

## **Staff Responses to Planning Commission Questions**

At the work session on [April 23](#), the Planning Commission considered four recommendations regarding the development process. These recommendations proposed streamlining processes, removing duplicative steps, and allowing additional administrative approvals.

The Commission supported the first two recommendations, which outlined streamlined processes for project plans and Planned Development (PD) amendments. The Commission posed questions and requested additional information on two other recommendations that proposed additional administrative approvals for certain site plans. These are summarized below along with staff's responses.

1. Could residential in other adjoining jurisdictions be included in the buffer area in Recommendation 3?
  - Staff Response: Yes, staff will ensure that the ZOR adoption includes provisions for including residential zones in jurisdictions that adjoin the city.

Moreover, this provision is not needed because these zones are the most intense and are where plans call for development, and infrastructure is in place. The 300' distance requirement ensures separation and avoids compatibility issues with residential. As detailed in the "Site Plan Analysis" section below, historic cases that would have been eligible for this provision demonstrate this. If there are concerns with this recommendation, staff suggests increasing the size of the buffer instead of incorporating the other options presented on April 23.

2. What determines a Level 1 or a Level 2? Is there an opportunity to improve?
  - Staff Response: The Zoning Ordinance currently bases the level of review on a [point system](#). Each application is evaluated on the acreage of the site, the number of dwelling units proposed, the square footage of non-residential space proposed, the residential impact area, and the traffic impact of the proposed development. Each of these items is allocated a number of points which are added together to determine the complete point valuation for the project. Up to 6 points is a Level 1 site plan, Level 2 is 7-15 points, and 16 or more points is a project plan. In preparing the response to this question, staff has identified and prepared an additional Recommendation 5 below.
3. Preliminary benchmarking - how do Rockville's processing times compare to other nearby jurisdictions?
  - Staff Response: Staff evaluated processing times for site plans and compared them to similar processes in Gaithersburg, Montgomery County, and Frederick City.
    - Rockville: Staff evaluated the time between application submittal and final action for cases from 2014 to 2024. Level 2 site plans took nearly 7 months on average. Administrative site plans (amendments and Level 1s) took under 4 months.
    - The City of Frederick provides two calendars with application and review timeframes. For simpler projects, the time from application to Planning Commission action ranges from approximately 4-6 months. For more complex projects, it ranges from 6-8 months.
    - Montgomery County: Montgomery County's Ordinance sets specific review times for each application type, as follows:

- Sketch Plans (including major and minor amendments): 90 days
- Preliminary Plans: 120 days
- Site Plans (including major and minor amendments): 120 days
- Project Plan Amendment: 120 days

An applicant may request extensions to allow additional time to meet all necessary code requirements and standards. Aside from an allowable 30-day Director-level extension, there is no limit to the length of each extension or the number of extensions granted by the Planning Board, as long as the applicant continues good faith efforts to address requirements.

Staff has not yet found metrics on the total time from application to final action for these cases. However, a review of recent Planning Board agendas and discussion with Montgomery County staff indicate that one or more extensions are more common than final action within the codified timeframes.

- Gaithersburg: Similar to Rockville's, the City of Gaithersburg's ordinance does not prescribe a time in which their site plan applications must be approved. Their staff estimate that their Sketch Plans and Schematic Development Plans take approximately six (6) months, site plan applications take approximately three (3) to four (4) months, and their site plan amendments take approximately one (1) month when approved by staff and two (2) months when approved by their Planning Commission. Note that these are estimates based on staff's experience and not based on actual project data.