



Loudoun County, Virginia

HERITAGE COMMISSION

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July 9, 2022

Joe Kroboth III, Acting Director, Planning and Zoning
1 Harrison Street, SE 3rd Floor
Leesburg, VA 20175 zorewrite@loudoun.gov

Dear Mr. Kroboth,

Re: Zoning Ordinance Rewrite – Heritage Commission Comments

The Heritage Commission would like to thank you and your staff for your commitment to the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite (ZOR), which will ensure that Loudoun County's zoning code reflects the 2019 Comprehensive Plan. In particular, we applaud the work on Village Conservation Overlay Districts (Chapter 4.07) and Adaptive Reuse (Section 5.10). The inclusion of these two chapters in the Zoning Code will help to achieve our common goals as outlined in Loudoun County's Heritage Preservation Plan.

While the Heritage Commission has entered specific comments into the ZOR (attached), we wish to emphasize two broad points that we feel are essential to preserving Loudoun's heritage:

1) Under the **Village Conservation Overlay District** (Chapter 4.07), we observe that **Loudoun's rural villages** currently have little ability to guide their own planning, despite the promise of the 2019 Comprehensive Plan for a "community plan framework" within the Rural Policy Area. We strongly urge you to ensure that County staff have funding and resources to initiate development of the formal community plan framework so that villages can begin to develop their own small area plans as soon as possible. We also urge the County to respect all historic villages as though VCODs were in place, and ensure the rural village list is comprehensive. Our attached comments provide additional detail.

2) Under **Adaptive Reuse** (Chapter 5.10), we have proposed broadening the scope of eligibility for these promising new provisions, with the intention of allowing additional older buildings to qualify for adaptive reuse. Our aim is to proactively encourage adaptive reuse of historic structures by keeping the process simple and enhancing the incentives for its adoption. In particular, we recommend **streamlining the adaptive reuse provisions** to make their application as user-friendly and financially affordable as possible, for example by removing onerous requirements for market analysis, structural engineers, and verification of obsolescence. See attached comments for additional detail.

We have been pleased to see the strong response from the heritage and preservation community stimulated by the County's ZOR outreach effort. We urge you and your staff to take into account the large number of thoughtful comments made by communities and individuals across the County.

Once again, the Heritage Commission thanks you and your staff for your significant contribution to Loudoun County and its heritage preservation.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Pollard
Chairman, Loudoun County Heritage Commission

cc: Loudoun County Board of Supervisors
Tim Hemstreet, County Administrator
Valmarie Turner, Assistant County Administrator
Loudoun County Heritage Commission

Heritage Commission Comments to the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite

Chapter/Section	Zoning Ordinance Language	Heritage Commission Comments
3.05.07.06 Infrastructure	"Telecommunications monopoles are prohibited along ridge lines, but are allowed downslope from the top of ridge lines, to protect views of the Catoctin, Bull Run, Hogback, Short Hill, and Blue Ridge Mountains."	Please add: "Monopoles must be downslope from the ridgeline such that the height of the monopole is below the height of the adjacent ridgeline."
3.05.07.06. D.3.P.	"Telecommunications monopoles are prohibited along ridge lines, but are allowed downslope from the top of ridge lines, to protect views of the Catoctin, Bull Run, Hogback, Short Hill, and Blue Ridge Mountains."	Please add: "Monopoles must be downslope from the ridgeline such that the height of the monopole is below the height of the adjacent ridgeline."
3.05.07.06 Infrastructure	"Applicants proposing a new telecommunications tower within 1 mile of a County designated historic district, property listed on the National Register of Historic Places or Virginia Byway must at least 3 visual simulations and written justification as to why the tower could not be sited elsewhere."	Please insert (language in bold capitals): "Applicants proposing a new telecommunications tower within 1 mile of a County designated historic district, property listed OR ELIGIBLE TO BE LISTED on the National Register of Historic Places or Virginia Byway must provide at least 3 visual simulations and written justification as to why the tower could not be sited elsewhere."
4.07 Village Conservation Overlay District	General comment	As unincorporated villages of Loudoun County, historic villages in the Rural Policy Area do not have any local planning authority, and are dependent on County intervention for assurance of infrastructure and other basic services, including heritage preservation. As a general comment, we urge County BOS and administration instruct staff that developing the community plan framework for the VCOD is a priority to which resources should be allocated as soon as possible.
4.07 Village Conservation Overlay District, Purpose	After the fifth bullet point	Please add the following new bullet point: "Protect the character, culture and identity of the historic crossroads communities of Airmont, Bloomfield, Howardsville, Morrisonville, Unison and Willisville pending formal designation of their status as Rural Historic Villages as discussed in the General Plan."
4.07. B Village Conservation Overlay	"The VCOD boundaries are as established on the adopted zoning map and affect the following villages set forth below."	Please insert following "set forth below":

District, District Boundaries		“except that the historic crossroads villages noted in the General Plan and noted in Section 4.07.C. shall be treated as Rural Historic Villages pending completion of County review of their status”
5.10 Adaptive Reuse Standards	General comment	The proposed language on adaptive reuse for eligible structures is a very welcome development, and will be essential for further sustainable preservation and productive use of the County's numerous historic structures, in turn a critical element of heritage tourism particularly in the Rural Policy Area. In order to facilitate use of this new zoning code provision we urge that the eligibility and requirements be made more flexible, particularly for historic villages. Specific comments follow in sections below.
5.10 Adaptive Reuse	General comment	We have included reference to widely recognized standards of adaptive reuse to encourage retention of character defining features of historic properties. We also see a natural overlap between re-use of the built environment and the sustainability movement. These general comments are reflected in the specific comments that follow:
5.10 Adaptive Reuse, Purpose	Fifth bullet: “Encourage preservation of historic structures through appropriate renovation.”	Please add at the end of the bullet: “... consistent with standards such as the Secretary of Interior Standards and/or HDRC Guidelines (see Section C Standards).”
5.10 Adaptive Reuse, Purpose	Seventh bullet: “Prolong building lifespans, encourage reuse of existing resources ...”	At the start of the bullet, please add the two words “Encourage sustainability, ...”
5.10. B. Adaptive Reuse, Eligibility	General comment	We propose broadening the scope of eligibility with the intention of allowing more older buildings to qualify, so as to encourage adaptive reuse of the built environment by keeping the process simple. We recommended streamlining the rezoning process to make the process more user-friendly and financially affordable by removing requirements such as market analysis, structural engineers, and verification of obsolescence. Adaptive reuse should not be expensive and burdensome.
5.10. B. Adaptive Reuse, Eligibility	“To be eligible for adaptive reuse, a structure must be:”	Please clarify by adding the words: “one of the following: ...”
5.10. B.1. Adaptive Reuse, Eligibility		Please add new line item “ B.1.e Designated ‘locally historic’ by the Loudoun County Heritage Register.”

5.10. B.3. Adaptive Reuse, Eligibility	The structure is greater than 50 years old, and the prior use or uses in the structure are obsolete or economically nonviable.	Please delete "... and the prior use or uses in the structure are obsolete or economically nonviable."
5.10. B.3. Adaptive Reuse, Eligibility	Section B.3.	Please delete line items a. through c.
5.10. C. Adaptive Reuse, Standards and Requirements	General comment	We recommended allowing more options when making changes as some historic buildings and sites don't lend themselves to traditional zoning set-backs or rear, off-street parking spaces. When there are questions, we recommend the Zoning Administrator consult with the HDRC.
5.10. C. Adaptive Reuse, Standards and Requirements	"Adaptive reuse projects must comply with the standards and requirements of this Zoning Ordinance, except as set forth in Sections 5.10.C and 5.10.D below, and must comply with the following	Please include that design standards must comply with the Zoning Ordinance, unless an alternative design is recommended by the HDRC upon submission of an application following the COA application standards and process. If the property is not located in an HCC overlay district, please add that "the HDRC shall be guided by the Secretary of Interior standards in making its recommendations."
5.10. C. Adaptive Reuse, Table 5.10-1	Table 5.10-1. Uses Permitted as Adaptive Reuse	We recommend allowing additional density for onsite property owners
5.10. C. Adaptive Reuse, Table 5.10-1	Second line of the table, under 'Permitted as Adaptive Reuse'	Please see suggested definition of "Live /Work" in the Section which covers 'Definitions.'
5.10. Adaptive Reuse	General comment	Please consider allowing for some limited flexibility based on context-appropriate original historic uses in specific cases (e.g., for African American churches or cemeteries). Where there are questions on context-appropriateness, we recommend consultation with the HDRC"
11.03. Definitions	General comment	Please consider in the definition of 'historic' any structure, building, or other built resource that is: 1.Listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places (a listing maintained by the Department of Interior) or preliminarily determined by the Secretary of the Interior as meeting the requirements for individual listing on the National Register;

		<p>2. Certified or preliminarily determined by the Secretary of the Interior as contributing to the historical significance of a registered historic district or a district preliminarily determined by the Secretary to qualify as a registered historic district;</p> <p>3. Listed or contributing to a listing on the Virginia Landmarks Register; or,</p> <p>4. Listed or contributing to a listing on the Loudoun County Heritage Register.</p>
11.03. Definitions	General comment	<p>Please consider adding ‘Cultural Landscape’ – A geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person, or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values, as defined by the National Park Service.</p>