



Date of Meeting: March 5, 2026

**TOWN OF LEESBURG**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION WORK SESSION**

**Subject:** Zoning Ordinance Rewrite

**Staff Contact:** Michael Watkins, Zoning Administrator  
Brian Boucher, Deputy Director  
James David, Director

**Purpose:** Wrapping Up PC Review and Input

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**Background:** At their July 20, 2023 Public Meeting, the Planning Commission received an introductory presentation on the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite project. In October 2023, representatives from Kendig Keast Collaborative (Consultant) presented their code audit of the Town's current Zoning Ordinance and broad recommendations for changes at a joint meeting of the Planning Commission and Town Council. In February and September 2024, the consultants delivered their first draft of the new Ordinance via the Town's enCodePlus online zoning platform and provided an overview of concepts in each Article to the Planning Commission. The first draft of the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite was released on March 6, 2025 for a 60-day public review period. The second draft of the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite was released on November 17, 2025 for a 45-day public review period. All Planning Commission and public presentations and the code audit are available on the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite project page at: [leesburgva.gov/zoningordinancerewrite](https://leesburgva.gov/zoningordinancerewrite).

**Issues:** The Planning Commission has held 19 work sessions on the draft Zoning Ordinance Rewrite since January 16, 2025. The draft is in good shape as a result of the Commission's work. The Commission submitted remaining comments, questions, or edits on or before the February 19, 2026 Work Session. The March 5, 2026 and March 19, 2026 meetings will include staff responses to the remaining Commission comments.

**Prefabricated Attainable Housing Concept**

Chair Campbell submitted questions and analysis related to input from a third-party attainable housing developer that specializes in for-rent low-rise prefabricated multifamily housing units located on a single lot. The subject developer has had success in Maryland and Chair Campbell wishes to understand whether the Town's existing ordinances could accommodate this type of housing development. Furthermore, Chair Campbell wants to discuss potential changes via the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite to ensure the Town is ready and supportive if a prefabricated attainable housing development was proposed in the future.

The developer's concept shows multiple low-rise prefabricated residential units with architectural detailing such as front porches and gable roofs, landscaping, and compact blocks with private roads and courts (see Attachment 1). The narrative accompanying the attainable housing concept illustrations indicates units are on a single record lot with no subdivision, are multifamily buildings, and have densities ranging from 8-15 units per acre. The developer also

states the residential units are all built to Federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) standards (see Attachment 1). The following questions from the developer are followed by staff responses:

1. Does the existing zoning ordinance clearly allow for this type of unified, low-rise rental community built to HUD code?

**Staff response:** The current Zoning Ordinance (ZO), Subdivision and Land Development Regulations (SLDR), and Design and Construction Standards Manual (DCSM) are not set up to accommodate this type of development. A potential applicant could apply for a Planned Development, which is a legislative process that allows developers to specify unique lot and building standards. However, the ZO, SLDR, and DCSM lack definitions for low-rise multifamily units. The Town’s current definitions treat multifamily as apartments. Also, the current SLDR and DCSM do not have adequate standards for the private road configurations shown in the developer’s illustrative concept.

2. How can implementation occur in a measured and precise manner without unintentionally limiting beneficial use scenarios?

**Staff response:** The Commission and staff have been working through the ZO Rewrite in a very measured and precise manner considering potential consequences to all proposed regulatory changes. The Commission may wish to consider creating a “development option” in the ZO Rewrite for 100 percent attainable housing projects that contain for-rent low-rise multifamily prefabricated housing. Without individual lots oriented toward public streets, the development option will need to consider building separation requirements (instead of setbacks), and private roads that meet fire safety requirements. Staff suggests taking incremental steps in the ZO Rewrite for the stated purpose of achieving more innovative attainable housing options, and does not recommend allowing this type of development for market-rate housing developments.

3. Would emphasizing form, scale, and site design-rather than construction method or ownership structure alone-improve clarity?

**Staff response:** The definition of manufactured home (e.g. mobile home) is clear in Virginia State Code: *A structure that is transportable in one or more sections, built on a permanent chassis, designed to be used as a dwelling, and includes the plumbing, heating, air-conditioning, and electrical systems contained in the structure.* The developer’s concept is not a mobile home park. Furthermore, the construction method or ownership structure of housing units are typically not characteristics that define different dwelling types in a zoning ordinance. The emphasis in the Town’s ZO Rewrite is already placed on form (e.g. single-family detached houses, single-family attached townhouses, multifamily apartments), scale (e.g. building height, dwelling units per acre), and site design (e.g. setbacks, open space, amenities, stormwater). Whether the components of a house are built in a factory and transported to a site for assembly versus stick built on-site is not relevant to the Town’s zoning.

4. Is unit count the most appropriate metric, or should height, massing, distance between buildings, and site design carry greater weight?

**Staff response:** The ZO Rewrite carries forward the Town’s longstanding Euclidean approach of regulating the density of housing developments according to dwelling units per acre. This question alludes to form-based code with no density cap, which the Town has considered but never truly implemented. Town leaders have been more concerned with limiting residential density and associated impacts to existing neighborhoods and local infrastructure.

5. Are existing code definitions aligned with modern housing products that offer the greatest potential to address regional housing challenges?

**Staff response:** The existing and proposed Zoning Ordinances align closely with the Loudoun County Zoning Ordinance, and the Town relies on the County for cooperation in providing housing services, which are both acknowledgments that housing affordability is a regional issue that needs regional solutions. Modern housing products such as tiny homes, prefabricated homes, and accessory dwellings have and will continue to be options in the Town’s Zoning Ordinance. The ZO Rewrite takes this one step further by codifying “affordable housing units,” which are not different housing types but are regulated by State affordable housing programs. The ZO Rewrite will allow affordable housing units to meet a proposed development’s inclusionary housing requirements. If the Commission wants to expand attainable housing options even further they could direct staff to create new definitions and an attainable housing “development option” that accommodate low-rise for-rent multifamily housing products. Note that updates to SLDR and DCSM will also be needed.

6. Are architectural requirements calibrated to allow production of attainable housing, or do they inadvertently prohibit feasibility due to cost premiums?

**Staff response:** The Zoning Ordinance Rewrite carries forward affordable dwelling unit compatibility and interspersion standards to ensure that affordable units are similar to market rate units in unit type and exterior architectural treatment. Allowances are made to keep costs down by allowing affordable dwelling units to fulfill the compatibility requirement if the variation in design elements used is the same as those used in at least 25 percent of market rate units.

7. Is there room for flexibility when high-quality design outcomes are achieved through alternative construction methods?

**Staff response:** The construction type of a housing unit – prefabricated versus stick built – is not a predominant issue in the ZO Rewrite. The Town does have four architectural control districts: Gateway District, Old and Historic District, Crescent District and proffered H-2 District such as Oaklawn and Village at Leesburg. In these zoning districts architectural standards and design guidelines may stipulate high quality materials must be used for construction. Also, the State guidelines for affordable housing units have specific requirements for primary and secondary building materials.

8. For attainable housing developments, should one- to two-story buildings containing 2–4 dwelling units be treated as attached residential for purposes of applying overlay standards, where the building scale and site design are consistent with residential character?

**Staff response:** The ZO Rewrite carries forward definitions for residential buildings with multiple units as single-family attached or multifamily. *Single-family attached* is defined as a unit that is in a single structure with other single-family dwelling units. Each single-family attached dwelling unit must be separated from the others by a common party wall, have its own individual exterior entrance, and must be located on its own individual lot. Single-family attached includes duplexes. *Multifamily dwelling is defined as* a dwelling containing more than two dwelling units. Staff recommends developing a separate term and definition for the low-rise attainable housing development option if Commission wishes to pursue revising the ZO Rewrite to accommodate the developer’s concept.

9. Should the ordinance allow limited administrative flexibility in RM for housing-type mix requirements when a development is rental-only and under unified ownership, provides deed-restricted attainable housing, and meets applicable dimensional and design standards, except where administrative flexibility or alternative compliance is approved to support attainable housing delivery?

**Staff response:** Staff recommends creating a 100 percent attainable housing development option for low-rise multifamily projects rather than modifying the Residential Medium (RM) zoning district. The Commission should direct staff if this is a desired revision to the ZO Rewrite.

10. In attainable or LIHTC-financed developments, the non-discernability requirement may be largely academic; however, additional clarity could help ensure consistent administration and avoid unnecessary design complexity. In such cases, it would be best for LIHTC program requirements to govern.

**Staff response:** Agreed. The ZO Rewrite includes a new Affordable Housing Unit section to support attainable housing units governed by Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) and other State programs. There is no interspersed requirements for affordable housing units and deference goes to State program requirements.

11. Are there circumstances—specifically for attainable housing developments—where administrative flexibility or alternative compliance paths are anticipated under the DCSM, and if so, should those be cross-referenced or clarified within the zoning ordinance?

**Staff Response:** The existing DCSM has parking courts and private travelways that potentially could be modified to meet the needs of this type of attainable housing but as noted above, would still need to meet all Fire Marshal and emergency access requirements. Other criteria such as requiring sidewalk for pedestrian access, street trees, utility corridors, street parking and other streetscape items would need to be

addressed through a DCSM modification to allow travelways and parking courts to be utilized for this type of development. In the DCSM Rewrite, a new category for private roads could be written to more adequately provide the type of road network needed for these types of development. The SLDR would also need changes to address how this type of development can be processed since this type of housing does not currently exist in this document.

The Zoning Ordinance Rewrite includes many revisions that help lower costs of construction for attainable housing projects:

- Allowing higher density housing in the Residential Medium, Residential Urban, Mixed-Use, Crescent District – Activity Center, and Crescent District – Residential Medium zoning districts.
- Streamlining the permitting process through increased by-right uses and administrative approvals.
- Allowing accessory dwellings in Residential Suburban, Residential Historic, Residential Medium, and Downtown zoning districts.
- Reforming single-family zoning in the old Moderate Density Residential (R-6) District to allow townhouses and apartments.
  - Old R-6 will be converted to the new Residential Medium zoning district.
- Reforming single-family zoning in the Residential Historic zoning district to allow townhouses by minor special exception.
- Allowing apartments in the new Residential Medium zoning district.
- Encouraging mixed use development in the Mixed Use, Innovation Center, Crescent District – Activity Center, Downtown, Residential Urban, and Commercial Neighborhood zoning districts.
- Allowing mixed use developments in more areas of Downtown (e.g. floodplain).
- Allowing housing in commercial areas including the Mixed Use, Innovation Center, Crescent District – Activity Center, Crescent District – Commercial Corridor, Downtown, and Commercial Neighborhood zoning districts.
- Revising height restrictions to allow a building height bonus for residential development projects that exceed the minimum requirements for providing affordable dwelling units.
- Revising height restrictions and setback requirements in denser zoning districts such as Crescent District – Activity Center, Mixed Use, Innovation Center, and Residential Urban.

One zoning change that is not included in the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite is reducing or eliminating parking minimums for 100 percent affordable housing projects. To date, the Planning Commission has not been in favor of reducing parking for multifamily or single family attached housing due to concerns over impacts to surrounding neighborhoods and available street parking.

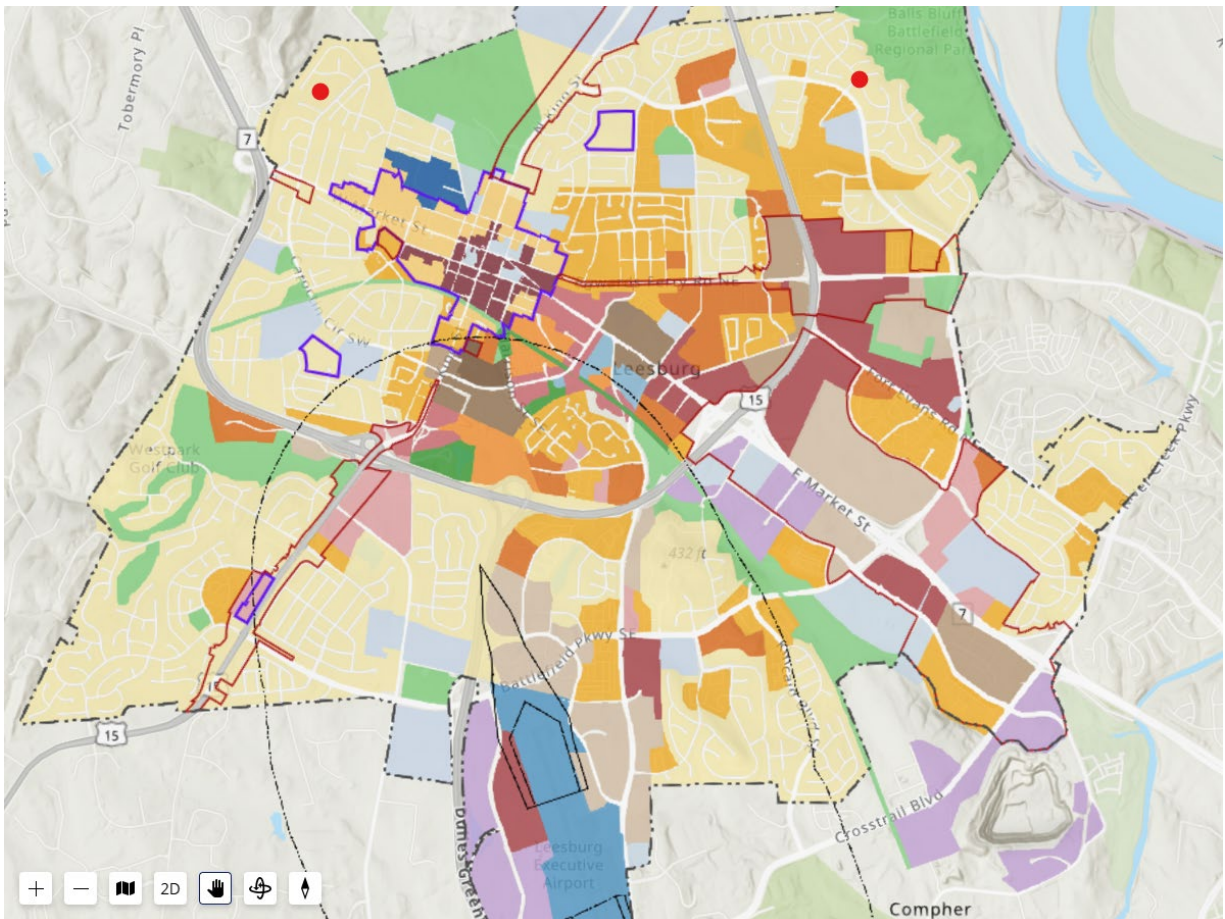
### Public Comment Report and Responses

Vice Chair McAfee noted the Public Comment Report as of November 17, 2025 had some valid concerns raised and asked for staff responses. The consultant and staff are working on responding to each comment and will include the responses in the Commission’s March 19, 2025 packet.

### Additional Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Tuck would like to discuss adding small planned Commercial Neighborhood (CN) areas into select residential areas to promote community grocery, convenience, and services areas (see red circles on the map below).

**Staff response:** While addressing “food deserts” is a good policy objective, it is difficult to pick one or two parcels out of a neighborhood that is already zoned for residential and rezone those to commercial. This would run the risk of being considered “spot zoning,” which is the controversial practice of rezoning a small parcel of land for a use that differs significantly from surrounding zoning. In some cases spot zoning is considered illegal unless it is determined to be in the public’s best interest and consistent with the Town Plan. Upon closer inspection of the zoning map, the red dot in the northeast corner is about half-mile away from a parcel zoned CN, but it is not ideal since the Route 15 bypass cuts through the middle.



Commissioner Robinson met with staff the week of February 24<sup>th</sup> and raised several questions and concerns covering VA Code references, Legacy Districts, floodplain uses, parking ratios and credits, contiguous open space, “Utility, Major” and “Continuing Care Facility” use allowances, BAR authority, and validity periods for permits and entitlements. Staff will provide more detail and responses to Commissioner Robinson’s questions at the March 19, 2026 Commission meeting.

**Next Steps**

The March 5, 2026 Planning Commission Meeting is another of many opportunities throughout the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite project for members of the Planning Commission and the public to provide input.

Tentative Planning Commission Zoning Ordinance Rewrite Work Plan

#	Topic	Commission Meeting Date
1	ZO Rewrite Work Plan	January 16, 2025
2	Zoning Map	February 6, 2025
3	Release of Draft Text	March 6, 2025
4	Article 1 General Provisions	April 3, 2025
5	Article 2 Zoning Districts and Dimensional Standards	
6	Article 3 Use Regulations	April 17, 2025
7	Article 3 Use Regulations (continued)	May 1, 2025
8	Article 3 Use Regulations (continued)	May 15, 2025
9	None	June 5, 2025
10	Recap Articles 1-3, Article 4 Development Standards	July 10, 2025
11	Article 5 Review Bodies, Article 6 Review Procedures	July 17, 2025
12	Article 7 Nonconformities, Article 8 Enforcement, Article 9 Word Usage	August 7, 2025
13	No Meeting	August 21, 2025
14	Recap Articles 4-9, Deep Dive List	September 4, 2025
15	Deep Dive List (continued)	September 18, 2025
16	Deep Dive List (continued)	October 2, 2025
17	Deep Dive List (continued)	October 16, 2025
18	Placeholder Sections, Public Comment Report	November 6, 2025
19	Crescent District, Public Comment Report	November 20, 2025
20	Subcommittee Recommendations: Attainable Housing, Signs	December 4, 2025
21	No Meeting	December 18, 2025
22	Questions/comments on ZO Rewrite Draft II, CD-AC Test Results	January 15, 2026
23	Questions/comments on ZO Rewrite Draft II, Travel Demand Model	February 5, 2026
24	Final questions/comments on ZO Rewrite Draft II, Additional Review of Residential Densities	February 19, 2026
25	Staff responses to Commissioner questions	March 5, 2026
26	Staff responses to Commissioner questions	March 19, 2025
27	Joint PC-Council Meeting	April 2, 2026
28	Public Hearing	April 16, 2026

**Attachments:**

1. Developer's Attainable Housing Concept
2. Public Comment Report (as of November 17, 2025)