



CITY OF ALEXANDRIA

Zoning Ordinance Text Amendments

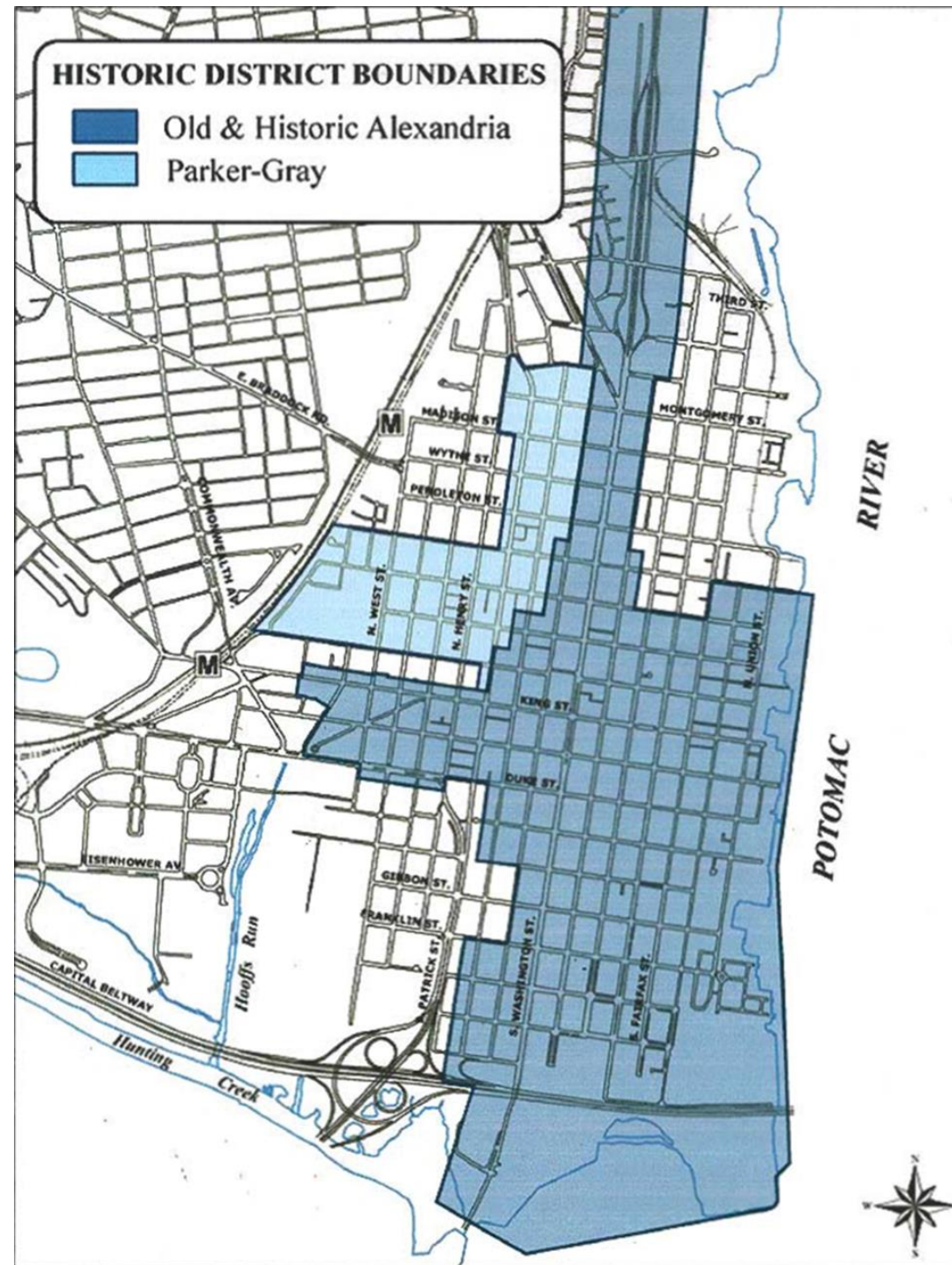
- **Historic Preservation**
- **Residential**
- **Commercial**

October 22, 2025





Historic Preservation: Purpose



- Clarify and streamline BAR review of development projects
- Increase clarity & consistency of language in Article X
- Create more pathways for staff (administrative) approval
- Give property owners more flexibility in planning projects
- Update curb cut regulations in OHAD



Part I: Changes to BAR Review Process for Development Projects (DSP/DSUP)

- Formalize concept review process - required for all Development projects
- COA split into two parts
 - COA 1 reviewed before PC/CC hearing
 - BAR reviews bulk characteristics under 10-105(A): height, scale, massing, setbacks, and general arrangement of buildings or structures
 - COA 2 reviewed after PC/CC hearing
 - BAR reviews architectural features subject to the standards of 10-105(A); cannot change approved bulk characteristics



Part II: Updates to Article X of the Zoning Ordinance (Historic Districts and Buildings)

- Clarify standards for routine maintenance vs repair and replacement
 - Routine maintenance does not require BAR approval; in-kind replacement does
- Remove outdated and inappropriate language
 - References to real estate values & cost (not under BAR purview)
 - \$10 annual subscription for notice of public hearings (eNews is now used)
- Ensure language in the OHAD, PG, and 100YOB sections is consistent
- Increase validity period of Certificate of Appropriateness/Permit to Demolish for non-development projects (12 months to 36 months)
- Use gender-neutral language when appropriate (chairman > chair)



Part III: Historic Preservation Updates Outside Article X

Waiver of Rooftop Mechanical Screening

- 6-403(B)(2) - Rooftop appurtenances
 - Rooftop mechanical equipment, citywide, must be screened, but the BAR has the authority to waive or modify the screening requirement
 - Allows BAR to delegate waiver authority in PG as an administrative (staff-level) approval
- Proposed update: revise language to allow BAR to delegate waiver authority in OHAD and 100YOB
 - Design Guidelines Committee would then decide what review levels are appropriate



Part III: Historic Preservation Updates Outside Article X

Historic Districts ATM Regulations

- 7-1800(A)(1)(a) does not allow the installation of an ATM on a "contributing structure" in the historic districts, as defined by the Secretary of the Interior's (SOI) Standards
- Propose to remove this language – BAR does not use "contributing" vs "non-contributing"
- ATMs already require a COA and have their own Design Guidelines



Part III: Historic Preservation Updates Outside Article X *Old and Historic District (OHAD) Curb Cut Regulations*

- Create a relief mechanism from the prohibition of accessing parking from the street rather than an alley or interior court, as required by 8-200(C)(6)(A)
- Currently, curb cuts in the OHAD require approval of a variance by the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA)
 - Curb cuts in PG and 100YOB are reviewed by the BAR
- Circuit Court and Virginia Court of Appeals decided that a variance is not appropriate as a relief mechanism for parking access regulations
- Proposed update: transfer purview of curb cut applications in OHAD from BZA to BAR, same as PG and 100YOB



Residential: Purpose



- Adapt SUP and SUB regulations to current market and planning realities
- Improve Zoning Ordinance clarity and usability
- Create standardized entitlement process for office-to-residential conversions



Office-to-Residential Conversions - Background/Context

- 1992 comprehensive zoning rewrite created small subset of buildings that can't be converted without special approvals
- Even smaller subset allowed to convert with SUP
- Other conversions have occurred either by right or with varying approvals (rezonings and various special use permits)
- Processes need standardization





Office-to-Residential Conversions - Recent Projects



601 North Fairfax Street



Office-to-Residential Conversions - Recent Projects



4900 Seminary Road



Office-to-Residential Conversions - Potential Amendment

- Expand existing SUP conversion option currently only available to buildings on King Street
- Considerations:
 - Consistency with small area plan goals
 - Appropriate approval pathway (by-right, admin, or full hearing SUP)



Part II: Substandard lots and Lots without Frontage - Current Policy

Zoning Ordinance classifies lots as substandard if they are too small, too narrow, or don't have enough street frontage to meet minimum zoning requirements

- Vacant substandard lots and lots without frontage can be developed with SUP approval depending on:
 - How its size compares to surrounding properties
 - When lot was recorded
 - Whether applicant owns adjacent property and if that property is vacant/developed
- Existing houses on substandard lots can be:
 - Rebuilt (if demolished) at roughly the same size and height
 - Expanded if most of the first floor remains
 - Demolished and rebuilt larger and taller with SUP approval



Part II: Substandard lots and Lots without Frontage - Current Policy

- Council reviews vacant substandard lot SUPs based on the whether the proposed house would:
 - Provide adequate setbacks
 - Not impact adjacent property values
 - Be compatible with neighborhood character
- For developed substandard lots: SUP review limited to bulk, height, and design compatibility





Part II: Substandard Lot (Re)development

Approval History:

Vacant Substandard Lots

- 34 SUPs, 8 denials since 1973

Developed Substandard Lots

- 36 SUPs, all approved since 2008

Considerations:

- Assess whether regulations are aligned with current City policy and market conditions





Part III: Subdivisions - Background

- Subdivision regulations ensure land is divided and recorded properly
- Any new or relocated lot line requires Planning Commission approval
- Planning Commission can grant exemptions from subdivision requirements if specific criteria are met
- For residential property, new lots must be platted consistently with neighboring lots



Part II: Substandard lots and Lots without Frontage - Current Policy

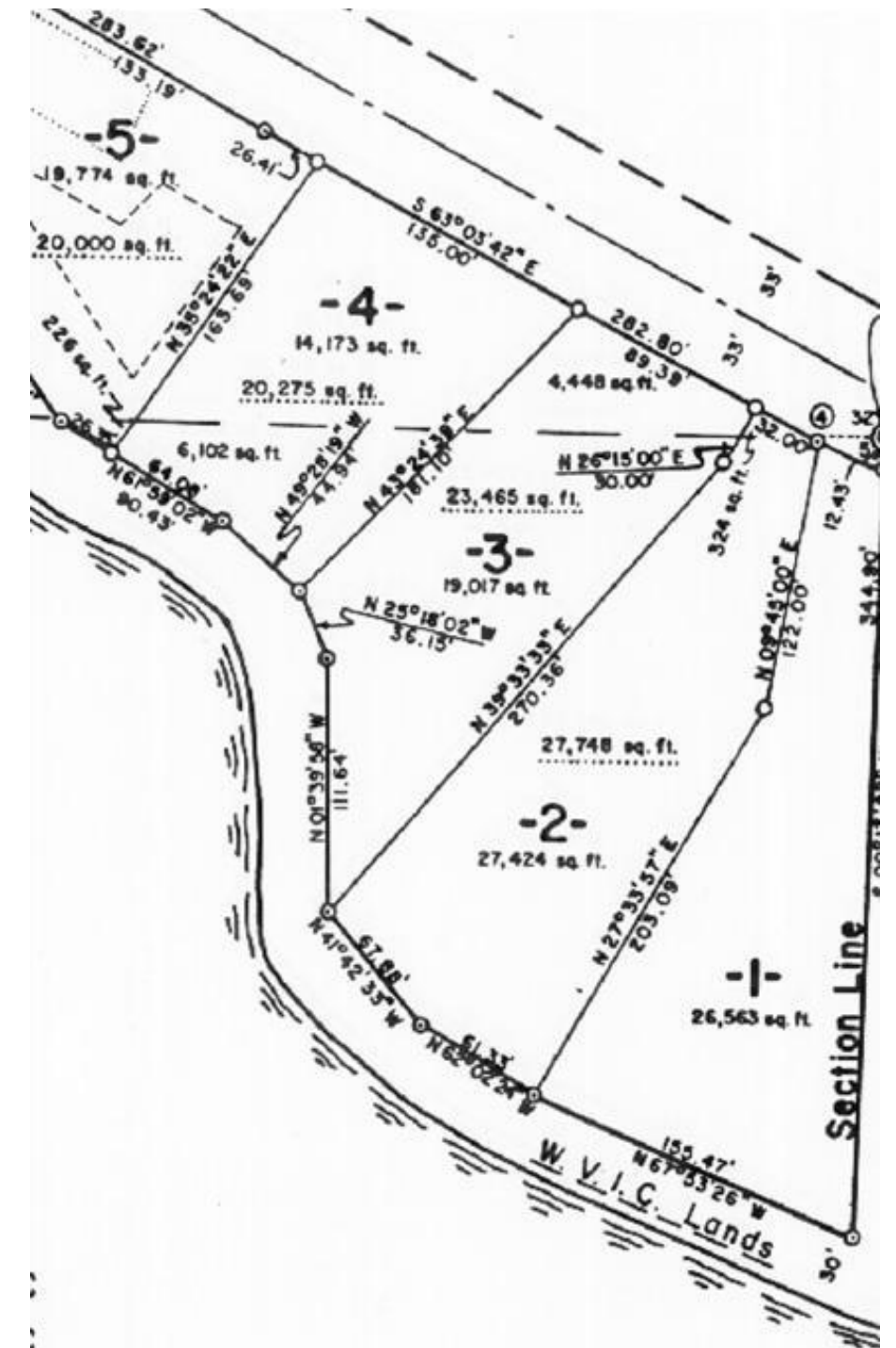
Lots without any frontage can only be developed with SUP approval.

Zoning Ordinance does not establish specific review considerations, so generic SUP review criteria apply



Part III: Subdivisions

- Potential Changes:
 - Create separate process for lot line adjustments
 - Simplify language and reduce redundancy with the site plan and grading plan requirements
 - Clarify variation standards
- Considerations:
 - Unless it's new development, subdivisions tend to be one to two lot subdivisions
 - Approval process for subdivisions
 - Subdivision committee vs. full hearing





Commercial: Purpose



Streamline use approvals for commercial businesses while managing neighborhood impacts through standards established in the Zoning Ordinance

Recommendations based on staff experience administering City regulations and on the analysis of enforcement history



Types of Zoning Use Approvals

Special Use Permit (SUP)

- Three-month process
- Planning Commission and City Council public hearings
- City Council approval required

Administrative SUP for New Use

Administrative SUP for Minor Amendment

Administrative SUP for Change of Ownership

- 30-35 day process
- Staff administrative review
- with City Council approved conditions

Permitted/By-right

- No required use review

A photograph of a person's hands filling out an "Application Form" on a tablet. The form is titled "Application Form" and is divided into sections. Section A, "General Questions", includes fields for "Proposed Insured's Name", "Birth Date", "Address", "Phone Number", "ID Number", "Status", "Occupation", "Gender", "Email Address", "Social Security Number", and "Are you a retiree?". Section B, "Type of Health Coverage", includes fields for "Employee", "Spouse", "Plan Choice", and "Children". There is also a table for "Complete If Spouse/Children are Proposed for Insurance" with columns for "Name", "SSN No.", "Relationship to proposed insured", "Birth Date", "Age", and "Sex". At the bottom, there are fields for "Annual Premium" and "Monthly PAT (complete PAT card)".



Part I: Changes in use approvals

Administrative SUP to Permitted/By-right Use

Restaurant

- Operator would still have to comply with conditions in the zoning ordinance.
- Zoning enforcement would ensure compliance.



City and Public School Trailers

City would responsibly monitor impacts and promptly resolve any issues that may arise.





Part 1: Changes in use approvals

SUP to Permitted/By-right

Indoor live entertainment

Private academic schools with approved pick-up and drop off plan

Public buildings

Salons and spas over 30-foot frontage in King Street Retail and

Mount Vernon Overlay zones

Fraternal/private clubs

Funeral homes



Part 1: Changes in use approvals

SUP to Administrative SUP

Nonresidential temporary trailers

- Three-year term with option to reapply for an additional two years
- One trailer per lot
- Must remain in use for 90 consecutive days





Part 1: Changes in use approvals *Change of Ownership*

Reduce processing to two weeks or less

- Applies to new businesses taking over an existing SUP
- Streamlines process for new business start-ups
- Application notification to civic associations and on the City's [website](#)
- Opportunity for appeal of director's approval





Part 2: Minor Updates

Commercial uses

Use Limitations sections

- Update to reflect current regulatory and enforcement standards
- Uses allowed in the zone would be allowed to take place outdoors with special use permit approval
- Delete outdated restrictions. Examples: sale and repair of large appliances, use of one small truck, and manufacturing

Definitions

Update and modernize use definitions including:

- Restaurant, trailer, congregate home, retail, personal service, motor vehicle parking and storage, and church



Part 2: Minor Updates

Commercial uses

Add child and elder care homes to commercial zones

- Already allowed in all residential zones

Expand types of retail and personal service on ground floor uses in medium and high-density apartment zones (RCX, RC, RD, RMF)

- Align with CRMU/Mixed Use allowed uses
- Change would allow for consistency among all mixed-use buildings



Part 2: Minor Updates

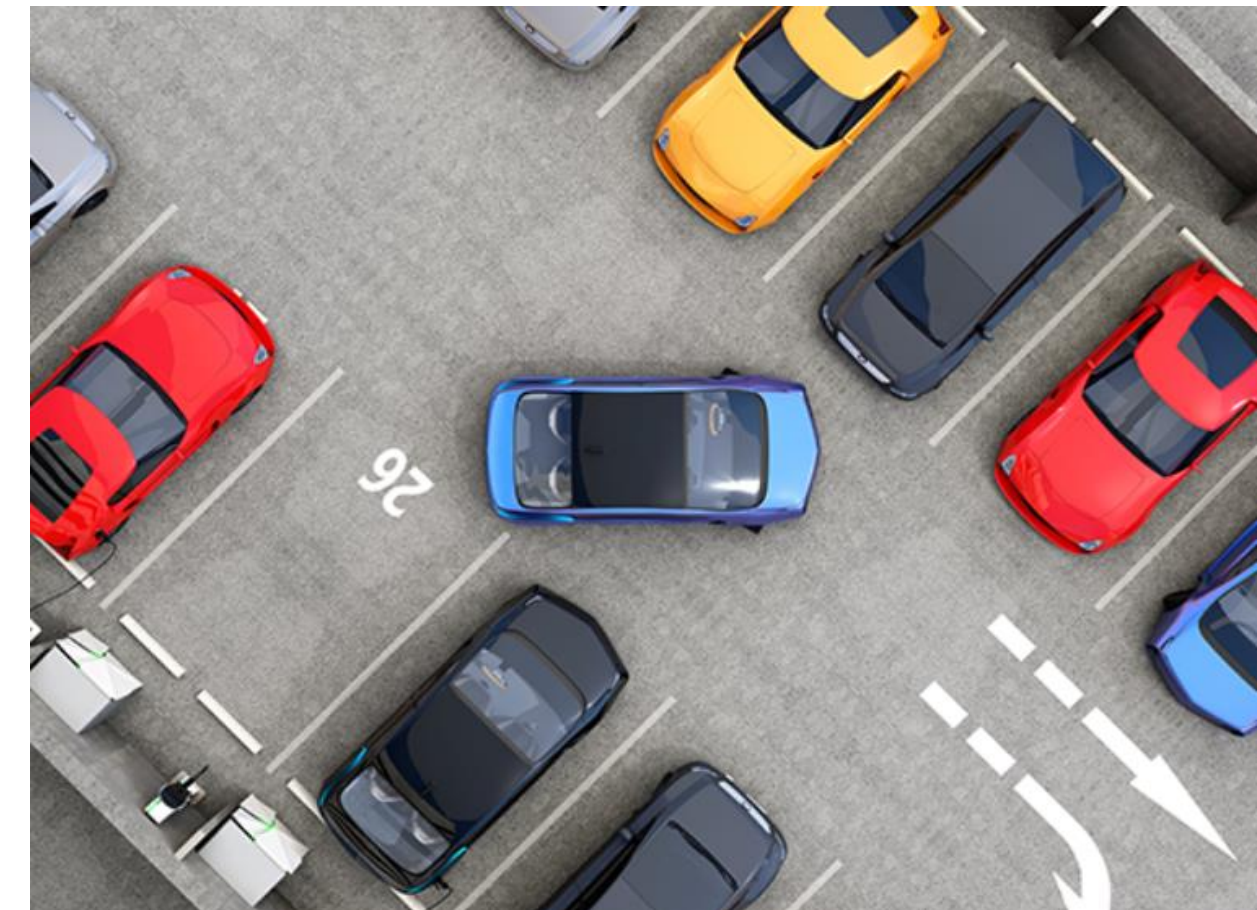
Parking

Amend the Section 8-200 (F) requirement to comply with current parking standards when renovation costs exceed one-third of building market value

Reduce the parking requirement for indoor and outdoor recreation and entertainment uses

- Proposed: One space for every 1000 square feet

Allow commercial use required and overflow parking on non-residential properties (e.g. places of worship parking lots) within 1,000 feet of business





Public Engagement

October 22, 7 – 9 p.m., City Hall, Room 1900

Discussion and Open House on Historic Preservation, Residential, and Commercial Zoning Ordinance Text Amendments

Zoning Text Amendments website

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/zoning/zoning-amendments>

December 2, 7 p.m.

Planning Commission public hearing

December 13, 9:30 a.m.

City Council public hearing



Break Out Discussions

Historic Preservation:

Brendan Harris

Residential:

Sam Shelby

Catie McDonald

Commercial:

Ann Horowitz

Lanning Blaser

Tony LaColla