

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

November 2015

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/zoning/pdc-prm-crdamendment/>

### **Abbreviations Used in this Document**

FAR - Floor Area Ratio

PDC – Planned Development Commercial District

PRM – Planned Development Residential Mixed Use District

CRD – Commercial Revitalization District

CRA – Commercial Revitalization Area

CBC – Community Business Center

TSA – Transit Station Area

Board – Board of Supervisors

### **1. What is the purpose and intent of the PDC and PRM Districts?**

The PDC District, which was created in the early 1970's and predates the current Zoning Ordinance, was established to encourage the innovative and creative design of high density commercial mixed use development and to insure high standards in the layout, design and construction of commercial developments. The PRM District was established in 2001 to accommodate high density residential mixed use developments, particularly around transit station areas and other mixed use centers. Similar to the PDC District, the PRM District is designed to promote high standards in design and layout, to encourage compatibility among uses within the development and integration with adjacent developments. Currently, the maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) in the PDC District is 2.5 and the maximum FAR in the PRM District is 3.0.

### **2. What is Floor Area Ratio, typically referred to as FAR?**

FAR is used to measure the overall intensity of the development and is determined by dividing the gross floor area of all buildings on a lot by the land area of that lot. FAR along with building height, building setbacks, and open space requirements all help define the built form of a development. Many jurisdictions use FAR as the basis for determining the maximum development potential of a particular property.

### **3. Why is the maximum allowable FAR proposed to be increased to 5.0 in the PDC and PRM Districts when the property is located in a TSA, CBC, CRD or CRA?**

The PDC and PRM Districts are the preferred zoning districts to be used when rezoning to the higher intensity, mixed use communities set forth in the comprehensive plan. The intensity recommendations set forth in the comprehensive plan in certain transit station and

revitalization areas are currently higher than the PDC and PRM Districts would permit under the current limits of 2.5 FAR and 3.0 FAR, respectively, so staff is proposing to increase the maximum FAR to accommodate the higher intensity mixed use development envisioned by the comprehensive plan.

**4. Will all developments in the PDC and PRM Districts be eligible for a maximum FAR of up to 5.0?**

No. Only those properties that are to be rezoned to PDC or PRM that are located in either a TSA, CBC, CRD or CRA may request an FAR above the 2.5 FAR limit in the PDC District or the 3.0 FAR limit in the PRM District. This maximum FAR would be further limited to only those properties where the comprehensive plan recommends the higher intensity level for the development. All such rezoning applications will require a public hearing before the Planning Commission and a public hearing before the Board of Supervisors. Nothing guarantees that any development will be approved by the Board or that any development will be approved for the maximum FAR allowable by the zoning district.

**5. How do the density/intensity recommendations of the comprehensive plan relate to the maximum allowable FAR in the Zoning Ordinance for planned developments?**

All planned developments are subject to the provisions of Par. 1 of Sect. 16-101 of the Zoning Ordinance, which states "the planned development shall substantially conform to the adopted comprehensive plan with respect to type, character, intensity of use and public facilities. Planned developments shall not exceed the density or intensity permitted by the adopted comprehensive plan, except as expressly permitted under the applicable density and intensity bonus provisions." The bonus provisions referenced in this provision relates specifically to any such bonus that is attributable to the provision of affordable housing.

**6. Are the proposed maximum FARs automatically applicable to any property currently zoned PDC or PRM?**

No. Implementation of these changes to a particular property cannot be achieved until such time as there is an amendment to a previously approved rezoning that would permit the applicant to implement these proposed higher FAR. As with the new rezoning applications described in Item 2 above, an amendment to a previously approved rezoning also requires a public hearing before the Planning Commission and a public hearing before the Board of Supervisors.

**7. Does the proposal reduce the minimum required parking for developments in a PDC or PRM District?**

No. The parking rates for all uses remain unchanged by the proposed amendment. The proposal will clarify the existing provisions that allow for a potential parking reduction based on the proximity to transit opportunities. And, because the comprehensive plan

recommendations for these areas envision mixed use communities with residential and non-residential components, the proposal will add residential uses to the existing provisions that allow an applicant to request a parking reduction in a CRD for non-residential uses. In all cases for a residential parking reduction, the request is subject to Board review and approval.

**8. What is the change regarding the inclusion of cellar space in the calculation of gross floor area?**

Under the current provisions of the Zoning Ordinance, any floor area with more than half of its clear height below grade level is considered cellar space. Such cellar space, regardless of how it is used, does not count toward the FAR calculation. However, if cellar space is used for something other than mechanical equipment, uses that are accessory to the operation of the building, loading or unmanned datacenter equipment, then the appropriate amount of parking for the use(s) must be provided. Today, cellar space is essentially "free" FAR and staff believes that going forward such space should be considered in the FAR calculations in the PDC and PRM Districts.

**9. Does the proposed amendment reduce the minimum required open space for the PDC or PRM District?**

No. The current 15% minimum required open space for the PDC District and 20% minimum required landscaped open space for the PRM District are not being modified. However, the proposal will limit the amount of required landscaped open space that can be provided above street level to not more than 50% of the requirement. Currently, there is no limit on this percentage, essentially allowing 100% of the open space to be located on rooftops or otherwise above street level. Additionally, the proposal will direct an applicant to the comprehensive plan to address the design features, dimensions, location and other factors associated with the landscaped open space when there are applicable recommendations for streetscape and urban park standards for the property.