



Zoning Ordinance Rewrite: FAST 2 Process Improvements

Work Session

March 3, 2025

Outline

- Requested feedback
- FAST 2 and Zoning Ordinance Rewrite
- Connection with Mayor and Council focus areas
- Rockville Advantages
- FAST 2 Plan
- Recommendations
- Requested feedback
- Questions

Requested Feedback

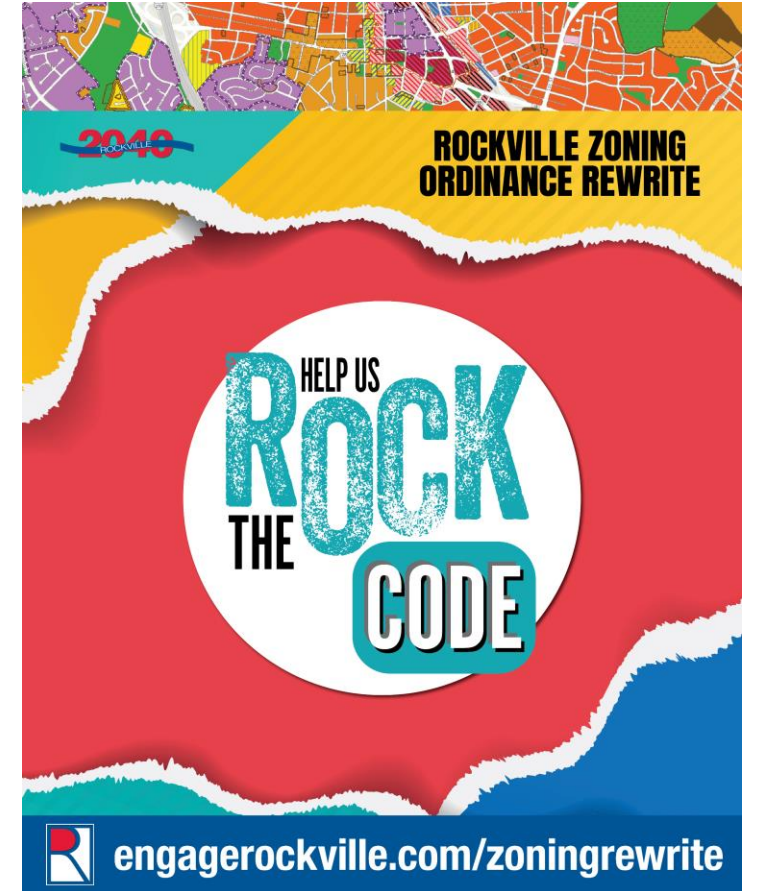
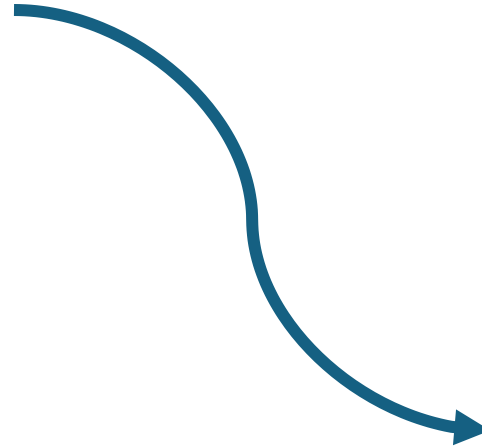
1. Do you support the proposed streamlined Project Plan process?
2. Do you support the proposed streamlined Planned Development (PD) amendment process?
3. Do you support a provision that allows for site plans in certain zoning districts to be approved administratively?
4. Do you support a provision that allows for certain types of site plan to be approved administratively?

FAST 2 and Zoning Ordinance Relationship



FAST (Faster, Accountable, Smarter, Transparent) Initiative:

Ongoing initiative (since 2018) to make the development review and permitting process Faster, Accountable, Smarter, and Transparent. Phase 2 began October 2024.



ZOR Objectives

- Implement Comp Plan land use and zoning recommendations
 - Affordable housing
 - Economic development
 - Town Center Master Plan
 - Climate Action Plan
 - Vision Zero
- Incorporate the city's commitment to equity, resilience, and sustainability
- Implement FAST II recommendations
- Modernize and reorganize to be easily understood and accessible
- Incorporate best planning practices

Connection with M&C Guiding Principles



Housing Production and Affordability

Rockville's share of the region's housing production goal requires 8,600 new housing units by 2040.



Economic Development

Fostering economic development within the City and increasing competitiveness within the region.



Effective & Efficient Service Delivery

Quality services delivered efficiently

Housing Guiding Principle

- Housing Crisis
 - National shortage of units (Freddie Mac)
 - Largest shortage of low-cost rentals and entry-level homes
 - High demand due to desirability of Rockville & Washington D.C. region
- National Strategies to Address
 - Housing Supply Accelerator (American Planning Association and National League of Cities)
 - Streamlining processes, administrative review and decision
 - APA guidance on administrative approvals
 - More efficient, less costly, makes projects more financially viable, more predictable
- Endorsed Housing Strategies (9/16 M&C work session)
 - Streamline the development review process.
 - Speed, predictability, and certainty with administrative approvals.

Economic Development Guiding Principle

- Housing crisis impacts economic development
- Efficient, predictable processes are critical to getting business to locate and open
- Processes must be competitive with other jurisdictions
- REDI's FY 25 Strategic Plan
 - Support Streamline opening and operating bio/life sciences ("Bio-Ready" Sites)
 - Reduce barriers to coming to Rockville
 - More administrative approvals

Effective and Efficient Service Guiding Principle

- Current processes are long
 - Project Plans average 18 months from preapplication to approval
 - Site plans to Planning Commission over 7 months
- Some developers claim that the time and expense of the process limits Rockville's attractiveness
- Steps taken to address:
 - Mapped processes
 - Identified steps that are redundant or of limited value
 - Developed recommendations that ensure requirements are met through transparent processes
- Greatest opportunity to expedite building and permitting is through development processes (Potential for development to start 6 months to a year quicker)

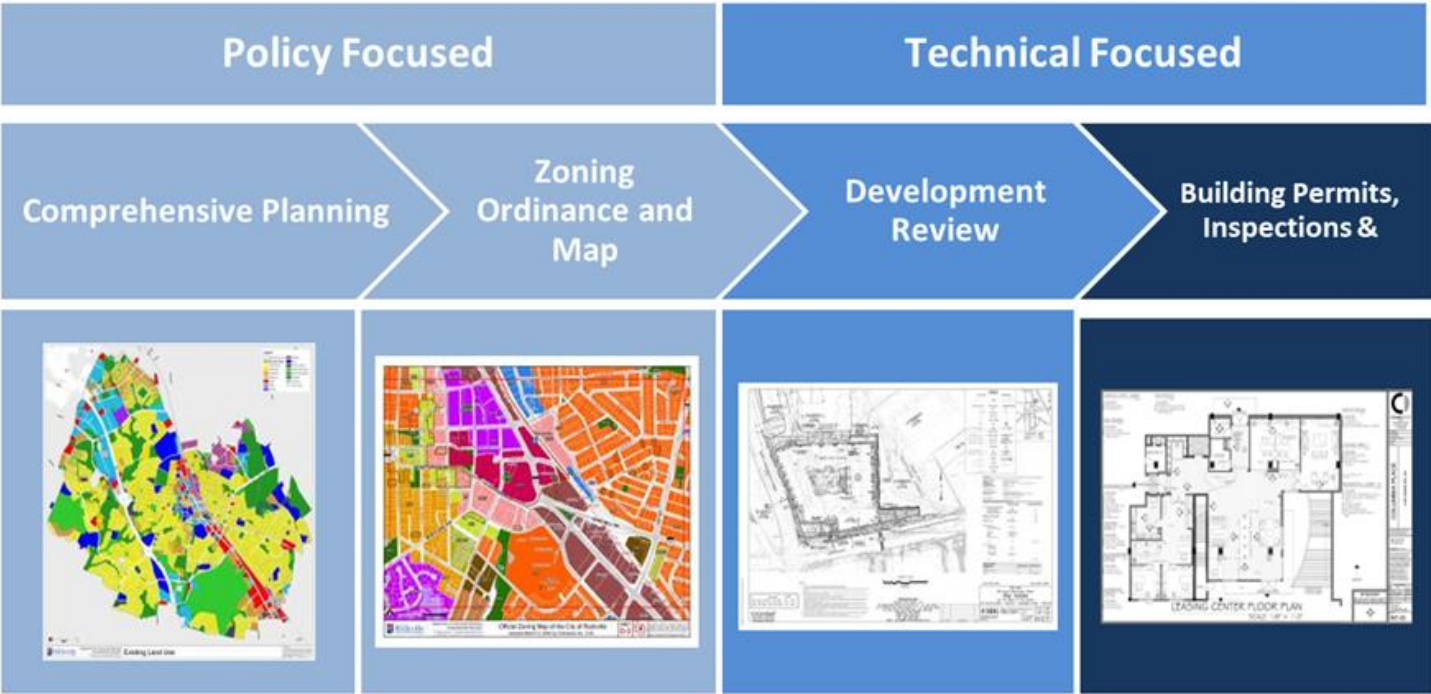
Rockville Advantages

- Housing Units in pipeline/projected

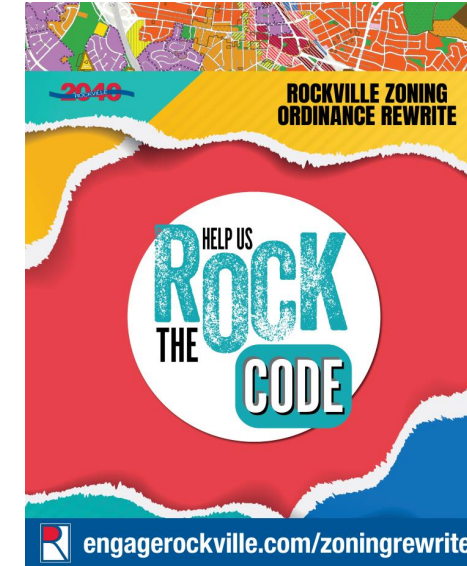
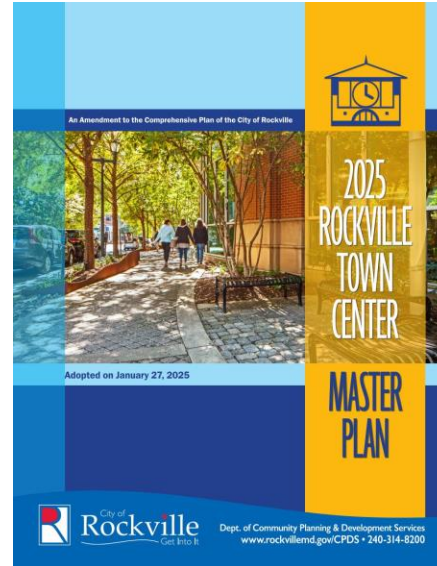
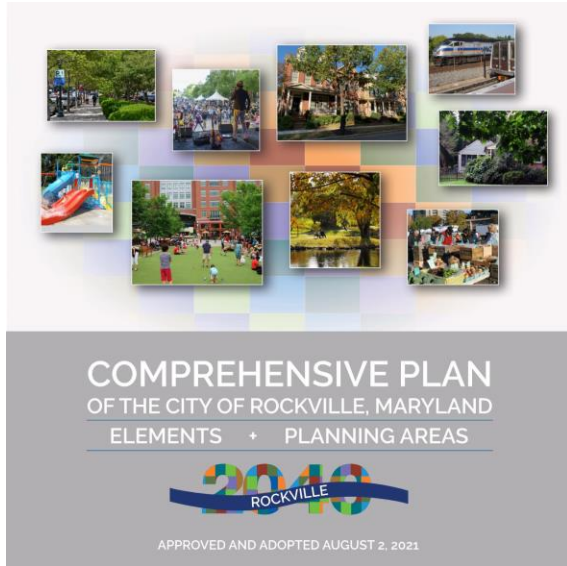
	2020-2030	2031-2040	2041-2050	Total
Approved	4,699	460	-	5,159
Projected	-	3,440	1,843	5,283
Pending	295	226	-	521
Completed	1,197	-	-	1,197
Total	6,191	4,126	1,843	12,160

Source: City of Rockville Department of Community Planning and Development Services

Rockville Advantages



Rockville Advantages



- Visionary Policy Framework
 - Recommendations to:
 - Increase housing
 - Update zoning
- Implementing through ZOR
 - Update process and requirements
 - ✓ Parking, building height
 - ✓ Parkland/public use space
 - ✓ EV charging
 - ✓ Business Supportive Regulations
 - ✓ Other

FAST 2 Work Underway

- Drafting changes to Chapter 21 (road code) to streamline processes and clearer regulations
- Creating a single point of intake for all applications (virtual one-stop shop)
- Permitting
 - Establish and implement a metric to reduce time to building permit issuance
 - Restarted Quick Start permit on 2/17

FAST 2 Work Underway (continued)

- Process updates in ZOR
 - Administrative process for some subdivision plats
 - Administrative review of some historic cases
 - More efficient and effective alternative process for changes of use for new businesses/tenants
 - Streamlining the project plan and Planned Development Amendment processes
 - Additional administrative approvals for certain site plans

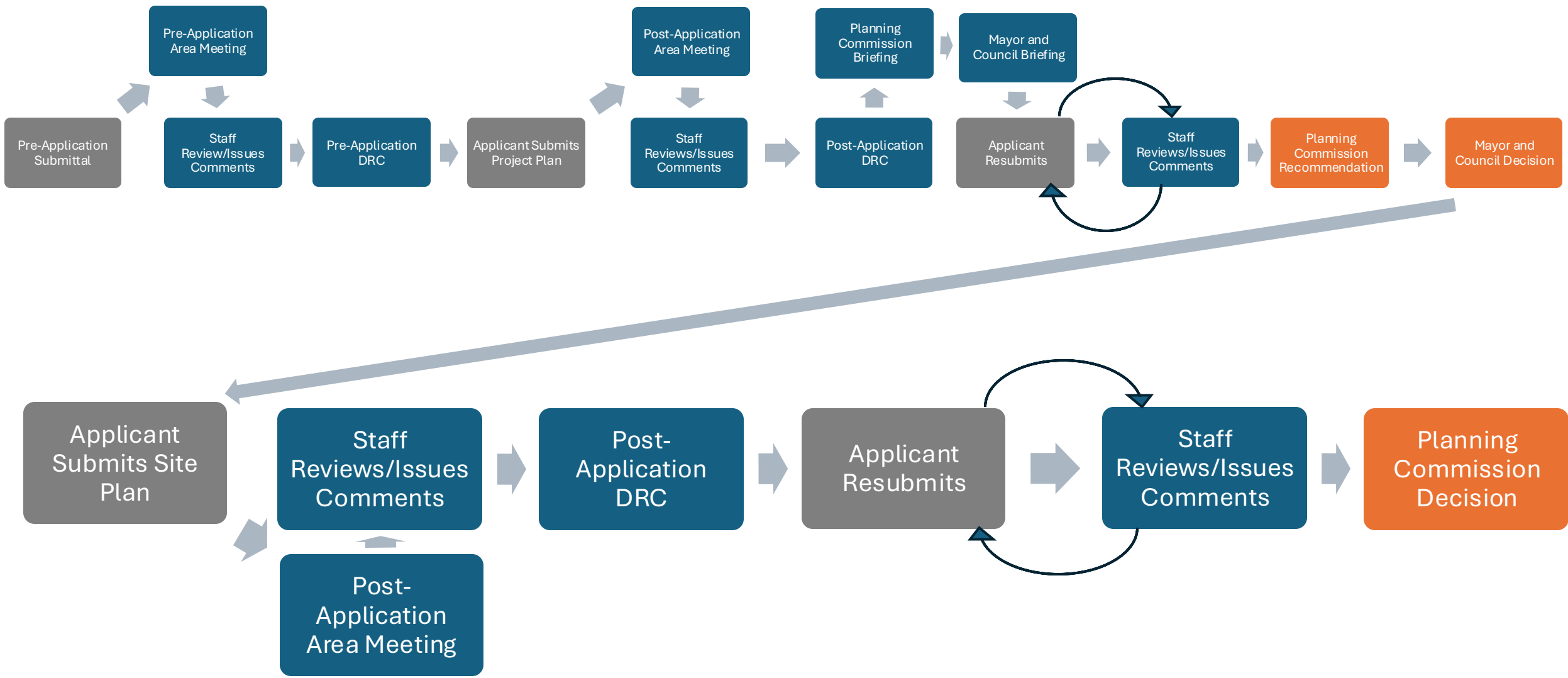
Overview of Recommendations

1. Streamline the Project Plan process
2. Streamline the Planned Development (PD) amendment process
3. Adopt a provision that allows for site plans in certain zoning districts to be approved administratively
4. Adopt a provision that allows for certain types of site plan to be approved administratively
 - For all processes, public notification required for all area meetings and public hearings before the Planning Commission and Mayor and Council

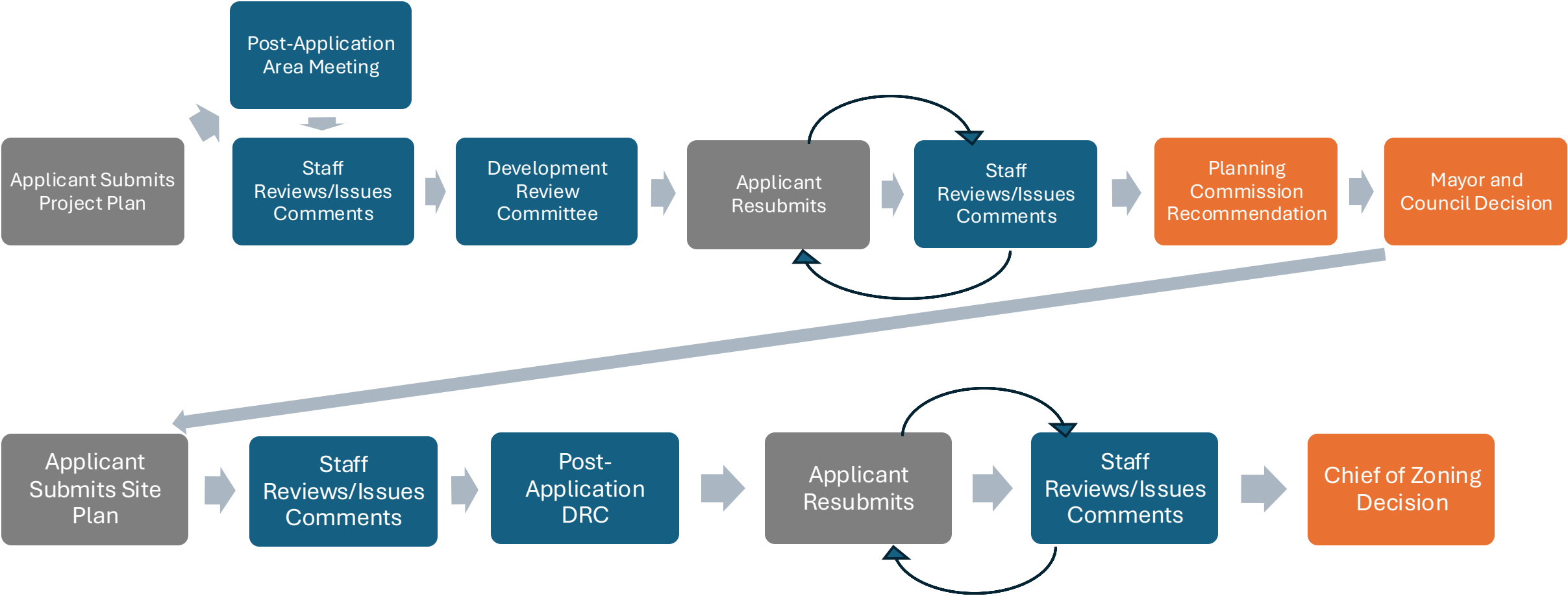
Recommendation 1 – Streamline Project Plan Process

- Project plans are the largest projects (Shady Grove, Twinbrook Quarter)
- M&C continue to be the deciding body
- Combine two area meetings into a single post-application meeting
- Remove Planning Commission and M&C briefings
- Allow subsequent site plans to be approved administratively
 - May be processed concurrently so long as project plan is approved first
- Goal to make the process achievable within 6 months
 - Currently takes 18 months on average

Current Project Plan Process



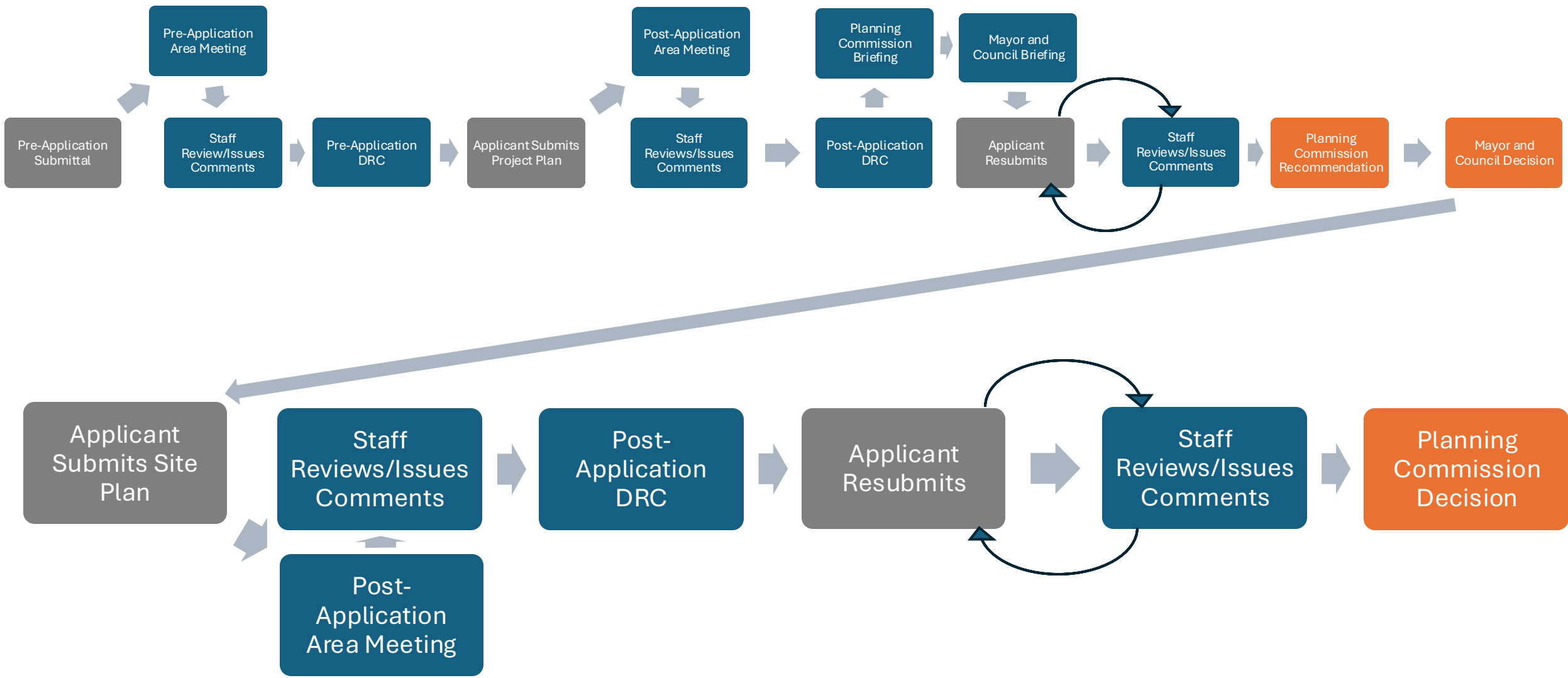
Proposed Project Plan Process



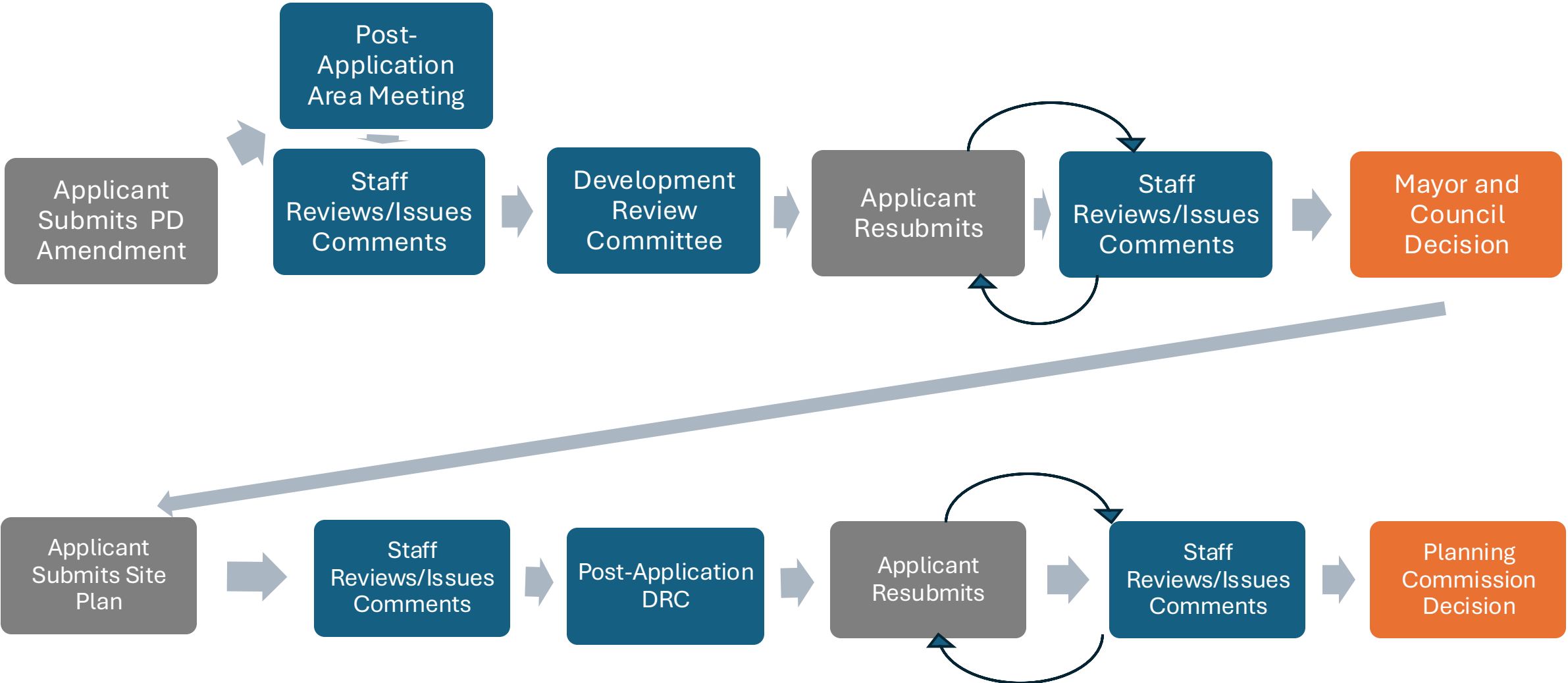
Recommendation 2 – Streamline Planned Development Amendment Process

- Multiple PD zones throughout the City
 - Development requires a PD amendment (Rockshire, Tower Preserve)
- M&C continue to be the deciding body
- Combine two area meetings into a single post-application meeting
- Remove Planning Commission and M&C briefings
- Allow case to proceed directly to the Mayor and Council
- Planning Commission approves subsequent site plans
 - May be processed concurrently so long as PD Amendment is approved first
- Goal to make the process achievable within 6 months
 - Currently takes 18 months on average

Current PD Amendment Process

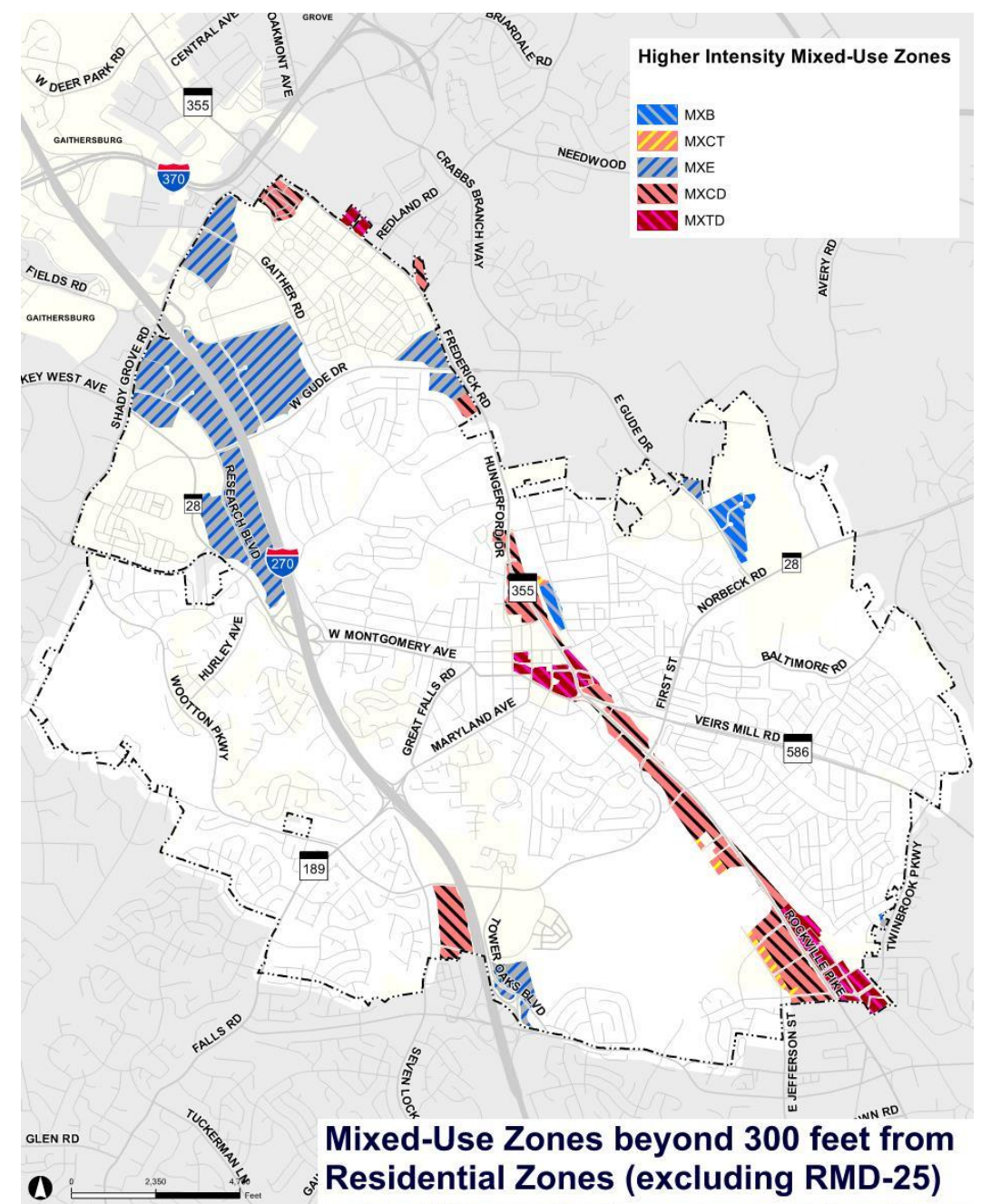


Proposed PD Amendment Process



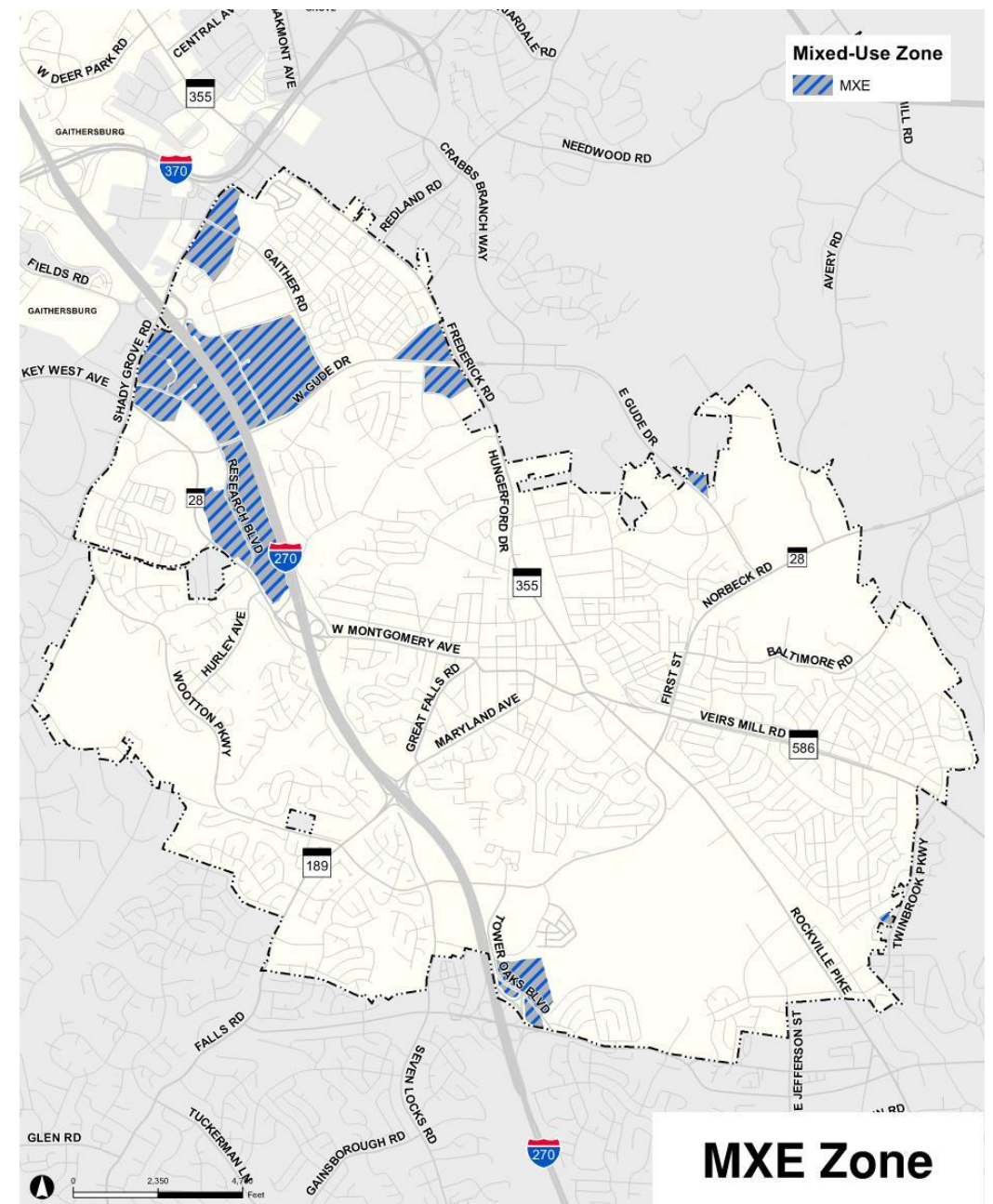
Recommendation 3

- Designate certain mixed-use district developments to be approved administratively
 - Only in most Mixed-Use zones (MXB, MXCT, MXE, MXCD, and MXTD) near transit and existing infrastructure)
 - Only when not within 300 feet of a residential zone
- Montgomery County has similar administrative provision



Recommendation 4

- Designate additional project types for administrative site plan approval
 - Research and development (including life sciences) in the MXE zone
 - Aligns with City's economic development goals and REDI's FY 25 Strategic Plan priority "bio-ready"



Recommendation 4 (continued)

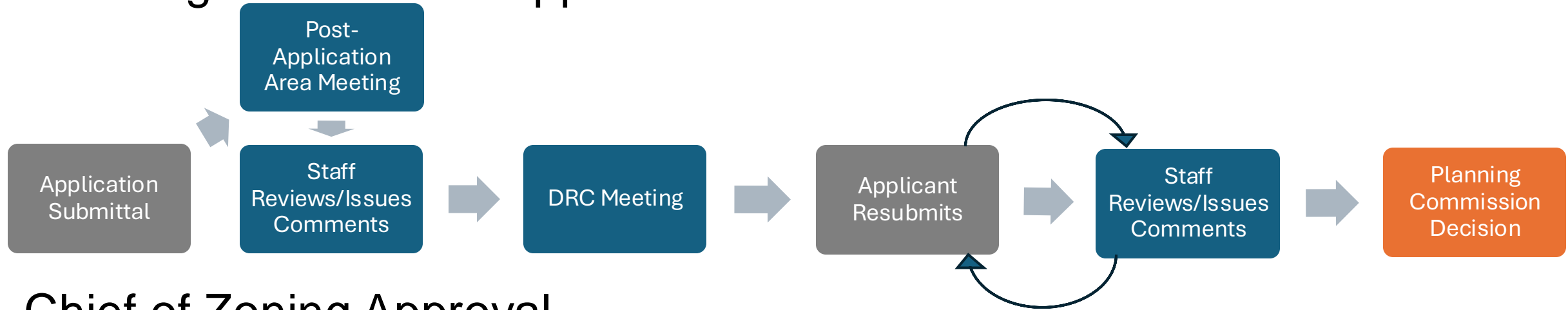
- Designate additional project types for administrative site plan approval
 - Housing developments with 20% or greater affordable housing units
 - Housing for senior adults and persons with disabilities.
 - Would reduce barriers to supportive housing types for vulnerable populations.
 - Residential development up to 19 units.
 - Faster process is especially important for smaller projects
 - Nonresidential (e.g. office) to residential conversions.



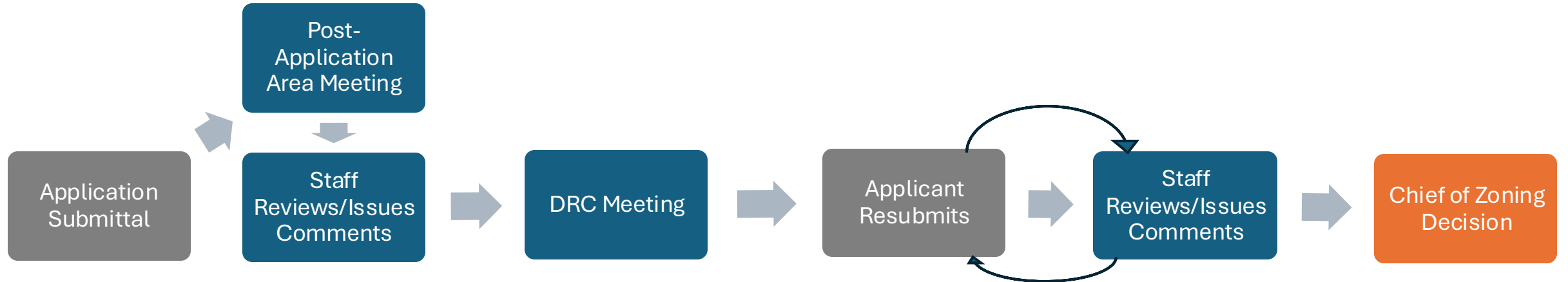
Proposed office to residential conversion at 12501 Ardennes

Proposed Site Plan Processes

■ Planning Commission Approval



■ Chief of Zoning Approval



Comparison of Site Plan Processes

- Opportunity for transparency, community engagement, and feedback in both processes
- Same thorough technical review to ensure all city requirements are met
- Same/similar outcome – a site plan that implements the city's technical requirements as set forth in the zoning ordinance and other city standards
- Currently, these site plans are reviewed and approved in one Planning Commission meeting as presented and recommended by staff
- Site Plans near existing residential communities remain Planning Commission decisions
- Administrative decisions to be publicly posted

FAST - Unlocking Rockville's Potential

- FASTer processes
 - Project Plans and PD Amendments currently take 18 months on average, could be achieved in 6 months (1 year sooner)
 - Administrative site plans - reduction of approximately 7 – 10 weeks (3 to 6 weeks for approvals + 4 weeks by combining area meetings)
- Aligned with City's goals and priorities
 - Rockville to be premier place for housing, office to residential, life-sciences
- Predictability and certainty
- Incentive for new affordable and market-rate residential development in the pipeline to be built
- Adaptable – allows for future M&C additions to respond to shifting market conditions or city priorities

Requested Feedback

Requesting general direction, with specific code language to come back through ZOR

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Questions?