



City of Alexandria

Commercial-to-Residential Conversions Zoning Text Amendment #2025-00009

City Council
January 24, 2026



Agenda



1. Summary
2. Background
3. Proposal
4. Outreach
5. Recommendation



Summary

New Procedure for Office-to-Residential Conversions

- Replaces “ad-hoc” entitlement process
- Allows for more comprehensive assessment

Process

- Single SUP application instead of REZ, MPA, or standalone SUP applications
- Standard 3-month SUP timeline

Benefits

- Coordinated review of master plan guidance, site, and neighborhood benefits and impacts
- Incorporates review of modification requests for setbacks, open space, off-street parking, and other minimum requirements



Background

Conversion Benefits:

- Adaptive-reuse of existing buildings
- Maintains neighborhood character
- Creates housing units

City office vacancy rate: 21.1% (~4.1 million square feet)

Alexandria Office Market Statistics by Submarket Q2 2025

SUBMARKET	VACANCY RATE	NET ABSORPTION	INVENTORY
Old Town	14.3%	-26,860 SF	7,670,164 SF
Carlyle	29.1%	32,377 SF	1,881,912 SF
Potomac Yard	0.9%	33,488 SF	991,041 SF
West End	18.6%	-12,630 SF	1,894,861 SF



Background: Recent Conversions

Address	Approval Type	Units
720 N. Saint Asaph St.	SUPs for parking reduction, FAR up to 2.5	12
628 King St.	King Street conversion, parking reduction SUP	11
1201 E. Abingdon Dr.	Development SUP, REZ, MPA	143
2525 Mount Vernon Ave.	SUP for parking reduction	30
601 Wythe St.	Rezoning + SUP for multi-unit residential	18
1625 Prince St.	SUP for parking reduction	45
2051 Jamieson Ave.	Development SUP	181



Background: Zoning History

Regulatory Challenges

- *FAR Disparities*: many zones allow higher FAR for nonresidential vs. residential use
- *Residential Requirements*: Setbacks, open space, and minimum lot standards don't apply to nonresidential uses
- *Post 1992 Rewrite Impact*: Comprehensive zoning changes lowered FAR limits and many buildings became noncomplying

Process Inefficiencies

- *Interpretation*: conversion projects often require creative interpretations to access modification provisions
- *Rezoning Necessary*: Some conversions cannot move forward without rezoning to legitimize existing building
- *Lack of Consistency*: Site-specific conversion process



Background: Policy Evolution

2002: Conversion SUP Process Established

- Applied only to buildings on King Street
- Successfully implemented for several buildings including 1101 King Street

2023: Zoning for Housing Policy

- Analyzed conversion trends and regulatory challenges
- No changes to Zoning Ordinance
- Recommended conversion projects use 7-700



Proposal: New SUP Procedure

Eligibility

- Existing buildings that don't or can't comply with residential zoning requirements.
- Proposed use must be permitted in the zone

Reductions to Minimum Requirements "Built-in"

- Reductions available to setbacks, open space, off-street parking, and other minimum requirements
- Applicant must demonstrate that meeting requirements would be infeasible
- No increase to existing floor area or height unless compliant with zone

Process

- Single SUP application
- Standard 3-month SUP timeline



Proposal: SUP Considerations

Utilizes Existing SUP Considerations

- Health, safety, welfare
- Compatibility
- Neighborhood impact

Master Plan Conformity

- Does conversion align with Small Area Plan goals?
- Example: Eisenhower East SAP requires certain minimum office density near metro
- Example: Old Town North SAP establishes criteria for likely conversion candidates (building age, amenities, transit proximity)

Inclusive Review

- Current process limits review scope to building characteristics
- Proposed process allows for more comprehensive assessment of the conversion
- Follow current voluntary housing contribution policy



Proposal: Other Updates

Clarify changes of use in noncomplying buildings generally

- Use must be permitted in the zone
- Changes of use can't increase existing noncompliance unless SUP for conversion is sought or building previously operated residentially

Refine residential reversion process

- Relocate to new section
- Amend density limitation: allow compliance with zone limits OR number of units that existed previously, whichever is higher



Outreach

Community Outreach	Date
Website launch	8/29
Planning Commission Work Session	10/7/25
eNews Notifications	9/8, 9/10, 10/8, 10/9
Community Open House	10/22
Open House Video w/ability to comment	Posted 10/23
Bi-Monthly P&Z Virtual Community Updates	9/2, 10/30
Arlington County staff	9/19
NAIOP Opportunity Event and Monthly Meetings	10/9, 10/15, 12/17



Planning Commission initiated and recommended approval

