



Department of Planning and Zoning



Adjusting The Bulk Regulations For Developed Property In Columbia

HOW ARE BULK REGULATIONS ADJUSTED FOR DEVELOPED PROPERTY IN COLUMBIA?

An adjustment to the bulk regulations provides relief from the strict application of the requirements for the New Town zoning district of Columbia regarding the size or location of structures or uses. Upon the request of a property owner, the Howard County Planning Board is authorized to approve adjustments from the bulk regulations established by the final development plan (FDP) for the lot. A final development plan is a recorded zoning document which identifies the designated land uses for a specific geographic area of New Town with written criteria controlling such items as permitted land uses, building heights, setbacks, density and parking requirements.

FDP requirements, which may be considered for adjustment by the Planning Board include:

- Maximum height of structures;
- Maximum lot coverage by structures;
- Minimum off-street parking spaces;
- Minimum structure setbacks from public street rights-of-ways and property lines.

For a property, which was developed in accordance with a previously approved site development plan (SDP), an adjustment request is processed as an amended site development plan (ASDP). Where no previously approved SDP exists, the request is identified as a concept site development plan (CSDP). The Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) Public Service Desk has a list of approved site development plans for Columbia.

HOW DO I APPLY?

Application forms and submission requirements are available at the Department of Planning and Zoning Public Service Desk or on the [DPZ website](#). The DPZ Public Service Desk staff is available to assist in completing the application. The documents required to initiate processing are:

- A completed application. Applications and checklists are also available on [DPZ's website](#).
- Required copies of a detailed plot plan of the existing and proposed structures with a reference to the approved SDP for the subject property, if applicable.

- A Village Review Committee approval letter from the applicable Columbia Village Board.
- A statement of acknowledgement from adjoining property owners stating their awareness of the proposed bulk regulation adjustment (form provided by DPZ).
- Filing and posting fees. The Schedule of Fees is available at the DPZ Public Service Desk or on the [DPZ Website](#).

HOW ARE BULK REGULATION ADJUSTMENTS EVALUATED?

The Zoning Regulations contain two standards that the Planning Board must use to evaluate adjustments to the FDP bulk regulations:

- The adjustment will not alter the essential character of the neighborhood or area in which the property is located; will not impair the appropriate use or development of adjacent property; and, will not be detrimental to the public welfare.
- The adjustment is needed due to practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships which arise in complying strictly with the FDP and/or results in a better design than would be allowed by strict compliance with the development criteria.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS?

The basic steps for processing a FDP bulk regulation adjustment are:

1. Submission

Applications for Planning Board approval of FDP bulk regulation adjustments (ASDP/CSDP) are submitted by appointment to the DPZ Division of Land Development. The accepted application is assigned a file number reference and distributed to the Subdivision Review Committee (SRC), an advisory group of County and State Departments, for review and comments. A Planning Board meeting date is scheduled based on public notice requirements and the number of items already scheduled for upcoming Planning Board meetings.

2. Posting

The property must be posted with the time and date of the Planning Board public meeting at least 15 days immediately prior to the meeting. DPZ provides the prepared posters, but the applicant is responsible for erecting and maintaining them.

3. Plan Review and Staff Report

The SRC reviews the ASDP/CSDP plot plan and provides comments to DPZ. DPZ produces a staff report, which describes and evaluates the requested bulk regulation adjustment. This report includes a recommendation based upon the criteria specified in the Zoning Regulations as described in this brochure. The staff report is generally available to the public at least 2 weeks prior to the Planning Board meeting.

4. Planning Board Hearing

The applicant or a representative must attend the Planning Board public meeting and be prepared to present the adjustment request and answer any questions the Planning Board

may have. Other people who are interested in the request may attend the meeting and ask questions or provide information as permitted by the Board's Rules of Procedures.

5. Decision

The Planning Board makes the decision on a FDP bulk regulation adjustment. While the Planning Board gives due consideration to the DPZ recommendation, it is not bound by it. The Planning Board may approve, approve with conditions, or deny the request.

6. Appeals

A decision rendered by the Planning Board may be appealed to the Board of Appeals. Information concerning the appeal process may be obtained at the DPZ Public Service Desk.

IF APPROVED, ARE THERE OTHER REQUIREMENTS?

Upon approval by the Planning Board, DPZ notifies the applicant in writing of the Board's action and any other requirements, which may be necessary prior to obtaining a building permit and beginning construction. Information on building permit requirements and processing may be obtained from the Department of Inspections, Licenses and Permits. All approved permits and plans must conform to the bulk regulation adjustment plan approved by the Planning Board.

AN IMPORTANT NOTE . . .

This brochure is meant for informational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for the Zoning Regulations.

For more information

The Howard County
Department of Planning and
Zoning, 410-313-2350, or
www.howardcountymd.gov/Departments/Planning-and-Zoning
or visit Planning and Zoning's
Public Service Desk on the
First floor of the George Howard
Building, 3430 Court House Drive,
Ellicott City, MD 21043.

Office hours are:
Monday through Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.,
Friday 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Written inquiries may also be
Sent to our office at the above
address.