in this gateway corridor. (The thrift store will become a nonconforming use.)" *(2000 Approved Sectional Map Amendment for The Heights & Vicinity (Planning Area 76A), Zoning Change E2-1 Discussion, p. 162.)*

f) "The zoning change from C-S-C to R-T will reinforce the residential development pattern of the existing neighborhood." (*2009 Approved Marlboro Pike Sectional Map Amendment, SMA Change 78 Discussion, p. 259*.)

g) "This property [a towing company at 5530 Marlboro Pike] has a re-zoning request to C-M. There is a special exception on this property (SE 3939) issued 08/04/89. The zoning change from C-S-C to R-T will reinforce the residential development pattern of the existing neighborhood." (*2009*

Approved Marlboro Pike Sectional Map Amendment, SMA Change 98 Discussion, p. 267.)

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-30-2026 would permit places of worship and restaurants as a by-right use within the Residential, Single-Family Attached (RSF-A) Zone, subject to specified criteria, while the same use would continue to require special exception approval in other residential zones that permit a broader range of residential and institutional uses, including the RMF-20 and RMF-48 Zones. This approach creates an inconsistency in the treatment of the use across residential zoning districts. For instance, the use, place of worship normally requires special consideration in zoning legislation to ensure that Prince George's County is treating such uses fairly and equitably across the County since it could potentially create concerns under constitutional principles, equal protection doctrines, or the federal Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA).

Place of worship is commonly located within residential neighborhoods and, accordingly, they are currently permitted in the RSF-A and other Residential Base Zones. Commercial uses, however, are not commonly located within residential neighborhoods, other than as home-based businesses, and, accordingly, they are generally prohibited in RSF-A and other Residential Base Zones. Places of worship are expected to be located in residential neighborhoods, whereas commercial kitchens and restaurants are not expected to be located in residential neighborhoods. Accordingly, this LDR will allow such uses in zones that are not designed to accommodate their impacts.

In addition, several of the proposed development standards for places of worship require further consideration, more specifically:

- The standards contained on page 6, lines 14 and 15 "(bb) The maximum allowable lot coverage for the zone in which the use is proposed shall not be increased", appear to duplicate requirements already established in lines 9 and 10 "(vi) The maximum allowable lot coverage for the zone in which the use is proposed shall not be increased". If the earlier provisions apply to all places of worship, the additional language may be unnecessary.

- The proposed criterion in lines 16 through 18 "(cc) The subject property shall be suitable for the proposed place of worship, taking into consideration the character of the surrounding properties and the general neighborhood, and any other uses on the subject property", requires a determination regarding the suitability of the use on a potential property. This standard is inherently subjective and is more characteristic of the findings associated with a Special Exception application. By-right uses are generally administered through objective, measurable standards that provide predictability and consistency in permitting decisions. Where compliance with objective standards results in approval in every instance, administrative review is more appropriate than discretionary review.

- Similarly, the proposed criteria applicable to Eating and Drinking Establishments in page 6, line 31 through Page 7, line 2 "(cc) The proposed use shall not adversely affect the character of neighboring properties; and (dd) The proposed use shall not create undue traffic congestion." reference adverse effects and traffic congestion without establishing measurable thresholds or performance standards. Absent objective criteria; consistent implementation may be difficult.
  It should also be noted that compatibility between uses is already addressed through existing requirements of the County Landscape Manual, including setbacks, buffering, and screening standards applicable to adjacent properties.

The companion background information/fiscal impact states the following:

> "This bill promotes the productive reuse of commercial buildings within residential neighborhoods by permitting certain uses in the Residential, Single-Family Attached (RSF-A) Zone. Specifically, the bill allows a restaurant use to be conducted in the RSF-A Zone, provided that the restaurant is located in an existing commercial building and does not expand beyond the footprint of that existing building. The proposed restaurant will also be reviewed for its impact on traffic and the general character of the surrounding neighborhood. Finally, the bill also permits certain places of worship in the RSF-A Zone, provided that certain development standards are met. To ensure compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood, this use will also be evaluated on the suitability of its location and its impact on the surrounding properties".

Based on the structure and specificity of the proposed standards, and the text cited above, staff notes that portions of the legislation appear to be narrowly tailored to accommodate a particular property or circumstance.

As a matter of planning policy, zoning text amendments are generally intended to establish regulations of countywide applicability rather than address development opportunities associated with individual parcels. Using a text amendment to authorize a use that is otherwise inconsistent with the purpose and intent of a zoning district may have broader implications beyond the individual property that prompted the legislation. Because text amendments apply uniformly wherever the specified conditions exist, use-specific standards developed to address a single circumstance may produce unintended consequences for other properties within the same zoning classification.

Accordingly, staff recommend careful consideration of whether the proposed standards are intended to establish countywide land use policy or whether the issues presented would be more appropriately addressed through existing property-specific zoning procedures.

In addition, the proposal should be evaluated for consistency with the purposes of the County's current Zoning Ordinance, including promoting orderly growth and development through predictable, comprehensive, and consistently applied land use regulations.

In conclusion, LDR-30-2026 does not establish a compelling public policy rationale for the proposed uses in the RSF-A Zone. Since a countywide planning need has not been identified or nexus to adopted policy objectives, the proposed amendment appears to function primarily as a mechanism to facilitate a limited set of potential development projects rather than advance a broader public purpose.

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-30-2026 is not "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

Modern, Streamlined, Simpler Ordinance:
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." LDR-30-2026 does not create a modern, streamlined, simpler Ordinance. It adds complexity, confusion, and subjectivity. Therefore, it is not consistent with Plan 2035.

1. Simplifying the Entitlement and Permitting Process

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.

As mentioned above, permitting a use that conflicts with the intent of a zone classification is incompatible with a modern and simple Zoning Ordinance, as it leads to bypassing the comprehensive planning and rezoning procedures authorized by State law and the Zoning Ordinance.

2. Property-Specific and/or Narrowly Tailored Text Amendments

   As previously mentioned, the proposed bill as drafted, suggests it targets a specific property, which was legally zoned by the District Council into the RSF-A Zone to facilitate the construction of attached single-family housing, likely in concurrence with a duly approved area master or sector plan that recommended the same, to the exclusion of other uses.

   When the District Council rezones an existing building for a completely different family of uses, prohibiting future development of the existing use, it does so with the knowledge and intent that the subject property be redeveloped with a different set of uses. A wholesale rezoning from Commercial to Single-Family Residential Zones does not often allow for adaptive reuse of existing buildings. Should a current or prospective property owner feel a mistake is made, the appropriate avenue to resolve this is through a Zoning Map Amendment.

3. A Simpler, Modern Zoning Ordinance:

   LDR-30-2026 conflicts with Plan 2035's recommendation for a simpler, modern Zoning Ordinance in the conditions identified below:

   a. It proposes to permit-by-right and establish specific requirements for permitted principal uses applicable only to, places of worship located on lots less than one acre in the RSF-A Zone but not in other zones. There is no purpose stated within the legislation to explain why permitting places of worship by-right in one single-family residential zone is necessary but permitting them only by special exception in other zones is also necessary.

   b. Land use regulations should be clear and objective, with standards that are quantifiable, measurable, or binary (yes/no). The Zoning Ordinance is intended to be interpretable by the general public and by-right uses permitted through the evaluation and approval of the Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement (DPIE).

The proposed language (and some of the existing language) includes subjective and/or undefined terms or phrases that are difficult to consistently and evenly enforce, including:

Table 1: Proposed Requirements for Subjective Findings

Page	Line(s)	Potential Subjective Findings	Challenges Presented
2	16-18	"The subject property shall be suitable for the proposed place of worship, taking into consideration the character of the surrounding properties and the general neighborhood, and any other uses on the subject property."	"Suitable" is a subjective term. The Zoning Ordinance defines Place of Worship, identifies through the Use Tables and the Zoning Map where such uses are permitted and defines the requirements for the specific use. A proposed Place of Worship that meets these requirements is, by law, suitable.
			"Character" is a highly-subjective and often controversial term. The Zoning Ordinance does not define it. The Zoning Ordinance permits Places of Worship in Residential Zones in part because such community uses are often important community institutions who have traditionally been located in residential neighborhoods.
			The "general neighborhood" is subjective. This phrase can mean a block, a subdivision, an area of the County, and anything in-between, depending on the motivation of the person using the phrase.
2	31	"The proposed use shall not adversely affect the character of neighboring properties;"	"Adverse" is a subjective term. The Zoning Ordinance does not define it. Its meaning may vary depending on the motivation of the person using the phrase.
3	1		See comments on "general neighborhood" and "character" above.
3	2	The proposed use shall not create undue traffic congestion.	Both "Undue" and "traffic congestion" are subjective. The Zoning Ordinance does not define them. Their meaning may vary depending on the motivation of the person using the phrase.

In sum, LDR-30-2026 does not create a modern, streamlined, simpler Ordinance. It adds complexity, confusion, and subjectivity and therefore, it is not consistent with Plan 2035.

Consistency with Area Master and Sector Plans

Prince George's County practices concurrent planning and zoning. While this practice is uncommon, its purpose is to immediately classify properties into the zone that best implements the recommendation of the applicable Master or Sector Plan. For the most part, properties classified in the RSF-A Zone were recommended by their concurrently approved Master or Sector Plan for medium- or medium-high

density residential development. Plans approved since 2015 generally use these designations for individual properties on a Future Land Use plan and/or map for a particular plan. Current definitions of these Future Land Use categories are as follows:

> Residential Medium-High: Residential areas between eight and 20 dwelling units per acre. Mix of dwelling unit types, including apartments.
>
> Residential Medium: Residential areas between 3.5 and 8 dwelling units per acre. Primarily single-family dwellings (detached and attached)*. (Several plans, most recently the 2025 Approved West Hyattsville-Queens Chapel Sector Plan. Future land use category definitions found on page 50 of the Preliminary Sector Plan, accessed online July 7, 2026 at https://issuu.com/mncppc/docs/whqc_staff_draft_iii)*

Recommending an existing or former commercial property for residential development and classifying that property into a Residential Base Zone such as RSF-A, is an affirmative, considered, and intentional act by the District Council to require redevelopment of that property to residential uses. Such actions are taken through the public, transparent, inclusive, and deliberative process of a Sectional Map Amendment, and should only be reversed through that same process.

As of July 7, 2026, there are 26,594 parcels in Prince George's County in the RSF-A Zone recommended by their applicable Area Master, Sector, or Transit District Development Plan for medium- or medium-high density residential development. (*Future land use categories within approved Area Master and Sector Plans have evolved over time. The Planning Department's Geographic Information System identifies several future land use categories previously used to recommended medium- and medium-density residential development. These categories include Urban, Urban Single-Family, Low Urban, High Suburban, and Medium Suburban*.) As a side note, future land use categories within approved Area Master and Sector Plans have evolved over time. The Planning Department's Geographic Information System identifies several future land use categories previously used to recommend medium- and medium-density residential development. These categories include Urban, Urban Single-Family, Low Urban, High Suburban, and Medium Suburban.

Table 2: Parcels in the RSF-A Zone Recommended for Medium- or Medium-High Density Residential Development, By Councilmanic District, as of July 7, 2026

Councilmanic District	Properties recommended for Medium- or Medium-High Density Residential Development as of July 7, 2026
1	1,532
2	1,709
3	1,565
4	2,068
5	5,920
6	3,324
7	8,076
8	524

9	1,876
Total	26,594

A recommendation for such development means that commercial development is not recommended on these parcels; were such development recommended, a mix of uses, or commercial future land uses, would have been recommended. While the Zoning Ordinance permits several commercial uses within the RSF-A Zone, these uses are not recommended by Area Master or Sector Plans. The commercial uses that would be permitted pursuant to LDR 30-2026 are not consistent with 29 of the County's 38 approved Area Master, Sector, and Transit District Development Plans covering the 26,594 parcels identified above.

In addition to these future land use recommendations, several Master and Sector Plans make specific recommendations for parcels in the RSF-A Zone, including the examples shown in Table 3:

Table 3: Sample Recommendations for Properties in the RSF-A Zone

Plan	Page	Policy/ Strategy	Recommendation
1989 *Approved Master Plan for Langley Park-College Park-Greenbelt and Vicinity*	70	Living Areas: Recommendations: Subcommunity Recommendations: Chillum-Takoma Park: Recommendation 3	Due to the large number of existing apartments in the Chillum-Takoma Park area, a seven-acre vacant tract zoned C-1, C-2, R-10, R-18, and R-55 fronting Sligo Mill Road between Ray Road and Orchard Avenue is recommended for townhouses (R-T Zone) to serve as a density gradation between existing commercial development and single-family detached homes.
1994 *Approved Master Plan for Bladensburg-New Carrollton and Vicinity*	54	Living Areas and Housing: Recommendations: Specific Recommendations by Neighborhood: Neighborhood 12	The densities of the Gelman tract, given these significant constraints, will not exceed 7.0 units per acre. Granting the R-T Zone will satisfy the twin tenants of the Plan, namely low density and more innovative site design. The Gelman property should therefore also be rezoned to R-T.
	72	Commercial Areas: Recommendations: Annapolis Road Corridor	A vacant parcel in the vicinity of Chesapeake and Buchanan streets is recommended for rezoning from C-S-C to R-T. For the reasons noted earlier, it is undesirable to continue any vacant parcel in this category. Further, it is unlikely that it will be developed commercially because of the excess amount of retail space. There is, however, a need for affordable housing, which can be provided in the R-T Zone. (*This master plan makes additional similar recommendations in areas subsequently superseded by more recent approved plans)*
2010 *Approved Subregion 4 Master Plan*	83	Living Areas A&C: Recommendations: Land Use and Community Design: Recommendation 14	Develop single-family houses and townhouses only in the living areas; apartment/condo living should be relegated to growth centers and corridors.

Plan	Page	Policy/ Strategy	Recommendation
2017 *Approved East Riverdale-Beacon Heights Sector Plan*	149	HN 4.3	HN 4.3: Where vacant or underdeveloped lots can be subdivided to create multiple buildable lots under a more intense zone, consider intensification of zoning for such lots in existing residential zones to permit the construction of additional dwelling units in existing neighborhoods, as illustrated in the text box.
2022 *Approved Bowie-Mitchellville and Vicinity Sector Plan*	83	CZ 3.1	Reclassify the properties at 0 Mitchellville Road (Tax ID 0681619), 1970 Mitchellville Road (Tax ID 0733451), and 15928 Peach Walker Drive (Tax ID 0680231) to the Residential Single Family-Attached (RSF-A) Zone to support the recommended single-family attached residential development; Map 16. Future Land Use, designates this property in the Residential Medium-High land use category.
		CZ 3.3	Reclassify the properties located at 3600, 3702, and 3900 Church Road (Tax ID 0801258, 0801357, 0801290, 0801340, 0801241, 0801274, 0801233, 0801282, and 0728741) known as Freeway Airport to the RSF-A (Residential, Single-Family-Attached) Zone.
2025 *Approved West Hyattsville-Queens Chapel Sector Plan (This approved Sector Plan has yet to be published)*	TBD	LU 10.2	LU 10.2. Develop multiple one-, two-, or three-family dwelling units on the property at 2901 Nicholson Street (Tax Account 1789874) to support 'Missing Middle' Housing initiatives in the sector plan area. Implement this strategy by reclassifying the subject property into the Residential, Single-Family, Attached (RSF-A) Zone. See also Strategy HN 1.4 and Map 22. Properties Recommended for Classification in the RSF-A Zone Pursuant to Strategies LU 10.
2025 *Approved West Hyattsville-Queens Chapel Sector Plan*	TBD	HN 1.4	HN 1.4. Construct a variety of infill single-family housing types, including single-family detached, single-family attached, duplex, and triplex, on properties zoned RSF-A within the sector plan area. See also Strategies LU 10.2.

This table includes recommendations for residential development in the Residential-Townhome (R-T) Zone within the County's prior Zoning Ordinance.

The proposed legislation would permit, by right, commercial uses that are incompatible with the recommendations identified above. Thus, LDR-30-2026 is inconsistent with at least 29 of the County's 38 approved Area Master, Sector, and Transit District Development Plans.

(ii) Addresses a demonstrated community need;

"Identified community need" is not defined by the Zoning Ordinance and is subjective. There is no identified community need addressed by 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-30-2026 is inconsistent with the purpose and intent of the zones in this Ordinance, specifically with the purposes of the RSF-A Zone which include providing development that is respectful of the natural features of the land and development that is compatible with surrounding lands (See Section 27-4202(f)). As it creates a separate set of standards for the uses place of worship and restaurant in the RSF-A Zone. Therefore, contrary to ensuring that efficient development, this bill may create incompatible development within the zone where the proposed standards apply.

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

LDR-30-2026 complies with this criterion.

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

LDR-30-2026 complies with this criterion. However, as noted in the analysis above, this bill could be in potential violation of the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000.

(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-30-2026 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-142-2026 was sent on July 9, 2026, as required by the Zoning Ordinance. The Planning Board public hearing will be held on July 30, 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-30-2026, the Department has no amendments at this time and reiterates the need for substantial review. The Department stands ready to provide whatever assistance the County Council needs to ensure that bills presented for the Council's consideration are consistent with the applicable sections of the County Code.

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 Planning Board **Support** the intent of supporting adaptive productive reuse of commercial buildings within residential neighborhoods but **OPPOSE** to the legislative approach proposed in LDR-30-2026, as described in the Recommendation section of this technical staff report.