



PLANNING COMMISSION WORK SESSION
Wednesday, April 2, 2025 @ 6 PM
Town Hall – 2nd Floor, East Conference Room

AGENDA

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

WORK SESSION BUSINESS

- **2500051** – An Ordinance Amendment to amend Front Royal Town Code Chapter 175-137 pertaining to Fees, Charges and Expenses and Chapter 148-1100 Fees.
- **2500062** – A Zoning Text Amendment to Town Code Chapter 175-12.1 to allow lodging houses by Special Use Permit in the R-1 zoning district.
- **2500072** – A request for a Special Use Permit submitted by the Warren County Community Health Coalition for a lodging house at 506 N. Royal Avenue, identified by Tax Map 20A5, Section 7, Block 18, Lots 3-4. The property is zoned C-1, Community Business District and is located in the Entrance Corridor.
- **2500100** – A request for a Special Use Permit submitted by Divinum Auxilium Academy for a private school located at 16 N. Royal Avenue, identified by Tax Map 20A5, Section 11, Lot 15. The property is zoned C-2, Downtown Business District and is located in the Entrance Corridor.
- Shelters/Alternative Housing.
- Board of Architectural Review proposed text amendment.

ADJOURNMENT

PUBLIC HEARING

**2500051 – AN ORDINANCE AMENDMENT TO
AMEND FRONT ROYAL TOWN CODE
CHAPTER 175-137 PERTAINING TO FEES,
CHARGES AND EXPENSES AND CHAPTER
148-1100 FEES.**

TOWN OF FRONT ROYAL - CHAPTER 148-1100 - FEES			
APPLICATION TYPE	TFR CURENT FEE	TFR PROPOSED FEE	EXPLANATION
Boundary Adjustment	\$100	\$100	
Boundary Plat / Survey Review	--	\$50	Staff Review Time, Which Can Include Site Visits
Lot Line Vacation	\$100	\$150	Staff Review Time, Which Can Include Site Visits
Performance Bond Release Partial and Full	\$100	\$200	Significant Staff Time, Potential Consultation w/ Town Attorney & Various Departments
Right-of-Way Utilization Permit	\$25	\$100	Staff Review Time, Which Can Include Site Visits & Coordination w/ Public Works
Special Exception	\$250	\$650	Requires Multiple Meetings w/ Staff, Multiple PC Meetings, Advertisements & Adjacent Property Owner Notifications
Site Development Plan (Minor)	\$100	\$500	Requires Staff Review Plus Routing & Coordination w/ Internal & External Departments
Site Development Plan (Major)	\$750	\$1000 for 1 st & 2 nd Submissions, Any Subsequent Review Will Incur \$500/per submission	Initial Fee Will Allow for One Round of Comments & Resubmission. The Hope is to Encourage Applicants to Not Use Staff for Site Design, but to Comply w/ Current Requirements.
Sketch Plan	\$100	\$150	
Subdivision Final Plat (Minor)	\$200 + \$100/per lot	\$200 + \$100/per lot	
Subdivision Development Plan (Minor)	\$100	\$500	
Preliminary Plan (Major)	\$500 + \$25/per lot	\$750	Requires PC Review
Subdivision Final Plat (Major)	\$1000 + \$100/per lot	\$1000 + \$100/per lot	Requires PC and TC Review
Subdivision Development Plan (Major)	\$750	\$750 + \$25/per lot	Requires PC and TC Review

TOWN OF FRONT ROYAL - CHAPTER 175-137			
APPLICATION TYPE	TFR CURRENT FEE	TFR PROPOSED FEE	EXPLANATION
25% Fee Reduction for Non-Profit Organizations	--	25% Fee Reduction of Regular Fee	
All Items Requiring Zoning Approval that has Started Prior to Obtaining Necessary Permits	Regular Fee Doubled	Regular Fee Doubled	
Business License Review	--	\$50	Staff Review Time, which Can Include Site Visits
BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS (BZA) - Administrative Variance - BZA Appeal of Zoning Administrator Determination - BZA Variance Request	\$100 \$400 \$400	\$100 \$650 \$650	-- Cover Board Fees & Advertisements/Adjacent Property Owner Notifications “ ”
CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS - Administrative Review - BAR Board Review - Demolition of Historically Significant Structure	\$50 \$100 \$200	\$100 \$300 \$400	-- Cover Board Fees Cover Board Fees & Advertisements/Adjacent Property Owner Notifications
Certificate of Compliance (Commercial Rate / 1000 ft)	\$25	\$75	Staff Review Time, which can include Site Visits
Comprehensive Plan Amendment	\$400	\$1000	Requires Staff Research, Multiple PC & TC Meetings, Advertisements for Public Hearings, GIS Map Changes
Final Compliance Inspection	\$25	\$75	Final Compliance Requires Staff Inspections
POD	\$25	\$50	
Requested Re-Advertisement (per meeting)	\$200	\$200	If Applicant Delays the Hearing

REZONING APPLICATION - Proffer Amendment - 1 Acre or Less - Over 1 Acre - Downzoning	\$400 \$500 \$500 + \$100/Acre Over 1 st Acre \$400	\$650 \$650 + \$100/acre \$650 + \$100/Acre Over 1 st Acre \$650	PC & TC Review, Public Hearings, Advertisement, & Adjacent Property Owner Notifications “ ” “ ” “ ”
Special Use Permit (SUP)	\$400	\$1000	Requires PC & TC Approval
Special Use Permit (SUP) Short-Term Rental	\$400	\$1200	Requires Additional Inspections & Site Visits for Staff as Well as PC & TC Meetings, Advertisements & Adjacent Property Owner Notifications
Special Use Permit (SUP) Telecommunications Tower New	\$400	\$1500	Requires Additional Inspections & Site Visits for Staff as Well as PC & TC Meetings, Advertisements & Adjacent Property Owner Notifications
Special Use Permit (SUP) Telecommunications Tower Replacement of Antennas and Other Equipment	\$100	\$300 + Third-Party Review	
Urban Agriculture Permit	\$25	\$100	Requires Annual Inspections by Staff & Outside Agency Review
Zoning Determination	--	\$100	Requires Significant Research & Staff Time
Zoning Ordinance Amendment	\$400	\$650	Requires Multiple Meetings w/ Staff, Multiple PC Meetings, and TC Meetings, and Advertisements
Zoning Permit Commercial Accessories, Additions, Renovations	\$100	\$125	Accessories, Additions, Renovations
Zoning Permit Commercial New	\$100	\$300	New Construction & Commercial Uses
Zoning Permit – Fences Commercial and Residential	\$25	\$50	
Zoning Permit, Multi-Family Residential Dwelling New	\$50/unit	\$100/unit	

Zoning Permit Residential Accessories, Additions, Renovations	\$25	\$50	Typically, Residential Renovations, Accessory Structures, Additions
Zoning Permit, Single-Family Residential Dwelling Detached New	\$75	\$125	
Zoning Permit, Single-Family Residential Dwelling Attached New	\$75/unit	\$125/unit	
SIGN APPLICATIONS			
- Permanent Sign	\$50	\$75	--
- Entrance Corridor	\$75	\$250	Requires PC Review
- Temporary Sign	\$25	\$50	--
- Relocation of Approved Sign	--	\$50	--

PC = \$100 once per month only if a meeting attended (not paid for additional meetings in same month)	500
BZA = \$75 once per month only if a meeting attended (not paid for additional meetings in same month)	375
BAR = \$50 once per month only if a meeting attended (not paid for additional meetings in same month)	250
LBBCA = \$50 once per month only if a meeting attended (not paid for additional meetings in same month)	250
FREDA = \$200 once per month only if a meeting attended (not paid for additional meetings in same month)	

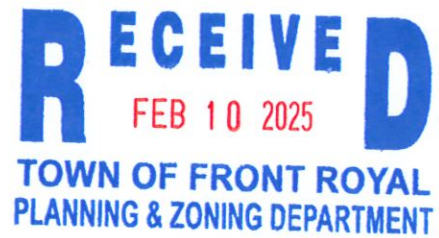
PUBLIC HEARING

2500062 – A Zoning Text Amendment to Town Code Chapter 175-12.1 to allow lodging houses by Special Use Permit in the R-1 zoning district.

2500062
ORD Amendment

Text amendment Proposal

I would like to propose a text amendment for the (R-1) zoning district. The proposed text amendment would be for 175-12.1 USES PERMITTED BY SPECIAL PERMIT: To add allowable use under miscellaneous by special use permit for as follows: Lodging houses, rooming houses, and boarding houses on parcels $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre or larger.



Aaron Hike

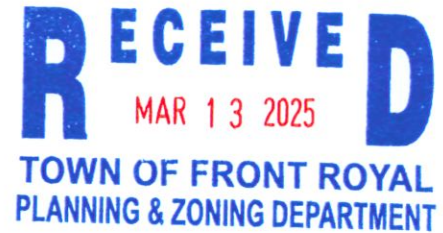
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "A. Hike", written over a faint circular stamp.

2-8-25

#2500062

Connie Potter

From: John Ware
Sent: Thursday, March 13, 2025 5:01 PM
To: Connie Potter
Subject: FW: Text Amendment Letter of Justification



From: build hikeconstruction.com <build@hikeconstruction.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 13, 2025 4:43 PM
To: John Ware <jware@frontroyalva.com>; Lauren Kopishke <lkopishke@frontroyalva.com>
Cc: Aaron <hikeconstruction@gmail.com>
Subject: Text Amendment Letter of Justification

justification for requesting a text amendment to allow a residential home to be used as a lodging house:

Dear Planning and Zoning Department,

I am writing to formally request a text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance that would allow residential properties to be used as lodging houses within the R1 district of Front Royal with a lot size of more than 3/4 of an acre. I believe that this amendment is in line with the evolving needs of our community and can contribute positively to the local economy and housing options.

1. ****Meeting Evolving Housing Needs:****

The demand for short-term and flexible accommodation options has been rising steadily in recent years. Lodging houses offer an alternative to traditional hotel accommodations and can provide affordable and convenient housing options for visitors, students, and workers who need temporary living spaces. Not to mention the largest need in this community, which is transitional housing for teens, women and children, and the homeless population. This amendment will help address the growing need for such housing while maintaining the character of residential neighborhoods.

2. ****Promoting Economic Growth:****

Allowing residential homes to operate as lodging houses can contribute to the local economy by attracting visitors who may not otherwise stay in traditional hotels and also while freeing up hotel space for tourist rather than long-term locals who have no other option for housing. These visitors often contribute to local businesses, restaurants, and attractions, supporting the broader economic environment. This change would enable homeowners to offer short-term rentals OR housing for those ALICE families in our community while benefiting from increased income opportunities as well as strengthening our work force. If individuals don't have to see refuge in shelters in surrounding localities they are local to be able to work in our community. Currently many motels and hotels in the town limits house locals vs tourists. This will help change that.

3. ****Enhancing Housing Flexibility:****

With the rise and change of remote work and temporary employment, many people seek flexible living arrangements that fit their transient lifestyle. Individuals paying for hotel/motel accommodations can never catch up or get ahead because of the cost, it's essentially a trap. By allowing residential homes to function as lodging houses, we are accommodating those in need, the vulnerable, and these changing housing needs, ensuring that people who come to our area for short-term stays can find suitable, safe, and affordable lodging. Or those who live and work here but have lost stable housing can have security.

4. ****Ensuring Residential Compatibility:****

This proposed text amendment would include clear guidelines and regulations to ensure that lodging houses maintain the integrity and character of residential neighborhoods. For instance, establishing criteria for the maximum number of guests, maintaining appropriate parking provisions, and ensuring proper safety standards (fire safety, health codes, etc.) can ensure that lodging houses are compatible with the existing residential uses. As well as only allowing these on residential homes with larger lots. This way the town wouldn't be able to be over saturated with lodging houses vs long term residential homes

5. ****Alignment with Other Jurisdictions:****

Many other localities across the state and nation have successfully adopted similar amendments to allow residential homes to operate as lodging houses. These areas have seen positive results, such as increased tourism and positive impacts on local businesses, without significantly detracting from the quality of life for existing residents. By following this trend, Front Royal can join these communities in adapting to modern housing and economic trends.

6. ****Safety and Regulation:****

The proposed amendment would include necessary safeguards, such as safety and building code compliance, ensuring the health and well-being of guests. These would include requirements for adequate fire escapes, smoke detectors, and compliance with occupancy limits. Additionally, regular inspections could be conducted to ensure that lodging houses meet the safety and quality standards expected by the community.

In conclusion, the request for this text amendment is driven by the desire to adapt to changing housing needs, promote local economic growth, and ensure that residential neighborhoods remain safe and well-regulated. Allowing residential homes to be used as lodging houses would provide a new, flexible housing option while maintaining the community's character. I believe this text amendment will serve the best interests of both property owners and the broader community.

Thank you for considering this request. I look forward to working with the Planning and Zoning Department to facilitate a discussion on this proposed amendment and would be happy to provide any additional information or answer any questions.

This letter serves as a formal request and justifies the proposed change by highlighting the evolving housing needs, economic benefits, and steps to maintain compatibility with the community. While addressing growing crisis within our community.

**Thank you,
Aaron Hike**

Hike Construction Inc.

[417 N Royal Ave](#)
Front Royal, VA 22630
540-305-6643- Cell
540-313-6901- Office

**2500072 – A REQUEST FOR A SPECIAL USE PERMIT
SUBMITTED BY THE WARREN COUNTY COMMUNITY
HEALTH COALITION FOR A LODGING HOUSE AT 506 N.
ROYAL AVENUE, IDENTIFIED BY TAX MAP 20A5,
SECTION 7, BLOCK 18, LOTS 3-4. THE PROPERTY IS
ZONED C-1, COMMUNITY BUSINESS DISTRICT AND IS
LOCATED IN THE ENTRANCE CORRIDOR.**



TOWN OF FRONT ROYAL
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & ZONING
102 EAST MAIN STREET
P.O. BOX 1560
FRONT ROYAL, VA 22630

#2500072
RECEIVED
FEB 18 2025
TOWN OF FRONT ROYAL
PLANNING & ZONING DEPARTMENT
Main: 540.635.4256
Fax: 540.631.2727
Internet: www.frontroyalva.com

SUP 2500072

SPECIAL USE PERMIT REQUEST

APPLICANT

NAME Warren County Community Health Coalition PHONE (540)539-8248
ADDRESS 538 Villa Avenue, Front Royal VA 22630
E-MAIL christa@warrencoalition.org

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

PROPERTY ADDRESS 506 N Royal Ave, Front Royal VA 22630
Tax Map #: 20A5 718 3 & 20A5 718 4
TAX MAP 20A 5 SECTION 7 BLOCK 18 LOT 3 & 4
SUBDIVISION NAME _____ ACREAGE .207

REQUEST

ZONING DISTRICT C-1
PROPOSED USE OF PROPERTY Lodging House
SPECIFIC SPECIAL USE PERMIT REQUEST Lodging House with 4 bedrooms

ATTACHMENTS --The following must be submitted with the application. Additional information may be required depending on the nature of the request.

1. Survey/Plat of property showing all **existing** improvements.
(10 copies if larger than 11" X 17")
2. Site Plan Application
3. Application Fee of \$400.00 (Checks payable to the Town of Front Royal)
4. Additional information as required by the Department of Planning & Zoning.

CERTIFICATION

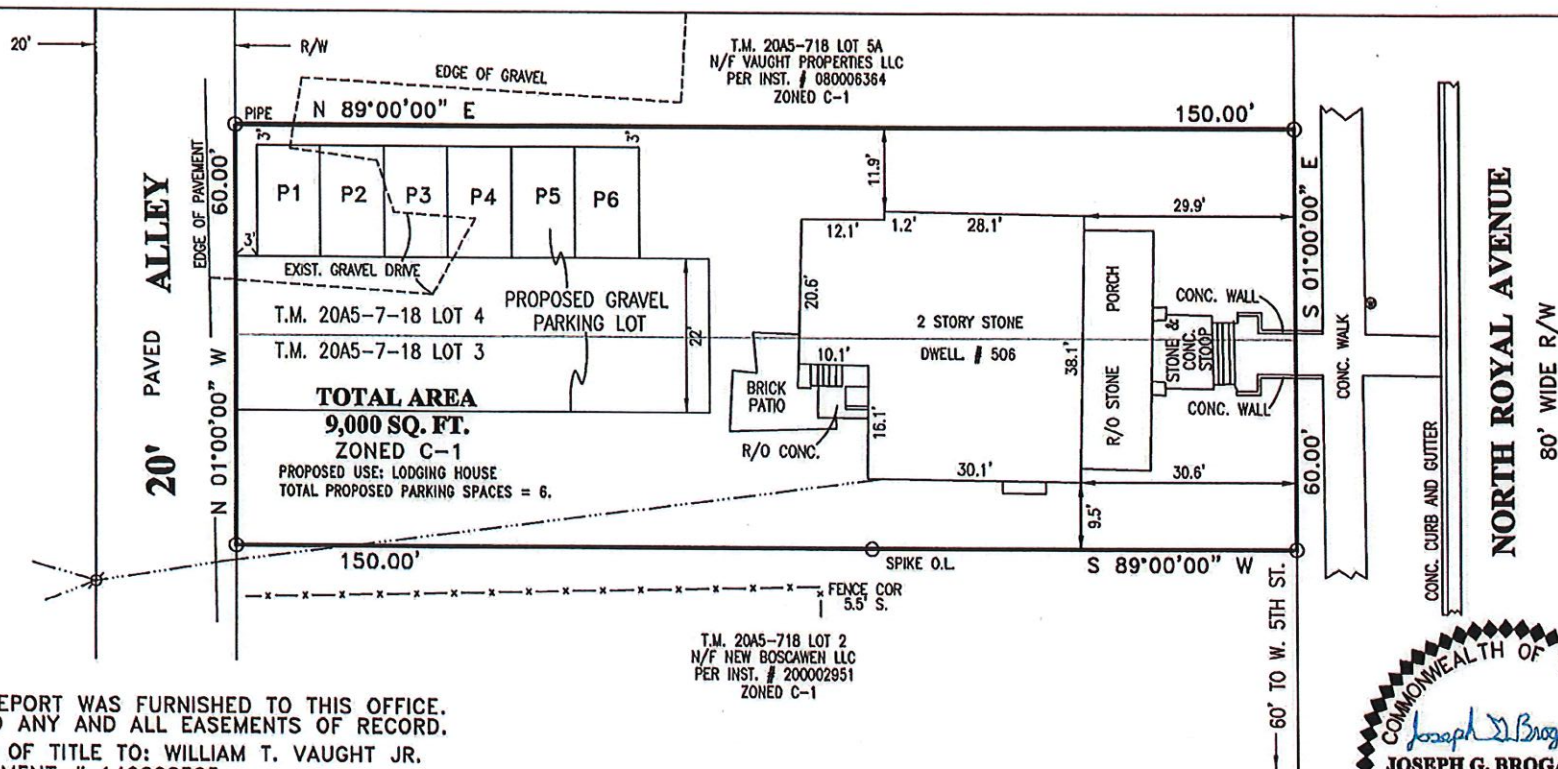
I certify that the information provided with this application is correct to the best of my knowledge and should the special use permit be granted, the project will comply with the conditions imposed upon it and will be implemented only as approved by Town Council.

Signature [Signature] Date 2/18/2025

By submitting this application, the applicant grants permission to Town officials and employees to enter upon the property, which is the subject of this application, during reasonable hours and for purposes related to the application process.

Receipt # _____ Date Paid _____

PER D.B. S/301



NO TITLE REPORT WAS FURNISHED TO THIS OFFICE.
SUBJECT TO ANY AND ALL EASEMENTS OF RECORD.
DERIVATION OF TITLE TO: WILLIAM T. VAUGHT JR.
PER INSTRUMENT # 140002505.

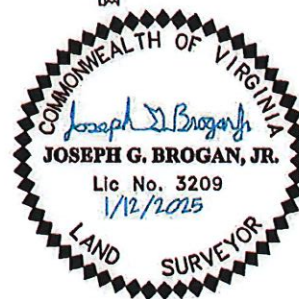
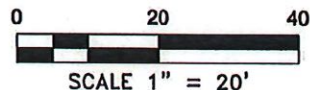
PLAT REF: DEED BOOK S PAGE 301.

SUBJECT PARCELS SITUATED OUTSIDE
THE LIMITS OF THE FEMA FLOOD ZONE.

SURVEY OF LOTS 3 AND 4 BLOCK 18 PER PLAT OF
FRONT ROYAL AND RIVERTON IMPROVEMENT COMPANY
FORK MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT

TOWN OF FRONT ROYAL
WARREN COUNTY, VA.

- P1 DENOTES PROPOSED PARKING SPACE.
- ⊗ DENOTES WATER METER.
- DENOTES EXISTING PIN UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.
- ⊙ DENOTES UTILITY POLE.
- DENOTES OVERHEAD WIRES.
- x- DENOTES VINYL FENCE.



PREPARED BY:
BROGAN LAND SURVEYING, PLC
P.O. BOX 1578
FRONT ROYAL, VA. 22630-0034
TEL. & FAX (540) 635-5657
JANUARY 12, 2025



Warren Coalition

Supporting a safe, healthy and drug-free Warren County

March 24, 2025

Connie Marshner, Chairman
Front Royal Planning Commission
102 E. Main Street
Front Royal, VA 22630

Dear Ms. Marshner and Members of the Planning Commission:

As I am unable to be present at the April 2nd Planning Commission work session, I am writing to provide you with information about our special use permit request for 506 North Royal Avenue.

This house is slated to become a six-bed women's recovery home with a live-in house manager who is a peer recovery specialist. As with the other two recovery houses we are already running, it will be a Level 3 residence, which means that those coming into the house will need to have completed in-patient or outpatient treatment within the past 30 days or actively be in outpatient care. We will continue to work with Warren County Drug Court to accept people into this house. Residents will include people using medication-assisted treatments excluding methadone. These medications will be secured and administered only at the appropriate times.

Through our program, we assist people in recovery in obtaining employment, their driver's license, appropriate clothing, medical care, and food. When needed, we provide transportation to and from work or medical appointments. When accepting someone into one of our recovery houses, our goal is to have them employed within 30 days (unless they are part of the Drug Court, in which case they may have other obligations to fulfill). Since opening our first house in May 2023, we have successfully assisted every client with obtaining employment.

You may be aware that we currently have a women's recovery house at 200 North Royal Ave. This house, which holds nine people and was our first recovery house, will revert to a men's facility. We feel it is in the best interest of the community and our clients to move the women to the smaller facility because we typically have a waitlist for men, while the number of women we are assisting each month has remained at four to six.

The new house will follow the same rules our other houses have. In addition to obtaining and holding employment, residents must continue with outpatient treatment and comply with regular drug screenings. All of our houses typically have clients who are on probation and thus are subject to regular searches by law enforcement. This new house would be subject to the same.

Addiction, as you know, is an incredibly difficult disease to overcome. Providing individuals with hope, purpose, direction, and connection can make all the difference in their recovery. By focusing on these objectives, we help our clients move forward on a daily basis, helping one person at a time. Knowing that their community also wants them to get well has made a difference to each of them.

Please feel free to contact me at 540-328-9036 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Christa Shifflett
Executive Director

P.O. Box 2058, Front Royal, VA 22630 • (540)-636-6385 • (540) 636-6875 (fax)
warrencoalition.org



Warren Coalition

Supporting a safe, healthy and drug-free Warren County

February 18, 2025

Dear Mayor Cockrell and Town Council Members:

The Warren County Community Health Coalition, DBA Warren Coalition, is requesting the fee we paid for a special use permit for 506 N. Royal Ave to be used as a lodging house be waived given our 501c3 nonprofit status.

Thank you for considering this request.

My best,

Christa Shifflett, M.Ed.
Executive Director

**2500100 – A REQUEST FOR A SPECIAL USE PERMIT
SUBMITTED BY DIVINUM AUXILIUM ACADEMY FOR A
PRIVATE SCHOOL LOCATED AT 16 N. ROYAL AVENUE,
IDENTIFIED BY TAX MAP 20A5, SECTION 11, LOT 15. THE
PROPERTY IS ZONED C-2, DOWNTOWN BUSINESS DISTRICT
AND IS LOCATED IN THE ENTRANCE CORRIDOR.**



TOWN OF FRONT ROYAL

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
102 EAST MAIN STREET
P.O. BOX 1560
FRONT ROYAL, VA 2263

Main: 540.635.4236
Fax: 540.631.2727
www.frontroyalva.com

SPECIAL USE PERMIT REQUEST

Application # 2500100

APPLICANT:

NAME Divinum Auxilium Academy PHONE 540.683.2217
ADDRESS 6294 Brounstown Rd., Front Royal, VA 22630
E-MAIL dschmiedicke@divineassistanceacademy.org

PROPERTY OWNER:

NAME Fm Town Hall LLC
NAME Jean Schmiedicke (DAA) PHONE 540.683.2217
ADDRESS 311 Luray Ave. Front Royal, VA 22630
E-MAIL 8201 Euclid Court, Suite 301
Manassas Park, VA 20111

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

PROPERTY ADDRESS 16 N. Royal Ave., Front Royal
TAX MAP 20A5 SECTION 511 BLOCK 11 LOT 15
SUBDIVISION NAME N/A ACREAGE _____
ZONING DISTRICT C-2

REQUEST

PROPOSED USE OF PROPERTY Private School
SPECIFIC SPECIAL USE PERMIT REQUEST Private School in C-2
District. (See Statement of Justification)

ATTACHMENTS --The following must be submitted with the application. Additional information may be required depending on the nature of the request.

1. Survey/Plat of property showing all **existing** improvements.
(10 copies if larger than 11" X 17" and provide a digital copy)
2. Site Plan Application Check # 2426
3. Application Fee of \$400.00 Receipt # 194373 Date Paid 3/10/25
4. Additional information as required by the Dept. of Planning & Community Development.

CERTIFICATION

I certify that the information provided with this application is correct to the best of my knowledge and should the special use permit be granted, the project will comply with the conditions imposed upon it and will be implemented only as approved by Town Council.

Applicant Signature _____

Date 3/6/2025

Property Owner Signature _____

DocuSigned by:

Francisco Barros

Date 3/10/2025

By submitting this application, the applicant grants permission to Town officials and employees to enter upon the property, which is the subject of this application, during reasonable hours and for purposes related to the application process.

RECEIVED
MAR 10 2025
TOWN OF FRONT ROYAL
PLANNING & ZONING DEPARTMENT



#2500100

DIVINUM AUXILIUM ACADEMY
ST. EDITH STEIN SCHOOL FOR GIRLS
ST. JOSEPH THE JUST SCHOOL FOR BOYS

6294 BROWNTOWN RD. FRONT ROYAL, VIRGINIA 22630

PHONE:

540.683.2217 (CELL)

March 10th, 2025

Town of Front Royal
Planning & Zoning, Planning Commission, Town Council
102 E Main St
Front Royal, VA 22630

Statement of Justification; Application for Special Use Permit – 16 N Royal Ave

Dear Ms. Kopishke,

This letter supplements an application for a Special Use Permit for a school at 16 N Royal Ave in the Historic District of Front Royal. The Divinum Auxilium Family of Schools (dba Divinum Auxilium Academy, St. Edith Stein School for Girls, and St. Joseph the Just School for Boys) has been blessed with the opportunity to purchase this building and make it part of the ongoing revitalization that is occurring within the heart of Front Royal.

The landmark property has been vacant for some time and we are looking forward to restoring it and reinstating its place as a living part of our community. We have already come to love this building for many reasons, including its history. It was built during the Roosevelt Works Progress Administration, along with the WC Courthouse and WC High School (now Skyline Middle School) in an effort to build civic resilience following the Great Depression. It has been a community anchor and iconic focal point of Front Royal's character both in terms of architecture and its role as Town Hall. Our plan for a school here aligns well with efforts for historic preservation, which is also consistent with the Town's comprehensive vision.* Historic preservation and education are equally important features of any healthy community and this building provides a special opportunity to promote both of these objectives.

To ensure the protection of the site and building, we plan to explore grants and partnerships with organizations dedicated to historic preservation. We are committed to maintaining the building's architectural integrity and researching opportunities for inclusion in historic registries to support its long-term conservation.

**Source: Town of Front Royal Comprehensive Plan, 2023*

RECEIVED
MAR 10 2025
TOWN OF FRONT ROYAL
PLANNING & ZONING DEPARTMENT

As we all know, schools are an integral component of any municipality. The architects and planners who built Front Royal were mindful of this fact, being sure to plant schools as a central feature of this corridor, including E. Wilson Morrison Elementary and Skyline Middle. In researching the appropriateness of a school on Royal Avenue itself, we were fascinated to learn that the street has showcased many schools throughout the town's long history on both North Royal and South Royal. Throughout the evolution of Front Royal as we know it today, Royal Avenue has been home to other private academies; it contained the first site dedicated to public education in Warren County in the 1870s; was home to Warren County High School in 1920; and even housed a college at the turn of the 20th century.**

Now, like then, we are mindful of how important this building is as a centerpiece of the town's character on its main thoroughfare. And just like then, we believe that a school at this location will contribute to the overall aesthetic, health, and vitality of a downtown that is already beautifully constructed with churches, municipal offices, and other existing schools at the core of our town. The building's central location and design were meant to facilitate the coming and going of townspeople and to be a bridge between Main St and the well-established neighborhood along Luray Avenue. We hope to see it fulfill this role again and be revived to foster and promote the spirit of this blooming sector of town.

Historic preservation and the importance of place have become an organic part of our own history since locating St. Edith Stein School for Girls at its current home on Luray Ave, directly across from Skyline Middle School. It has become the perfect place for our students and teachers to participate in church, town parks, and the Main Street community that surrounds them. As a historic building, Bon Air has given our staff and students a place of story, beauty, and a deep sense of pride in and ownership of our town. Since that time we have made every effort to be good neighbors by being attentive to the concerns of those who live and work nearby. We remain committed to prioritizing input from neighbors in the stewardship of the old Town Hall.

***Eastern College, located at the 500 block of N. Royal Ave c. 1909; WC High School on S. Royal c.1920; Simpson Academy on S. Royal Ave, former site of the first public school in Warren County. Sources: Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission (Architectural Survey of Warren County Virginia, Including the Town of Front Royal, 1974); Warren Heritage Society Archives*

Like any growing town or city, we recognize that urban centers naturally experience both pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The intersection of Royal Ave and Main St has long been established as having well-lit existing crosswalks to regulate foot traffic and vehicles. Our school proposed for the old Town Hall will be an all-boys school featuring 25 students aged 13-18 and comprising 7th through 12th grade. All groups coming and going to Main Street will be supervised by a teacher or administrator. Although any use of this building will potentially add to the congestion of this area, in all likelihood some more typical commercial enterprise would add a larger traffic burden for the town. We intend to cause as little impact as possible and have an established track record for being receptive to various ways to do so. At St. Edith's for example, we worked with neighbors and the police to structure parking and traffic flow patterns that created the least amount of impact on town streets and neighbors. So too with the old Town Hall, we remain open and flexible to working with the town and with our neighbors to ensure habits of daily operation that will consider every aspect of the safety and well-being of all.

We look forward to working with the town on this exciting project and reinvigorating this historic building.

Sincerely,

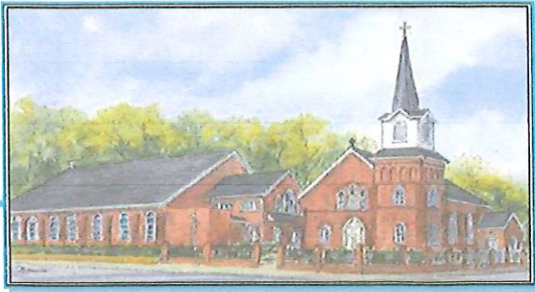


Dian R. Schmiedicke

Board President

The Divinum Auxilium Family of Schools

SUP #2500100



St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Church

120 West Main Street Front Royal, Virginia 22630

March 10, 2025

Attention Town of Front Royal Planning and Zoning Office

This letter is to certify that I, Reverend Daniel Gee, Pastor of St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Church agree to lease the requisite parking spaces required by the Town of Front Royal to Divinum Auxilium Academy pursuant to its acquisition of The Old Town Hall ([16 N. Royal Ave.](#)) for its use as a private school.

Respectfully yours,,

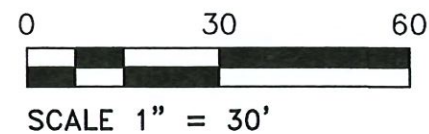
Rev. Daniel Gee
Pastor

RECEIVED
MAR 10 2025
TOWN OF FRONT ROYAL
PLANNING & ZONING DEPARTMENT

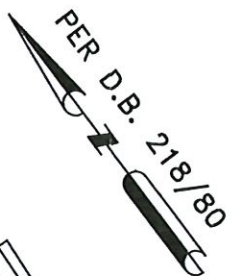
SURVEY OF THE FM TOWN HALL, LLC
PROPERTY PER INSTRUMENT # 140006310
FORK MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT
TOWN OF FRONT ROYAL
WARREN COUNTY, VA.

NO TITLE REPORT WAS FURNISHED TO THIS OFFICE.
SUBJECT TO ANY AND ALL EASEMENTS OF RECORD.
PROPERTY SITUATED OUTSIDE THE LIMITS
OF THE FEMA FLOOD ZONE.

TOTAL EXISTING ONSITE PARKING = 6.
3 (HC1) HANDICAP PARKING SPACES.
3 (P1) REGULAR PARKING SPACES.



LINE	BEARING	DISTANCE
L1	N 37°30'39" E	93.02'



TO. 1ST. STREET
ONE WAY
ALLEY
VARIABLE WIDTH

T.M. 20A5-11 PARCEL 19 ZONED R-3
CORR FAMILY REAL ESTATE LLC
PER INST. # 030003697

T.M. 20A5-11 PARCEL 8 ZONED R-3
CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON
PER D.B. 86/359

ENTRANCE TO PAVED PARKING LOT

TO. W. MAIN ST.

T.M. 20A5-11 PARCEL 10 ZONED R-3
TOWN OF FRONT ROYAL PARKING LOT PER D.B. 159/213

DISTANCE TO PROPOSED OFFSITE PARKING LOT = 232.17'

T.M. 20A5-11 PARCELS 9 & 12 ZONED C-1
MADDOX FAMILY INVESTMENTS, L.C.
PER INSTRUMENT # 010005049

- EP DENOTES EDGE OF PAVEMENT.
X DENOTES LIGHT OR LIGHT & UTILITY POLE.
⊕ DENOTES FLAG POLE.
● DENOTES PIN SET.
○ DENOTES EXISTING PIN OR PIPE AS NOTED.
⊗ DENOTES WATER METER.
--- DENOTES OVERHEAD WIRES.
-x-x- DENOTES FENCE.

UNION ST.
L1

ONE WAY

T.M. 20A5-11 PARCEL 16
N/F TRUSTEES OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
PER D.B. 89/195
ZONED C-2

T.M. 20A5-11
PARCEL 15
13,164 SQ. FT.
ZONED C-2

T.M. 20A5-11 PARCEL 14
N/F FRONT ROYAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
PER D.B. 92/119
ZONED C-2

T.M. 20A5-11 PARCEL 13
N/F FRONT ROYAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
PER D.B. 153/74
ZONED C-2

PREPARED BY:
BROGAN LAND SURVEYING, PLC
P.O. BOX 1578
FRONT ROYAL, VA. 22630-0034
TEL. & FAX (540) 635-5657
MARCH 7, 2025



SUP # 2500100

Connie Potter

From: David Beahm <Dbeahm@warrencountyva.gov>
Sent: Monday, March 17, 2025 10:10 AM
To: Connie Potter
Cc: Inspections; Kevin Perry; Matthew Byers; Gerry Maiatico; Gordon Foster
Subject: RE: SUP Application 2500100 for Comments – Divinum Auxilium Academy – Private School in C-2 District
Attachments: 2500100_Application_16 N Royal Ave_Divinum Auxilium Academy.pdf; 2500100_Ltr Lease of Parking Spaces_16 N Royal Ave_Divinum Auxilium Academy.pdf; 2500100_Statement of Justification_16 N Royal Ave_Divinum Auxilium Academy.pdf; 2500100_Survey Plat_16 N Royal Ave_Divinum Auxilium Academy.pdf

Comments – 16 N. Royal Avenue, Divinum Auxilium Academy – Private School in C-2 District – 2500100:

- Erosion and Sediment Control (ESC) Items:
 - There does not appear to be any land disturbance at this time and therefore nothing would be required. If this is not the case, the normal submission process would be required.
- Site Plan Review:
 - If or when any building construction related activity were to take place, a Site Plan Review may need to be completed for any external (increased footprint) changes. Any modifications to the existing building would be reviewed through the building code review process and a site review may not be needed.
- Building Inspections Items:
 - This would be a Change of Use and Occupancy and would require a permit that included plans showing existing conditions be submitted and any proposed changes to be made to meet the new Use and Occupancy group. If any type of work-related activity (structure, electrical, plumbing, mechanical, fire suppression, energy, retaining wall, etc.) were to be required, it would be subject to the normal requirements of application, review and approval prior to work beginning.
- Fire Marshal's Office Comments (standard):
 - We would defer all comments for the site development/new construction/retrofit/change of use to the Building Official. Upon approval and issuance of the CO, the facility shall be maintained in accordance with the Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code.

If anything should change in the scope, additional requirements may be required.

All submissions for these items can be made to the Building Inspections Department in person, through the postal service or at the email address: inspections@warrencountyva.gov

Respectfully,

David C. Beahm, CBO
Building Official
County of Warren

540-636-9973
Fax 540-636-4698
dbeahm@warrencountyva.gov
www.warrencountyva.gov

THIS MESSAGE IS INTENDED SOLELY FOR THE INDIVIDUAL(S) NAMED IN THE HEADER. THIS MESSAGE MAY CONTAIN MATERIAL THAT IS PRIVILEGED OR CONFIDENTIAL. IF YOU ARE NOT ONE OF THE INTENDED RECIPIENTS, PLEASE DO NOT READ, COPY, USE, OR DISCLOSE THIS MESSAGE TO OTHERS; PLEASE NOTIFY THE SENDER BY REPLYING TO THIS MESSAGE; AND THEN PLEASE DELETE THIS MESSAGE FROM YOUR SYSTEM. THANK YOU.

From: Connie Potter <cpotter@frontroyalva.com>
Sent: Monday, March 10, 2025 12:20 PM
To: David Beahm <Dbeahm@warrencountyva.gov>; Gerry Maiatico <gmaiatico@warrencountyfire.com>
Subject: SUP Application 2500100 for Comments

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the Warren County email system. Exercise caution when opening attachments or clicking links, especially from unknown senders.

Good morning,

Attached is a Special Use Permit Application #2500100 to operate a private school in the C-2, Downtown Business District at 16 N. Royal Avenue.

Please respond with comments by April 10, 2025.

Thank you,
Connie



Connie L. Potter

Executive Assistant
Town of Front Royal
Dept. of Planning and Zoning
102 E Main St | PO Box 1560
Front Royal, VA 22630
T./540-635-4236

This message was sent from a verified Warren County account.

SHELTERS/ALTERNATIVE HOUSING

Connie Potter

From: Louis A. R. Neel
Sent: Tuesday, March 25, 2025 2:14 PM
To: Lauren Kopishke
Cc: John Ware
Subject: Zoning Considerations for Autistic Adults in Transition
Attachments: Half Way Homes for Autistic Adults in Transition to Society.docx

Lauren,

I have been reaching out to a few organizations that deal with Austistic folks. There seems to be almost no real resources here in town although I have chatted with a Mom who has gone through the experience of raising an Autistic child. I also have phone calls and emails out to Bridge of Hope and Autism Speaks. I think the Bridge of Hope is more for families in distress but they are also one of the categories under consideration. I have gathered a bunch of information from the various national sites as well as using AI and have plagerized shamelessly (:)) in the attached document. If we can get a good contact this set of notes should serve us well in communication and finally putting pen to paper. At least that is my hope. There are really two sections in the document. One sections deals with needs and the other some zoning considerations in a general sense. This goose is not cooked enough to share widely but it is a start.

Have you had any luck with Project Phoenix or Veterans groups?

Thank you,
Allen

540-660-2000

Half Way Homes for Autistic Adults in Transition to Society

The need for halfway homes (or supported living programs) for autistic adults has become increasingly recognized in recent years. These homes can provide a supportive environment for individuals with autism who may not be able to live fully independently but also do not require the level of care found in institutional settings. Here are some key reasons why these halfway homes are important:

1. Lack of Independence Support:

Many autistic adults, especially those with high-functioning autism or Asperger's syndrome, struggle to live fully independently due to challenges with executive functioning, social interactions, and daily living skills. Halfway homes can bridge the gap between living with family and full independence by offering structured support and a gradual transition.

2. Safe and Predictable Environment:

Autistic individuals often thrive in environments that are structured, predictable, and calm. Halfway homes can provide such an environment, reducing stress and anxiety that might occur in less structured living arrangements. These homes can cater to individual sensory needs, such as providing quiet spaces or accommodations for specific routines.

3. Social Skills Development:

One of the primary challenges for autistic adults is social communication. A halfway home provides opportunities to practice social interactions with peers in a controlled setting, which can help them improve social skills, build friendships, and reduce isolation.

4. Support with Daily Living Skills:

Many autistic adults need ongoing assistance with daily tasks like cooking, cleaning, managing finances, and maintaining personal hygiene. Halfway homes typically have staff who help residents develop these skills at their own pace, promoting greater independence over time.

5. Tailored Therapeutic Services:

Many halfway homes offer access to therapy or counseling, such as occupational therapy, speech therapy, or social skills training. These services help individuals cope with their challenges and improve their quality of life.

6. Transition from Family Care:

For many autistic adults, living with family members is not a long-term solution. However, families may struggle to provide the level of care and independence their loved one needs. A halfway home offers a middle ground, where the individual can start learning to live independently but with necessary support.

7. Employment and Community Integration:

A halfway home can help autistic adults gain skills that enable them to work and integrate into the community. These homes may offer programs or partnerships with local businesses that allow residents to explore employment options in a supportive, non-judgmental environment.

8. Crisis Prevention and Management:

Autistic individuals are more likely to experience mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, or behavioral issues. A halfway home setting with trained staff can prevent these situations from escalating, offering both crisis intervention and long-term emotional support.

9. Reduced Loneliness and Isolation:

Living in a halfway home provides an opportunity for autistic adults to connect with others who share similar experiences, reducing the isolation that many individuals on the spectrum face. This sense of belonging can improve mental health and well-being.

10. Personalized Care Plans:

Each autistic individual has a unique set of strengths and challenges. Halfway homes often develop personalized care plans that address the specific needs of each resident, ensuring they get the support they require to lead fulfilling lives.

Current Gaps and Needs:

Limited Availability: There is a shortage of halfway homes specifically for autistic adults, with many individuals on long waiting lists for suitable housing.

Funding Issues: The cost of these services can be prohibitively high, and many families may struggle to find affordable options. Additionally, public funding or insurance coverage for these types of services may be limited.

Variation in Quality: Not all halfway homes are equally equipped to meet the diverse needs of autistic adults. High-quality programs that offer comprehensive support are often few and far between.

In summary, halfway homes for autistic adults are a vital resource that provides much-needed support, structure, and community. As awareness and demand grow, there is an increasing need for more of these homes to ensure that autistic individuals can live as independently and meaningfully as possible.

Zoning Codes

Zoning codes can significantly affect the establishment and operation of halfway homes for autistic adults. Zoning regulations are designed to control land use and ensure that residential and commercial developments are in harmony with the surrounding community. However, when it comes to halfway homes for individuals with autism, these regulations can sometimes create barriers. Here are some key ways zoning codes can impact such homes:

1. Residential vs. Commercial Zoning:

Halfway homes are typically considered residential facilities, but they may face challenges when located in residential zones due to perceived differences in function or concerns from neighbors. For example:

Density Restrictions: Zoning codes may limit the number of people who can live in a residence in certain areas, and halfway homes for autistic adults may exceed these limits, leading to legal hurdles or resistance from local authorities.

Use Designations: Many zoning codes classify group homes or residential care facilities separately from regular residential homes, often imposing stricter rules. A halfway home may not automatically be allowed in a residential zone without special permits or variances.

2. Special Use Permits:

In some cases, zoning codes may allow halfway homes to operate only if they obtain a special use permit (also known as a conditional use permit). This is a process where the home must meet additional requirements or conditions set by the local zoning authority. These conditions might include:

- Restrictions on the size of the facility
- Limitations on the number of residents
- Designated parking spaces
- Additional health and safety considerations
- Buffer zones or screening to mitigate impact on neighboring properties
- Parking Restrictions

3. "Community Care Facility" Definitions:

Zoning codes often have specific categories for community care facilities or group homes. These definitions might or might not include homes for individuals with autism. If the facility is not explicitly mentioned in the zoning code, the owners or operators may need to seek legal interpretation or request that the zoning code be updated to include such facilities. In some areas, this can be a lengthy and expensive process.

4. NIMBYism (Not In My Backyard):

Local zoning codes can be influenced by residents' concerns about group homes. This phenomenon, known as NIMBYism, can manifest in opposition to halfway homes for autistic adults due to misconceptions or fears about property values, safety, or changes to the neighborhood's character. Communities may push back against these types of facilities, even though they provide essential services for individuals with disabilities. Zoning codes in these cases may reflect this resistance through the imposition of more restrictive regulations.

5. Fair Housing Act and ADA Considerations:

In the United States, zoning regulations cannot discriminate against individuals with disabilities, including those with autism. Under the Fair Housing Act (FHA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), group homes for individuals with disabilities, including autism, are entitled to the same rights as other residential properties. These laws aim to prevent local authorities from using zoning codes to block the establishment of halfway homes for people with disabilities, unless there is a legitimate health or safety concern.

Reasonable Accommodation: Under the FHA, local governments may be required to make reasonable accommodations to allow group homes for people with disabilities, which can include autism. This might mean waiving certain zoning requirements like density limits or parking rules if they are too restrictive for the halfway home to operate.

6. Neighborhood Impact and Buffer Zones:

Zoning codes may require specific buffer zones between group homes and certain types of development, such as schools, churches, or residential areas. This can sometimes complicate the siting of halfway homes, especially if the buffer zones are too large to accommodate the facility within the desired area. Zoning restrictions can also require extra

measures such as fences or landscaping to separate the group home from neighboring properties.

7. Variances:

If a halfway home for autistic adults is unable to comply with specific zoning regulations, it may be possible to apply for a variance—a formal request to be exempt from certain zoning laws. However, obtaining a variance can be a time-consuming and sometimes contentious process. Local zoning boards typically hold public hearings, where neighbors may express concerns, and decisions can vary based on community sentiment or legal precedents.

Cities in Virginia that may be a good resource to study Half Way Houses for Autistic Adults

In Virginia, like in many other states, the ability to operate a halfway house or group home for individuals with autism (or other disabilities) depends on local zoning codes. Zoning regulations can vary significantly from city to city or county to county, and each locality determines how it will classify, permit, and regulate group homes, including halfway houses.

However, Virginia law, in accordance with the Fair Housing Act (FHA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in housing. This means that localities cannot use zoning codes to specifically exclude group homes for people with disabilities, including those for autistic adults. Still, local zoning boards may apply different regulations and conditions depending on the type and size of the facility.

Here are a few cities in Virginia where zoning regulations seem to exist that accommodate halfway houses or group homes for individuals with autism:

1. Virginia Beach

Zoning Classification: Virginia Beach has provisions for group homes in its zoning codes, including residential areas. However, the facility must comply with requirements such as the number of residents, building modifications for accessibility, and compliance with state regulations for care facilities.

Regulatory Process: Group homes may be classified as "family care homes" or "residential care homes," and operators must apply for the appropriate zoning permits. The city also enforces specific conditions to ensure that group homes are compatible with the surrounding residential area.

2. Richmond

Zoning Classification: Richmond's zoning code allows for group homes, including those that serve individuals with disabilities. Group homes are generally permitted in residential

districts, though certain conditions must be met, such as ensuring the facility does not significantly alter the character of the neighborhood.

Special Use Permits: In some cases, operators of group homes may need to apply for a special use permit to ensure the facility meets local requirements and does not exceed the limits on occupancy or noise levels.

3. Arlington

Zoning Classification: Arlington County has provisions that allow group homes for people with disabilities, and these homes are usually considered a permitted use in residential zones. However, Arlington's zoning code specifies that certain criteria, such as the number of residents and the type of care provided, must be met.

Community Integration: Arlington is known for its progressive stance on integrating individuals with disabilities into the community, so it often supports zoning for group homes, especially those that cater to people with developmental disabilities like autism.

4. Alexandria

Zoning Classification: In Alexandria, group homes are generally allowed in residential areas, but operators must comply with local zoning rules. The city's zoning ordinance includes guidelines for group homes that provide housing for individuals with disabilities. These rules often focus on things like building size, number of residents, and parking.

Permitting Process: Similar to other areas, group homes may require a conditional use permit or special use permit to operate in certain residential zones.

5. Fairfax

Zoning Classification: Fairfax County allows group homes for people with disabilities in residential areas. However, there may be limits on the number of residents, and group homes must comply with both zoning and building codes.

Fair Housing Act Compliance: The county must adhere to federal fair housing guidelines and cannot impose overly restrictive zoning laws that would unfairly limit the establishment of group homes for individuals with autism.

6. Loudoun County

Zoning Classification: Loudoun County permits group homes in residential districts, but operators must follow specific zoning guidelines, including limits on the number of residents and ensuring the home blends with the neighborhood character. Loudoun

County's zoning code also allows for reasonable accommodation requests under the Fair Housing Act.

Permitting Process: A special exception or special use permit may be required depending on the location, size, and type of care facility.

7. Chesterfield County

Zoning Classification: Chesterfield County includes group homes in its zoning code, but they are subject to special use permits or conditional use approvals. These regulations focus on ensuring that group homes are compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

Accessibility and Integration: As with other areas in Virginia, Chesterfield must comply with the Fair Housing Act and ensure that zoning laws do not discriminate against group homes for people with autism.

8. Prince William County

Zoning Classification: Group homes are permitted in residential areas in Prince William County, but they must meet certain conditions, such as the number of residents and accessibility requirements. The county's zoning code recognizes the need for such homes, as long as they do not disrupt the neighborhood's residential character.

Special Use Permits: Depending on the size and scope of the group home, a special use permit may be required.

9. Norfolk

Zoning Classification: Norfolk's zoning codes allow for group homes to operate in residential areas, subject to certain restrictions. These restrictions might include the number of residents and requirements related to building modifications, such as ramps or other accessibility features.

Fair Housing Act Protections: Norfolk's zoning policies align with federal laws, and any facility for individuals with disabilities, including autism, must be given fair treatment under these regulations.

10. Roanoke

Zoning Classification: Roanoke has provisions for group homes, and they are typically allowed in residential zones. However, the zoning laws may require certain conditions, such as limitations on the number of residents or compliance with health and safety regulations.

Special Use Permits: A special use permit may be required for larger group homes or facilities that provide care and support services.

Key Zoning Considerations:

Size and Occupancy Limits: Many localities have limits on the number of residents who can live in a group home, which may affect the ability to operate larger halfway houses.

Compatibility with Neighborhoods: Zoning codes often require that group homes not disrupt the neighborhood's character, which can mean limits on how visible the home is or the type of modifications that can be made to the property.

Permits and Variances: Depending on the locality, group homes may need special permits or variances to operate, which can be subject to local planning and zoning board approval.

Key Resources:

Fair Housing Act (FHA): Protects individuals with disabilities, including those with autism, from discrimination in housing. Local zoning laws cannot block group homes for people with disabilities without a valid reason.

Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS): This department provides resources and guidance regarding licensed facilities, including those for individuals with autism.

Conclusion:

In Virginia, many cities and counties have zoning regulations that accommodate halfway houses and group homes for individuals with autism, but these homes often need to meet specific zoning requirements. Advocates, families, and service providers may need to work with local zoning authorities to ensure the proper permits and accommodations are in place.

Connie Potter

From: Louis Neel <lkneel999@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 27, 2025 12:42 PM
To: Lauren Kopishke
Cc: John Ware
Subject: Re: Questions for Project Phoenix
Attachments: Project Phoenix Questions_2.docx

Lauren,

I made a few changes to the questionnaire. I added pets/emotional support animals, changed questions to a more logical order and corrected a typo. I will try and stay out of your mailbox the rest of the week. :)

Thank you,
Allen

On Mar 20, 2025, at 4:20 PM, Allen Neel <lkneel999@gmail.com> wrote:

I did not think of pets, service dogs or emotional support animals.

On Mar 20, 2025, at 4:12 PM, Lauren Kopishke <lkopishke@frontroyalva.com> wrote:

I was going to work on something similar. I am so grateful you put this together. One thing to add is pet lodging. During my initial conversation they said a lot of woman stay because the partner will threaten their dog or cat.

<image001.jpg> *Lauren E. Kopishke*
Director of Planning & Zoning
Zoning Administrator
Town of Front Royal
Dept. of Planning and Zoning
102 E Main St | PO Box 1560
Front Royal, VA 22630
T./540-635-4236

From: Louis Neel <lkneel999@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 20, 2025 3:58 PM
To: Lauren Kopishke <lkopishke@frontroyalva.com>
Subject: Questions for Project Phoenix

Lauren,

I had started a list of questions to ask various organizations. I tailored it a bit to make them relevant to Project Phoenix. It should help with the discussions. Perhaps forward questions in advance of the meeting?

Thank you,
Allen

Project Phoenix Questions -

1. What type of services do you provide and what is needed?
 - a. Emergency Housing?
 - b. Counselling?
 - c. Child Care?
 - d. Other?
2. What time frame is the norm for a stay?
3. What are the eligibility requirements for a shelter?
4. What are the zoning restrictions from your point of view?
 - a. Any experience with obstacles encountered from a local point of view.
5. What type of capacity is needed to make the effort viable?
 - a. Can residential style housing be used effectively?
 - i. Capacities (Size, Style, Sq footage)
 - ii. Financially
 - iii. Services
6. Is there currently a waiting list?
 - a. Are there any increases in local demands?
7. How are children handled
 - a. Age of children
 - b. Number of Children
8. How are animals handled
 - a. Pets
 - b. Emotional Support Animals
 - c. Guide Dogs
9. Do you have a preferred security posture?
 - a. Partnership with Police?
 - b. On site security
 - c. Alarms systems
10. What other organizations do you collaborate with?
 - a. Partnerships with other groups?
 - b. Do other groups come to shelter to provide services?
11. Do you feel a shelter being public enhances your efforts or is a detriment.
12. If location discretion is desired, Have you found shelters remaining anonymous possible or does the word get out relatively quickly.
13. How do you handle special accommodations?
 - a. Disabilities
 - b. Transportation

c. Language Barriers

d. LGBT Community

14. What happens when someone leaves shelter

15. Can you give some idea of success rates and share some stories of successes?

16. What State and local laws and regulations impact your operations?

17. What obstacles to success would you like the town address from a policy point of view.

Connie Potter

From: Louis A. R. Neel
Sent: Wednesday, March 26, 2025 8:21 PM
To: alexandra.Hannigan@nwcsb.com
Cc: Lauren Kopishke; John Ware; Connie Marshner
Subject: Group Homes and Zoning Questions for Front Royal
Attachments: Special Disadvantaged Groups Zoning Questionnaire .docx

Ms. Hannigan,

Thank you for speaking with me earlier today and offering to help with finding answers and resources. To reiterate our conversations, we are currently in the process updating the Front Royal Zoning ordinances. As a part of this update, it was noted that we may be inadvertently being too restrictive on certain categories of group homes and half way houses. The current thinking, supported by some research, is that some disadvantaged groups would benefit from being in a more residential environment. Although we are interested in all groups, the focus groups along with the definitions are listed below;

1. *Transition Housing for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities*

- a. *Transition housing for individuals with developmental disabilities refers to specialized living arrangements designed to help individuals with developmental disabilities transition from institutional settings, family homes, or other environments into more independent, community-based living situations. These housing programs often focus on helping individuals gain the skills and support they need to live as independently as possible, while also addressing any necessary medical, behavioral, or daily living assistance.*

2. *Temporary Veteran's Housing*

- a. *Temporary housing for veterans refers to short-term living arrangements designed to provide veterans with a safe, stable environment while they transition from military service to civilian life or while they wait for more permanent housing solutions. These housing options are typically aimed at veterans who are in crisis or at risk of homelessness, or in need of a supportive environment during a period of recovery, adjustment, or reintegration.*

3. *Temporary Emergency Family Housing*

- a. *Temporary emergency housing refers to short-term, immediate shelter provided to individuals or families who are experiencing a crisis or urgent need for a place to stay. This type of housing is meant to offer a safe, temporary living space for people who have become homeless due to natural disasters, domestic violence, financial hardship, or other emergencies, and who are unable to secure stable housing on their own.*

4. *Temporary Shelter for Domestic Abuse Victims*

- a. *Temporary shelter for domestic abuse victims refers to short-term, safe housing provided to individuals who are escaping situations of domestic violence or abuse. These shelters offer a secure, confidential environment where victims can stay while they work on escaping the cycle of abuse and begin rebuilding their lives. Temporary shelters provide immediate safety, support, and resources to help individuals navigate the next steps toward long-term recovery and stability.*

5. *Temporary Shelter for At-Risk Children*

- a. *Temporary shelter for children at risk refers to short-term housing or care provided to children who are in immediate danger or facing circumstances that put their safety, well-being, or development at risk. These children may have experienced abuse, neglect, abandonment, or other harmful situations. Temporary shelters serve as a safe haven where children can be protected while authorities, social workers, or organizations work to address their needs and find more permanent solutions, such as family reunification, foster care, or adoption.*

As per our conversation, I have included a list of questions we would like to address to better understand these groups with special needs. The questions are written as if they were addressing a particular organization in one of the above 5 categories. We would appreciate any responses and POCs that you could provide. I have attached the list in a Word format document. Please let me know if you need anything else and feel free to reach out anytime.

Thank you,

Allen Neel

Vice Chairman Front Royal Planning Commission

540-660-2000

Special Disadvantaged Groups Residential Zoning Questionnaire

1. What type of services do you provide and what is needed?
 - a. Emergency Housing?
 - b. Counselling?
 - c. Child Care?
 - d. Other?
2. What time frame is the norm for a stay?
3. What are the eligibility requirements for your shelter?
4. What are the zoning restrictions from your point of view?
 - a. Any experience with obstacles encountered from a local point of view.
 - i. What do you feel would be solutions
5. What type of capacity is needed to make the effort viable?
 - a. Can residential style housing be used effectively?
 - i. Capacities (Size, Style, Sq footage)
 - ii. Financially
 - iii. Services
6. Is there currently a waiting list?
 - a. Are there any increases in local demands?
7. How are children handled (if any)
 - a. Age of children
 - b. Number of Children
 - c. Special Rooms accommodation
8. How are animals handled (if any)
 - a. Pets
 - b. Emotional Support Animals
 - c. Guide Dogs
9. Do you have a preferred security posture?
 - a. Partnership with Police?
 - b. On site security?
 - c. Alarms systems?
10. What other organizations do you collaborate with?
 - a. Partnerships with other groups?
 - b. Do other groups come to shelter to provide services?
11. Do you feel a shelter being public enhances your efforts or is a detriment.
12. If location discretion is desired, have you found shelters remaining anonymous possible or does the word get out relatively quickly.

13. Do you feel a shelter being public enhances your efforts or is a detriment.
14. How do you handle special accommodations?
 - a. Disabilities
 - b. Transportation
 - c. Language Barriers
 - d. LGBT Community
15. What happens when someone leaves shelter?
16. Can you give some idea of success rates and share some stories of successes?
17. What State and local laws and regulations impact your operations?
18. What obstacles to success would you like the town address from a policy point of view.

Thank you for your help!



American Planning Association

Making Great Communities Happen

July/August 2018

PAS MEMO

Autism Planning and Design Guidelines 1.0

By Kyle Ezell, AICP CUD; Gala Korniyenko; and Rick Stein, AICP

According to [the latest data](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network, one in 59 children lived with autism in 2014, up from one in 150 in 2000 (Figure 1) (CDC 2018b). Autism's increasing prevalence calls for planners to plan and design the public realm to improve the quality of life for people with autism.

Officially termed *autism spectrum disorder*, autism's "spectrum" denotes a wide range of functional, cognitive, social, and behavioral impacts associated with this disability (NIH NINDS 2017). People with autism want to live fulfilled lives — as does everyone. They deserve to be considered as equal participants in the planning process, and their desires should be represented as strongly and clearly as all others. Planners must be careful that the landscapes that they implement represent the needs of those with autism, too — and planners must plan with them, not for them, to make sure their voices are heard.

This PAS Memo introduces a framework for planning with people with autism and offers an initial set of planning and design guidelines for the public realm that addresses their needs. This work was the culmination of a year-long research process that included adults with autism, parent caregivers of adults with autism, professionals from planning and planning-related fields, experts on autism, and graduate and undergraduate students at The Ohio State University.

The article first describes the issues faced by those with autism and makes connections to ways in which planners can address these issues. It then introduces the research work, explains the Six Feelings Framework for autism planning and design, and offers some examples from the Autism Planning and Design Guidelines 1.0.

Autism and Planning

Autism ([autism spectrum disorder](#), or ASD) is a developmental disorder. Autism is often diagnosed during the first years of life when communication issues, challenges with sensory responses, repetitive behaviors, difficulties with fine motor skills, and challenges in social situations are identified (CDC 2018a).

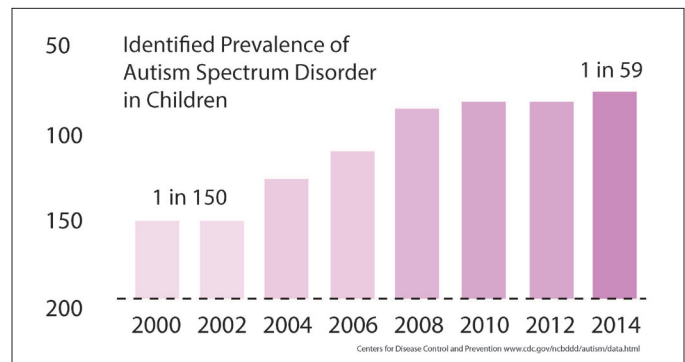


Figure 1. Increase in prevalence of autism among children, 2000–2014 (CDC 2018b)

Symptoms present themselves differently in every individual with autism, and some people require significant daily assistance, while others do not (CDC 2018a).

Cognitive conditions associated with autism include social anxiety, agoraphobia, attention deficit disorder, repetitive behavior, forgetting consequential tasks, depression, and epilepsy, among others (Baum, Stevenson, and Wallace 2015). People with autism experience their environments very differently, so it is important to understand the direct relationship between their general experiences and the scope of planners' work. Consider that:

- People with autism process information differently than "neurotypical" people (those with typical neurological development and no developmental disabilities), which makes them prone to sensory overload associated stress and anxiety (Baron et al. 2006; Merrill n.d.; DuBois et al. 2017). Planners can remedy the built environment's effects on adults with autism and also learn how stress and anxiety caused by overstimulation can be reduced.
- Response to noise (Kanakri et al. 2017) causes many to become distracted and suffer higher rates of sleep problems (Cortesi et al. 2010). Planners can employ zoning and urban design to create more quiet places.

- Sensitivity to light and noise affects many people with autism (Filipe 2017). Planners can propose silent (non-buzzing) streetlights with bulbs that emit softer light to improve their lives.
- People with autism might also have motor impairments (Ming, Brimacombe, and Wagner 2007). Planners can understand and accommodate these challenges in a wide range of infrastructure designs, such as strong buffers between pedestrians and cars.
- Very few adults with autism have a driver's license. Among 703 adults with autism in New Jersey, only 9.3 percent had a driver's license (Deka et al. 2016). Many who have a license use it as an identity card rather than a license to drive. Planners can influence transportation policy to enable people with autism to move more freely around the community.
- Few young adults with autism are employed full time (Pinho 2017). Unemployment is often tied to lack of access to jobs and unreliable or nonexistent transportation policies (Hu 2017). Planners can shape new policies, including more mixed residential-employment land uses.
- Many people with autism have communication challenges and do not enjoy attending meetings. Planners can offer alternative ways to participate in planning processes, such as using online participatory technologies (Afzalan and Muller 2017).
- Parents of children (and adult "children"/dependents) with autism are more prone to mental health issues as a result of responsibilities associated with full-time caregiving (Rejani and Ting 2015). Planners can advocate for targeted housing opportunities for people with autism. They can also propose infrastructure improvements that make it easier for people with autism, which can provide caregiver relief.

While not every person with autism shares the same health conditions and functional challenges, planners should have a general understanding of autism and how it affects many members of our communities, including family and other caregivers. Planners can then consider the impacts of policies and plans on people with autism and become proactive in creating more inclusive places relative to autism.

The "Cliff" and Independence

Children with autism rely on significant federal (Social Security and Medicaid), state, and local programs related to access to transportation, education/life/workforce training, and recreation.

When they reach the age at which they are legally considered adults (usually 18 or 21, depending on state of residence), government funding for these vital programs and services is generally no longer available (Shattuck et al. 2011). This loss of financial support can be described as "falling off the cliff" (Carpenter 2015) because funding ends abruptly, yet many new adults with autism continue to lack the skills for independent living.

Impacts of the "cliff" are wide reaching. It directly affects caregivers, who will likely be required to provide a higher level of care as a result of losing support from governmental funding

and programs (Herrema et al. 2017). It also impacts potential employers who might want to hire adults with autism who suddenly, without transportation funding, have few or no options to get to work (Carr 2017). But the "cliff" most directly impacts adults with autism, including recently transitioned adults who are usually not ready, able, or willing to live alone and provide for themselves as most neurotypical adults are expected to do. For these reasons, planners should begin planning with people with autism by focusing on the pressing needs of adults with autism.

Many adults on the autism spectrum — younger or older — will likely not be expected, be able, or desire to live completely on their own. Only a small percentage of adults with autism currently live or will ever truly live independently (Anderson et al. 2014; Heasley 2013; Seltzer et al. 2004). In this context, "independence" must be carefully understood. It, like autism, involves a spectrum, and directly relates to a person's level of functionality.

A prevailing neurotypical concept of independence should not be assumed for "neurodiverse" populations (Disabled World 2017). Adults with autism should have the option to choose the level of independence they require or need. It is clear, however, that many adults with autism face daily challenges experiencing and navigating the public realm, which is predominantly designed by neurotypical planners with a neurotypical population in mind. Anticipating and accommodating the independence spectrum clearly falls within the planning profession's domain.

Regardless where an adult on the autism spectrum lands or whose definition of independence is used, planners can learn how to modify the public realm to help adults with autism more easily move around their communities; enjoy appropriate, affordable, and safe housing; and access quality recreation. Though planning's scope is usually limited to effective tools such as comprehensive and neighborhood planning and zoning, and while planning cannot solve major funding policy issues associated with becoming an adult with autism, planners can improve our communities in targeted ways so adults with autism can thrive.

The Research Process

Our research attempted to fill a gap between existing knowledge about the needs of adults with autism and the practice of city planning, so that planners can create places where adults with autism can thrive. Dr. Emilio Amigo, a licensed clinical therapist, joined our research team as a focus group facilitator. Amigo had the trust of his clients, who were accustomed to a focus group setting, often discussing lifestyle and built environment issues in sessions. Therefore it made sense for Amigo to facilitate a focus group with 19 adults with autism, supported by students.

A parent caregiver focus group of 23 participants was also convened to help provide a caregiver perspective in identifying any overlooked or undercommunicated needs their adult children face. Word-for-word transcripts of qualitative data (conversations) indicated many challenges and desires in the daily lives of adults with autism.



Figure 2 (top). Charrette Day 1: Professionals propose ideas from the focus groups' data. Photo by Philip Arnold; Figure 3 (bottom). Charrette Day 2: Adults with autism sharing ideas for housing and transportation on Day 2 of the charrette. Photo by Philip Arnold.

The focus group data were coded and categorized into 28 infrastructure projects and policy recommendations. These informed a three-day design and policy charrette attended by adults with autism, their parent caregivers, and a team of more than 37 professionals who offered their expertise. The team included planners, neuroscientists, licensed psychologists, special education researchers, public health officials, transportation officials, ADA compliance officials, disability professionals and activists, architects, landscape architects, civil engineers, urban designers, leaders on and off of the autism spectrum, and planning students and professors.

On the first day of the charrette, the professionals began brainstorming ideas for the 28 policies and infrastructure projects supplied by the focus groups (Figure 2). The second day of the charrette featured two workshops with adults with autism and their parent caregivers, who commented and improved on the ideas of the professionals (Figure 3). The last day featured a presentation summarizing the charrette findings. Ohio State planning students then organized the findings to form the Six Feelings Framework (described below) with direct oversight by practicing planners and professors.

The Six Feelings Framework

Our findings from the focus group and charrette process were clear: Planners should plan and design around the feelings that adults with autism want to experience in the public realm. The goal of the proposed guidelines was therefore to help adults with autism feel included in their communities in a built environment where they can thrive.

Six feelings constitute the framework for Autism Planning and Design Guidelines 1.0. These six feelings combine to promote feelings of being included. When an adult with autism is using public spaces or infrastructure, planning and design implementations should make him or her:

- Feel connected – The public realm is easily reached, entered, and leads to destinations.
- Feel free – The public realm offers relative autonomy and the desired spectrum of independence.
- Feel clear – The public realm makes sense and is not confusing.
- Feel private – The public realm offers boundaries and provides retreat.
- Feel safe – The public realm diminishes the risk of being injured.
- Feel calm – The public realm mitigates physical sensory issues associated with autism.

Although these feelings are also desirable for neurotypical people, they are especially crucial with people with autism.

Initially, implementing plans and design guidelines for one group of people such as adults with autism may not seem practical as there are many other constituents who share the public realm. However, as is the case for implementing universal design, planning through the lens of autism can benefit everyone. The Six Feelings Framework helps planners create spaces and infrastructure that are more usable, comfortable, and beneficial to all constituents (but particularly adults with autism) who feel more connection, freedom, clarity, safety, privacy (when needed), calm, and ultimately, inclusion.

When someone is experiencing specific aspects of the public realm, these six feelings can trigger other derivative feelings, conditions, and realizations. A good way to make this clear is to consider the absence of infrastructure — for example, sidewalks, which were covered extensively during the “draw and discuss” charrette day with adults with autism.

Walking on busy streets without sidewalks can bring on feelings of not being able to connect easily to a destination, which can bring on a secondary response such as anxiety. The missing sidewalk can eliminate potential feelings of freedom and leave pedestrians also (secondarily) feeling vulnerable. Not knowing where one is expected to walk diminishes feelings of clarity and can trigger the (secondary) condition of anxiety or panic. Being exposed to oncoming traffic and potentially the property owners of whose land on which one may be trespassing threatens feelings of privacy, which can cause secondary insecurity. Feelings of safety, which are especially critical for adults with autism, are compromised when walking in potential danger, as

this raises fight or flight responses. Walking without a sidewalk on a busy street also diminishes feelings of calm.

During the charrette, the adults with autism were asked to demonstrate how wide a comfortable sidewalk should be. Standing side by side, facilitators helped the participants determine that the width of three average-sized people standing with plenty of room between them is a good standard, expanding the typical standard sidewalk width from four or five feet — the minimums recommended by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials and the Institute of Transportation Engineers (PBIC 2015) — to eight feet for them to feel connected and free.

Clear separation from the streets in the form of low shrubbery or low walls or balustrades were also important to create feelings of clarity (cars are on the street, pedestrians are clearly separated from the cars), feelings of safety (pedestrians are far enough away from the street), and feelings of calm (it's a nice, easy walk). While there are infinite combinations of secondary feelings and responses, focusing on the Six Feelings keeps the planning and design framework simple and understandable.

Applying the 1.0 Guidelines to Planning Practice

As autism is a spectrum, designing with autism in mind offers planners and designers a spectrum of possibilities and remedies. Absent a comprehensive set of published and widely tested standards, planners can begin to simply ask whether planning proposals meet the Six Feelings Framework. Ideally, infrastructure designed with autism in mind will evoke all six feelings. Attempting to achieve this adds more thought to the design process.

Ohio State city and regional planning students translated the Six Feelings Framework into a first interpretation of standards: the Autism Planning and Design Guidelines 1.0. The following sections provide a few examples of their work in applying these guidelines in the planning and design of common facilities and infrastructure.

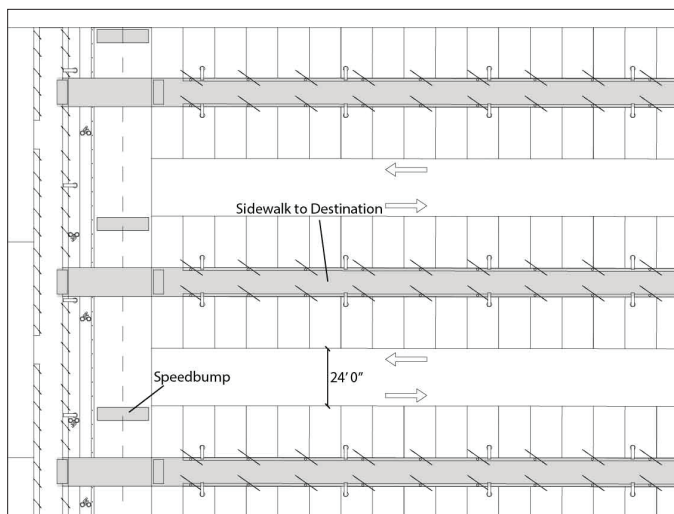


Figure 4. A design for a retail parking lot that integrates the Six Feelings. Courtesy Michelle Williams and Alex Blankenship.

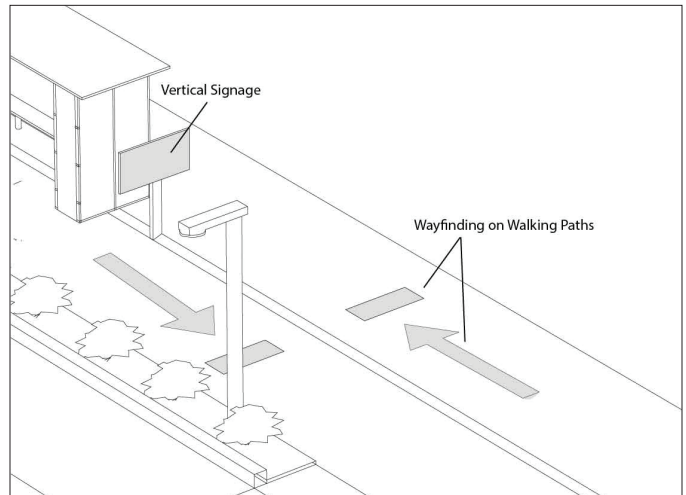


Figure 5. Wayfinding integrated with walking paths. Courtesy Michelle Williams and Aerin Ledbetter.

Parking Lots

An interpretation of a retail parking lot that attempts to integrate the Six Feelings (Figure 4) better connects the rows of parking spots to a destination, in this case, a retail store. This series of sidewalks prevents pedestrians from having to navigate around cars that are moving past and entering or backing from parking spaces, evoking feelings of safety (from dangerous cars) and feelings of being connected (from the parking space to the retail store). Speedbumps force car traffic to slow, further supporting feelings of safety.

Wayfinding implemented directly on the sidewalk (Figure 5) can bring feelings of clarity (pointing to the destination). Parking lots are often chaotic but this design lowers the potential for sensory overload, making people feel calmer (avoiding distracting headlights and people walking from many directions). More orderly walking networks can increase confidence

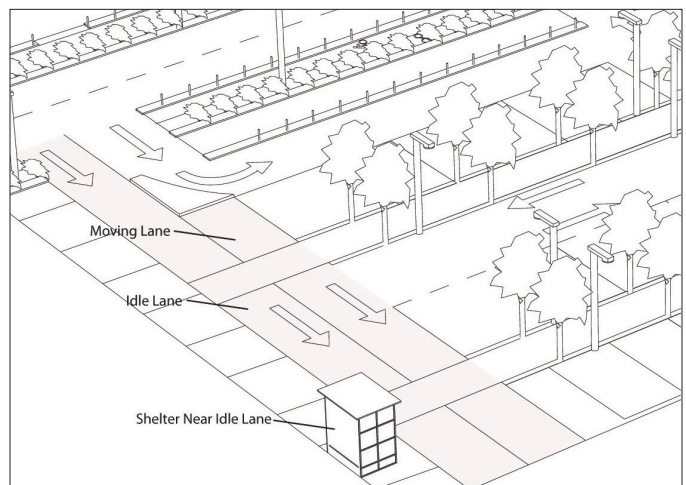


Figure 6. A design for pick-up and drop-off areas that integrates the Six Feelings. Courtesy Alex Blankenship, Michelle Williams, and Michael Kaufman.

for pedestrians with autism, making them feel freer than they would in standard parking lots.

As maximum parking space requirements (versus minimum requirements) are becoming more widely used (Shoup 2017), planners can write codes for parking lots in new developments that would require the same maximum number of spaces and add the new design amenities.

Pick-Up/Drop-Off Areas

Adults with autism often have difficulty navigating through overwhelming or crowded spaces such as city sidewalks and streets (Heffernan 2016). Many adults with autism do not drive and must rely on people offering automobile rides to and from destinations. In an urban context, city blocks have bus stops and on-street parking, but integrating additional designated areas to pick up and drop off passengers (Figure 6, p. 4) could improve quality life for adults with autism and their caregivers (Lubin and Feeley 2016).

Implementing areas for picking passengers up and dropping passengers off can create feelings of clarity (“I know where to go and I know my ride will know where to pick me up”) and feelings of calm (“The person picking me up will also know where to pick me up; now I can relax”). Shelters near the idle lane can offer feelings of safety (during bad weather, for instance) and potentially, feelings of privacy (offering a physical place to escape chaos).

Although pick-up/drop-off areas threaten the removal of some on-street parking spaces, the growth in ridesharing and the anticipation of automated vehicles, which also require pick-up and drop-off areas, may help justify their implementation. Planners can anticipate this need and begin to select the most appropriate locations for pick-up/drop off infrastructure, taking into account easy access to popular destinations, proximity to local landmarks for easy directions, and collaboration with transit agencies to prohibit bus stops within these zones. Planners might also explore sponsorships by private companies and public agencies, which would be permitted to “brand” their sponsored pick-up/drop-off areas.

Housing

A major theme during the focus groups and charrette was the need to find appropriate housing for high-functioning adults with autism.

Duplexes (sometimes called doubles) are structures with two housing units, desirable for caregiver parents who can be a wall away (Figure 7). Duplexes were also popular ideas for encouraging “intentional neighbors” — nonfamily members — who would be willing to mentor or become a caregiver. Accessory dwelling units (ADUs), sometimes referred to as in-law houses or “granny flats,” offer similar opportunities. ADUs can be affordable for renters or offered rent-free for family members. Duplexes and ADUs can bring feelings of freedom (having a house to call one’s own), feelings of privacy and safety (residents with autism can live alone but are still close to available caregivers or mentors), and feelings of calm (if sensory-calming design, materials, and accessories are used in such homes) (Gaines et al. 2016).

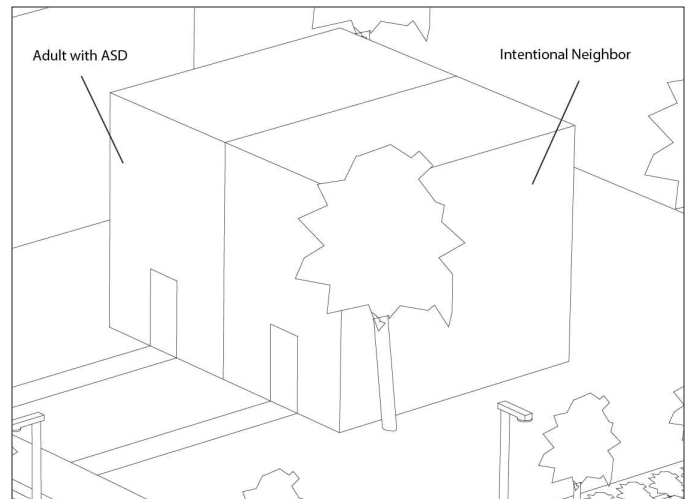


Figure 7. Duplexes can offer independent yet connected housing options for adults with autism. Courtesy Michelle Williams and Jack Hehemann.

Local zoning, and in some cases homeowners’ association rules, determines the viability of duplexes and especially accessory dwelling units. Planners serving communities where codes prohibit these housing options should consider how their regulations impact the potential for helping adults with autism to thrive. Allowing and expanding more options such as duplexes and ADUs (commonly referred to, along with triplexes, courtyard apartments, and live-work units, among others, as “missing middle” housing) can offer more supply and increased options for affordable housing for the entire community (Liebig, Koenig, and Pynoos 2006; Opticos Design 2018).

Soothing Spaces

Also referred to in the focus groups as “don’t bother me zones,” soothing spaces allow an escape from chaos (Figure 8). Similar to meditation rooms in buildings, these outdoor spaces offer

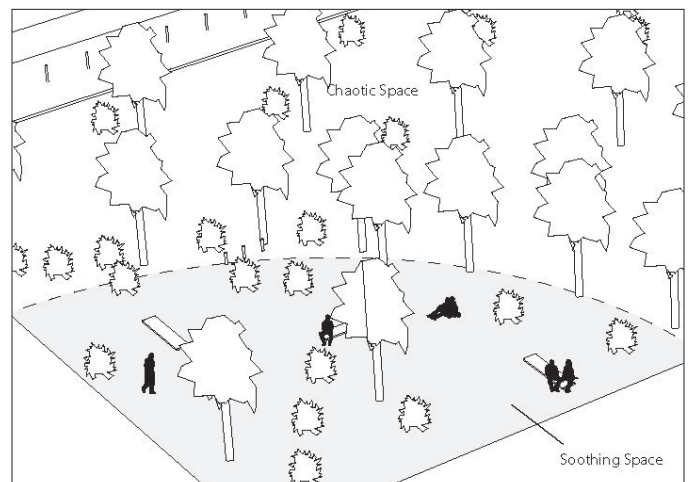


Figure 8. Soothing spaces offer outdoor havens to promote calmness, safety, and clarity. Courtesy Michelle Williams.

areas for users to experience feelings of calm, feelings of privacy, feelings of safety, and feelings of clarity as they are better able to reflect in a safe, soothing environment. When ready, users return to the public, recharged.

Planners can locate available, easily accessible spaces in and around busy areas including streets, campuses (both office and educational), active parks, and anywhere serenity and comfort are normally absent (Davidson and Henderson 2017). Planners can also assist in the branding, wayfinding, and informational design of soothing spaces to clearly indicate their purpose and set expectations for user conduct.

Multi-Use Trails

Multi-use trails were considered by many participants as being too multi-use — in other words, the trails combined walking or running and cycling on the same crowded, roughly 10-foot-wide path. The participants reported high risk for conflicts, with high-speed cyclists on racing bicycles sharing the same space as leisure cyclists and children on training wheels.

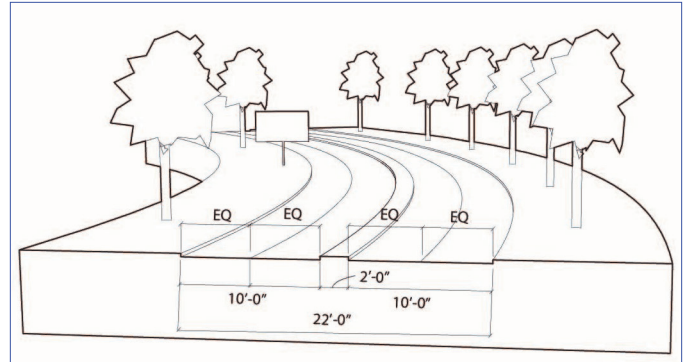


Figure 9. Separating multi-use paths into separate lanes of equal widths for different uses reduces user conflicts. Courtesy Michael Kaufman and Dalton Walker.

Clearly separating multi-use paths into spaces for each use and designing physical barriers to split the direction of movement (Figure 9) will significantly lessen conflict concerns,

Big Ideas for Autism Planning and Design

Along with facility-specific design interventions, compelling policy and program ideas emerged from the research that are more theoretical and large scale, such as transit systems models based on the Six Feelings framework.

Transit networks often resemble a “hub and spoke” system (Figure 10, left). Here, routes start on the outskirts of a city (the spokes) and work toward the middle (the hub), then go back out, creating long, linear lines. While this popular system design may appear to be logical and practical, many areas between the spokes are not easily accessible to transit. Consider the user who lives on the edge of the city, whose workplace is also located on the outskirts and only a few miles away — but not on a transit line. This user will likely experience feelings of not being connected. As is the case in many cities, this rider probably would be required to transfer at “the hub” (usually downtown) before traveling back out of town to get to work, extending a trip far longer than it needed to be.

Shifting to a model that resembles an atom shape (Figure 10, right) would create a series of looping, intersecting, and overlapping routes, increasing opportunities for transfer points and therefore higher connectivity throughout the city. Now riders can more easily travel to nearby or crosstown destinations, feeling free (easy, accessible transit options provide a sense of independence), feeling clear (the transit system is easy to understand and use), and feeling calm.

Another big idea was the “I need assistance” symbol (Figure 11). It was widely noted that sometimes adults with autism become confused when in public. They may need directions to their destination or may be experiencing distress. Similar to the International Symbol of Access (the blue square overlaid with a white stylized image of a person

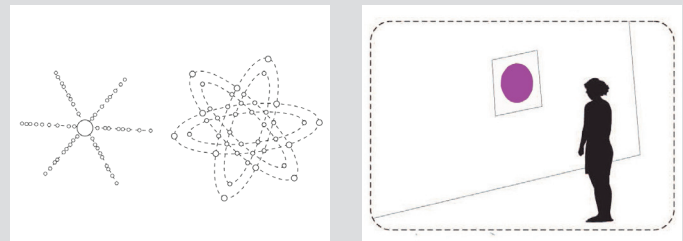


Figure 10 (left). Conventional (left) and Six Feelings-based (right) transit system models. Courtesy Michael Widman and Michael Kaufman; Figure 11 (right). An “I Need Assistance” symbol. Courtesy Kyle Ezell, Michael Kaufman, and Safa Saleh.

in a wheelchair) that signifies barrier-free access, an appropriately scaled magenta dot (magenta was a color liked by adults with autism in the charrette) would be prominently placed on the sides of buildings and in storefront windows to indicate help is inside or nearby. This idea will require major programming design since it involves two remedies for people with autism — information / wayfinding as well as people who are available to help. Providing this help would require significant training for the people inside the building with the dot.

This program may be outside of a planner’s expertise and abilities, but planners should be a part of the conversation. Planners can certainly assist in wayfinding — under or near the dot — where people who need assistance can, in the absence of a trained person ready to assist, at least experience feelings of clarity and feelings of calm, seeing useful information that could help them get further help.

boosting feelings of clarity, feelings of safety, feelings of calm, and feelings of freedom.

Greenways and parks planners can establish new policies for right-of-way expectations for wider separated use paths. Planners can work with civil engineers designing specifications that will work best for each built environment context (for example, path width would need to be narrower in more developed areas) (Deka, Feeley, and Lubin 2016). Planners can also work with landscape architects to establish plans for implementing soothing vegetation and benches, shelters, and other infrastructure that would assist the path's Six Feelings implementation.

Conclusion

The Six Feelings Framework was developed as an outcome of the focus groups and charrette at The Ohio State University as described above. It is intended to serve as the basis for a set of planning and design guidelines to help make public infrastructure and facilities not only more inclusive of people with autism but more clear, comfortable, safe, and freeing for everyone in a community.

The culmination of this research project was the development of an initial set of planning and design standards: the [Autism Planning and Design Guidelines 1.0](#), some examples of which have been shared in this article.

While we believe that this work has the potential to improve lives of adults with autism, there were significant limitations in the creation of these guidelines.

Most obviously, time was a factor, as this study comprised an academic year. Almost everyone involved was based in Columbus, Ohio, and the concerns, views, and experiences of our Ohio research participants may not represent the views and experiences of the rest of the U.S. and the world. Finally, although city planners, planning professors, and our professional advisory group, [Autism Living](#), were directly involved in continuous reviews of students' work, the planning and design framework that emerged from our research was not directly tested by professional planners.

Professional planners are encouraged to refine this work and engage in further study from this starting point. Test the Six Feelings Framework in your communities. Consider how to improve new plans, zoning codes, and planning proposals. We hope that our initial ideas in this toolkit are challenged and improved on by planners and professionals in allied fields such as architects, landscape architects, civil engineers, ADA coordinators, and public health professionals. We also hope that real estate developers will embrace these ideas and include the Six Feelings Framework in their proposals.

Planners care about the people in our communities. We can help people with autism find ways to make their lives better and thrive. This is just a start.

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Rick Stein, AICP, is a trustee of Autism Living, a Columbus, Ohio nonprofit whose mission is to create communities in where young adults challenged by autism, 55-plus generation, and diverse neighbors form cohesive, intergenerational neighborhoods of mutual support — sometimes referred to as "intentional neighboring." Stein is also owner of Urban Decision Group, a Columbus planning firm, and an administrator of the American Planning Association's Planning for Underserved Populations Interest Group. He is also the father of a son with autism. www.urbandesigngroup.com

For a full list of the many people who contributed to this body of work, visit [here](#).

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Special Disadvantaged Groups Residential Zoning Questionnaire

1. What type of services do you provide and what is needed?
 - a. Emergency Housing?
 - b. Counselling?
 - c. Child Care?
 - d. Other?
2. What time frame is the norm for a stay?
3. What are the eligibility requirements for your shelter?
4. What are the zoning restrictions from your point of view?
 - a. Any experience with obstacles encountered from a local point of view.
 - i. What do you feel would be solutions
5. What type of capacity is needed to make the effort viable?
 - a. Can residential style housing be used effectively?
 - i. Capacities (Size, Style, Sq footage)
 - ii. Financially
 - iii. Services
6. Is there currently a waiting list?
 - a. Are there any increases in local demands?
7. How are children handled (if any)
 - a. Age of children
 - b. Number of Children
 - c. Special Rooms accommodation
8. How are animals handled (if any)
 - a. Pets
 - b. Emotional Support Animals
 - c. Guide Dogs
9. Do you have a preferred security posture?
 - a. Partnership with Police?
 - b. On site security?
 - c. Alarms systems?
10. What other organizations do you collaborate with?
 - a. Partnerships with other groups?
 - b. Do other groups come to shelter to provide services?
11. Do you feel a shelter being public enhances your efforts or is a detriment.
12. If location discretion is desired, have you found shelters remaining anonymous possible or does the word get out relatively quickly.

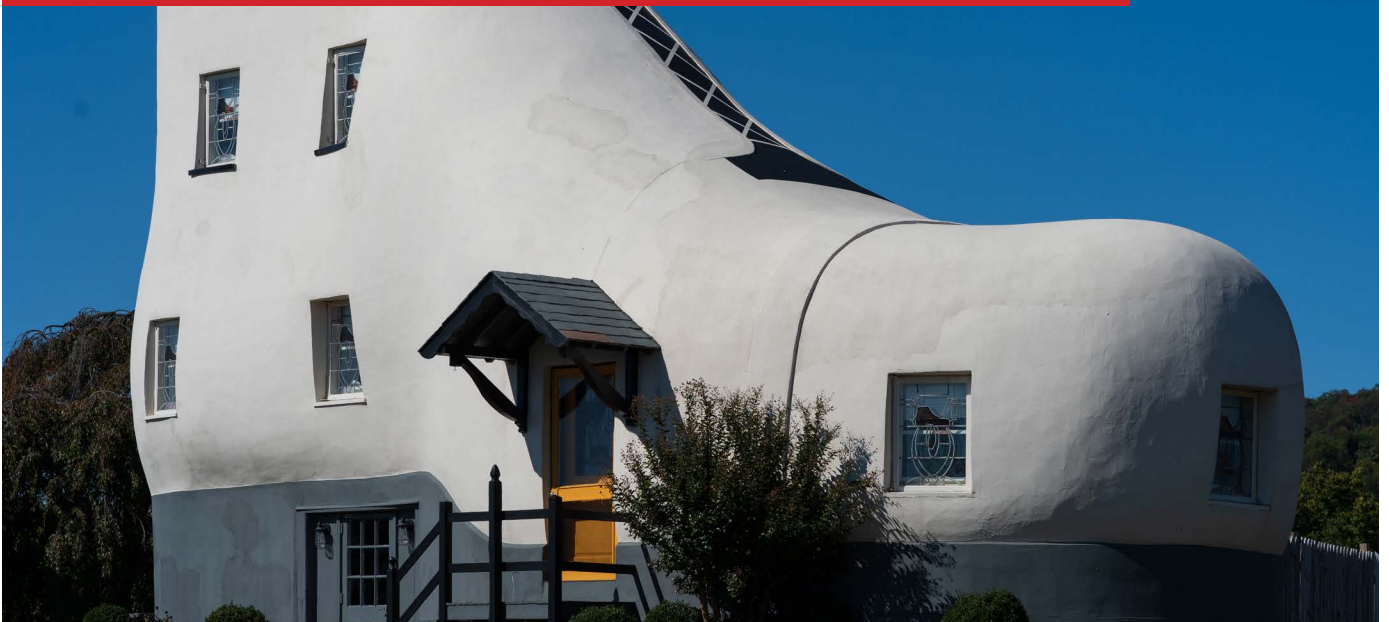
13. Do you feel a shelter being public enhances your efforts or is a detriment.
14. How do you handle special accommodations?
 - a. Disabilities
 - b. Transportation
 - c. Language Barriers
 - d. LGBT Community
15. What happens when someone leaves shelter?
16. Can you give some idea of success rates and share some stories of successes?
17. What State and local laws and regulations impact your operations?
18. What obstacles to success would you like the town address from a policy point of view.

Thank you for your help!

ZONING PRACTICE

Unique Insights | Innovative Approaches | Practical Solutions

Opening the Door to Unconventional Homes



In This Issue: [Field Guide to Unconventional Housing](#) | [Common Regulatory Barriers](#) | [Potential Regulatory Reforms](#) | [Conclusions](#)

Opening the Door to Unconventional Homes

By Charlie Nichols, AICP, and Benjamin Schmidt

While housing underproduction remains a problem nationwide, demand for new housing has risen disproportionately in rural areas since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (Park 2024). Furthermore, a growing number of rural homeseekers seem to be investing in nontraditional homes that rely on alternative construction methods or unconventional building materials. From shouses and barndominiums to 3D-printed houses and shipping-container, grain-bin, Quonset, and earth-shelter homes, these dwellings represent a departure from the standard stick-built playbook, offering builders and occupants a chance to embrace creativity and sustainability.

Because these housing types break the conventional single-family detached residence mold, they can face a variety of regulatory barriers, including explicit prohibitions and an uncertain relationship

to specific zoning and building code provisions. The housing industry is often a step ahead of zoning and building regulations, producing new product types to address the demands, constraints, and preferences of today's buyer. Consequently, it is important for planners and local officials to periodically reevaluate existing barriers to new and unconventional housing types.

This issue of *Zoning Practice* explores the rise of unconventional housing types and their potential to address housing shortages and diversify the housing market. It begins with a guide to different types of nontraditional housing before examining common regulatory barriers and potential regulatory reforms planners and local officials may be able to use to foster housing innovation and advance sustainable, resilient, and inclusive housing solutions.



3D-printed homes under construction near Austin, Texas (Credit: Roschetzky/stockPhoto/iStock/Getty Images Plus)

Field Guide to Unconventional Housing

Builders and occupants are increasingly drawn to various types of unconventional housing for reasons ranging from cost-effectiveness to sustainability and energy efficiency. To facilitate the development of different forms of unconventional housing, planners must first understand the specific needs, benefits, and challenges associated with each type. By identifying how these housing options align with broader community goals—such as sustainability, affordability, or resilience—planners can begin addressing regulatory barriers, updating zoning codes, and engaging communities in conversations about innovative housing solutions.

Barndominiums and Shouses

Shouses and barndominiums combine residential living spaces with areas traditionally used for storage, workshops, or agricultural purposes. A shouse (short for shop + house) typically integrates a workshop with living quarters. A barndominium (or *barndo*) entails either the conversion or renovation of an old barn or the construction of a new barn structure to include a dwelling unit (with or without a dedicated workshop). Despite the “condominium”

reference in the name, most barndominiums are fee-simple properties, meaning the owner holds the land and structure outright. The name is simply a playful nod to their dual-purpose nature.

These are, typically, post-frame construction buildings with a metal exterior, which reduces the need for load-bearing walls throughout the building. This allows for complete customization of internal layout and design to meet the needs of a hobbyist, small business owner, or rural homeowner.

In a recent survey of single-family homebuilders, seven percent of respondents said they had built a barndominium in 2023 (Emrath 2024). Shouses and barndominiums are most common in rural and exurban areas, where larger plots of land are available for integrating these mixed-use structures. They are particularly popular in agricultural regions of the Midwest and South, where ranchers and farmers appreciate the functional design.

Prefabricated metal building kits can streamline the construction process and offer increased durability over a traditional home. Costs vary widely but are generally lower per square foot than conventional homes, with estimates ranging from \$65 to \$160 per square foot (Runkle 2024).

A new construction
barndominium in
La Crosse County,
Wisconsin (Credit:

[Wikideas1/](#)
[Wikimedia](#)
[Commons](#))



A 3D-printed house under construction in Riverhead, New York (Credit: futurewalk/iStock Unreleased)



3D-Printed Houses

3D-printed houses are structures where home builders create a computer design and then use a robot to lay (or “print”) a concrete blend in layers to create a foundation and walls (Peavey et al. 2023). These homes often feature customizable designs, reduced construction waste, and efficient use of materials. 3D-printed houses can be “printed” onsite or as individual sections to be assembled later. However, certain components—such as roofs, windows, wiring, and plumbing—still require conventional construction methods.

While the concept of 3D-printed homes originated in the early 2010s, the technology remains in its infancy, with ongoing challenges related to durability, cost, and scalability. These homes appeal to early adopters, eco-conscious buyers, and those seeking innovative housing solutions. Additionally, some nonprofits and developers are experimenting with it for disaster relief and low-income housing.

Although 3D printing simplifies certain aspects of building, it complicates others. Builders must carefully plan for proper installation of essential systems like plumbing, electrical wiring, and HVAC during the design stage. Post-construction modifications are difficult due to the permanence of printed walls. Environmental factors, such

as temperature and humidity, also impact the printing process. For instance, a 3D-printed home in Iowa was demolished after excessive cracking compromised its structural integrity (Feldman 2023).

3D-printed homes can be built in days or weeks, depending on the design complexity and finishing requirements. However, this efficiency is offset by high technology costs and the relative scarcity of experienced 3D homebuilders. For example, 3D-printed homes in the Wolf Ranch development near Austin, Texas, start at \$450,000, comparable to the median home price in the area (Westfall 2024).

Shipping-Container Homes

Shipping-container homes, also known as cargo-container homes, repurpose intermodal shipping containers as building materials for dwelling units. These rigid metal containers are designed for transportation but can be modified with architectural elements, such as windows, doors, and insulation, to create habitable structures. Shipping containers provide a modular framework that allows for creative and flexible designs, including multi-story or stacked configurations. However, they require significant modifications to address challenges like ventilation, insulation, and climate control.



■ A shipping-container home in Flagstaff, Arizona (Credit: [Tom Check/Flickr](#))

The concept of shipping-container homes emerged in the early 21st century as a response to the surplus of unused containers worldwide. Early adopters embraced the idea as a sustainable, cost-effective alternative to traditional construction methods. While shipping containers are structurally robust, builders must address issues such as ventilation, insulation, and moisture control to ensure a livable environment. Improper modifications can lead to problems with climate control and condensation, particularly in extreme climates.

Shipping-container homes offer both financial and time savings. Prefabricated containers can be delivered and assembled quickly, reducing framing time. These homes typically cost less than traditional construction, averaging \$150–\$350 per square foot, with additional savings in materials and labor (Sullivan 2024). Additionally, container homes have a smaller environmental footprint, with studies showing significant reductions in timber

usage (1.98 tons) and CO₂ emissions (14.7 tons) compared to conventional housing (Islam et al. 2016).

Shipping-container homes are popular in urban and suburban areas, especially among eco-conscious homeowners. Their appeal lies in their creative reuse of existing materials, flexibility in design, and rapid construction timeline.

Grain-Bin Homes

Grain-bin homes are a form of upcycled housing that repurposes large cylindrical grain storage bins into residential units. These structures typically feature a conical roof and a large, round, steel frame that is modified to include doors, windows, insulation, and necessary interior components. The absence of load-bearing walls makes it easier to customize the interior space. Grain-bin homes are typically placed on a foundation, and owners may choose to attach multiple bins together to create larger living spaces.

A grain-bin home
in Alder, Montana
(Credit: [E.L.
Mulvaney/Flickr](#))



However, not all grain bins are designed with the same level of engineering, and many lack the strength to withstand extreme weather conditions without reinforcement. For example, the 2020 derecho in Iowa demonstrated the vulnerability of grain bins to high winds (Wittich and Praeuner 2022).

The conversion of a grain bin into a home is generally a more affordable option than traditional home construction, due to the low-cost availability of used grain bins. Grain-bin homes can be constructed relatively quickly, depending on the complexity of modifications.

Grain-bin homes are especially prevalent in the Midwest, including states like Iowa, where farming is central to the local economy. They appeal to those seeking unique, sustainable, and cost-effective housing solutions and attract individuals

interested in rural living or those who want to integrate a farm aesthetic into their lifestyle.

Quonset Homes

Quonset homes are constructed from the distinctive Quonset hut design, which consists of a metal, arch-shaped structure typically made from galvanized steel. These simple, durable buildings do not require interior load-bearing walls, allowing for flexible interior layouts. Although they are generally low-maintenance structures, Quonset homes can be prone to issues like condensation and extreme temperature fluctuations.

The Quonset hut design was originally developed during World War II by the U.S. military to create a portable, durable shelter for soldiers (Arsenault 2022). After the war, surplus Quonset huts became

available for civilian use, and over the years, many people adapted these buildings into homes, garages, and storage spaces.

Quonset homes are relatively easy and fast to build, especially because the steel structure is prefabricated and often requires minimal labor to assemble. Once the frame is in place, interior walls and finishes can be added to meet the specific needs of the owner. Depending on the level of customization and the inclusion of amenities, the construction timeline can range from a few weeks to several months, and total costs are often \$81–\$102 per square foot (BuildingsGuide 2024).

Quonset homes are most common in rural and exurban areas. While their distinctive appearance may be considered unattractive by some, the ruggedness and affordability of Quonset homes continue to appeal to individuals looking for unique, cost-effective housing options. Additionally, the sustainability of the materials and the potential for recycling make Quonset homes attractive to environmentally conscious buyers.

Earth-Shelter Homes

Earth-shelter homes can take several forms, ranging from earth-covered roofs to fully underground or bermed structures built into the hillside. The defining feature of earth-shelter homes is their natural insulation provided by the earth surrounding them, which helps maintain a constant internal temperature and reduces energy consumption.

Earth sheltering has ancient roots, with many early civilizations building homes into hillsides or using natural materials like stone and earth to construct dwellings. In modern times, the concept gained popularity in the mid-20th century with the rise of eco-conscious movements and increased interest in energy efficiency and environmental conservation.

Building an earth-shelter home typically requires careful planning, due to the unique construction methods and land preparation needed. Without proper ventilation, these structures are prone to moisture buildup and poor air quality. Another consideration is ensuring that the structure can handle environmental

*Quonset homes
in the True North
Quonset village
in Detroit (Credit:
[SteelMaster
Buildings/Flickr](#))*



pressures, such as rainwater runoff or potential soil shifts.

Consequently, many earth-shelter homes take longer to build than conventional homes. Because they are more labor intensive and require specialized materials, construction costs can be 20 percent higher than for traditional homes, especially for fully underground dwellings (USDOE n.d.). Furthermore, obtaining financing for these types of homes can be more difficult, as they are less common and may require more complex assessments of the land and structure.

Earth-shelter homes are typically found in rural or remote areas, where homeowners are more likely to prioritize sustainability and privacy over traditional architectural designs. These homes can be particularly appealing in regions with challenging climates, where the earth's natural insulation can offer protection from extreme weather conditions. However, the higher construction costs, potential financing difficulties, and specialized land requirements mean these homes are often out of reach for the average homebuyer.

Common Regulatory Barriers

Unconventional housing offers consumers greater flexibility and creative solutions to meet their housing needs. These options, however, have distinct features that may lead to zoning and building code compliance challenges. While some jurisdictions define and explicitly prohibit certain housing types, more commonly, barriers arise because local codes do not explicitly acknowledge unconventional housing.

Restrictive or Ambiguous Dimensional Standards

For the most part, unconventional housing types do not face special barriers related to district-based dimensional standards, such as minimum lot sizes, setbacks, height limits, and maximum lot coverage ratios. These types of housing can often meet traditional zoning criteria, provided the homes fit within typical residential envelopes. However, challenges can arise when zoning administrators struggle to interpret how these standards apply to these housing types.



*An earth-shelter home in Hawley, Massachusetts
(Credit: Formworks Building)*

For example, earth-shelter homes, which may be partially built into the ground or covered with earth, present a challenge for zoning administrators when it comes to setbacks, lot coverage, and minimum floor area requirements. These homes often don't conform neatly to the usual definitions of what constitutes a "building," as their earth-covered roofs or bermed designs complicate measurements for lot coverage and setbacks. Zoning codes may not account for such designs, resulting in uncertainty about whether these standards apply or how staff should interpret them for a structure that is not fully visible.

Similarly, adaptive reuse of grain bins can present issues related to height limits. While many zoning codes exempt agricultural structures such as grain bins from height restrictions, they often do not specify how to address these structures once they are converted into residential dwellings. As a result, zoning administrators may struggle to apply maximum height limits to taller grain-bin homes that may exceed the typical residential height. In these cases, the ambiguity or lack of specificity in zoning codes can lead to inconsistent interpretation and application of specific standards.

*A Quonset home
in Asheboro, North
Carolina (Credit:
[SteelMaster
Buildings/Flickr](#))*



Residential Design, Appearance, or Form Standards

Some cities, towns, and counties require all residential development in specific zoning districts to comply with design guidelines or standards. While these regulations are often intended to maintain a cohesive visual character or preserve community heritage, they can pose a significant challenge for unconventional housing types.

Many of the housing types discussed above cannot comply with guidelines and standards that require adherence to traditional architectural styles or building materials (Islam et al. 2016; Lomholt 2022). Zoning codes that restrict the use of steel, metal, or other industrial materials can severely limit the ability to incorporate such materials into the construction of these housing types, even though these materials are often chosen for their durability, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability.

Unconventional housing types also encounter challenges when attempting to meet standards or guidelines that specify compatibility with the architectural features of nearby homes. Many zoning codes are designed with the assumption that new construction will mirror the appearance of surrounding residences, which can be difficult for many unconventional homes. For example, a Quonset hut's distinctive

arched steel structure may be at odds with the angular, traditional homes in suburban neighborhoods. Similarly, earth-shelter homes, with their natural roofs and earth-covered exteriors, may not align with the expectations of residential design codes that prioritize visible, exterior-facing façades. As a result, the unique architectural forms of alternative homes can clash with zoning regulations designed to preserve neighborhood aesthetics, making it harder for these projects to gain approval.

Furthermore, form-based zoning ordinances, which are designed to regulate the physical form of buildings rather than their use, can impose additional restrictions. These ordinances often specify permitted building types for each zoning district, which can create challenges for alternative housing solutions that do not conform to the predefined building forms. For instance, form-based codes may not have provisions for adaptive reuse structures, like grain-bin homes or container homes, that are not explicitly listed as permissible building types (Battaglia and Lee 2020). As a result, these housing types may not be allowed or may require special approvals or variances to comply with form-based regulations, even if they meet all other functional requirements for residential use.

Limits on Home Occupations

Some of the housing types above can also face zoning barriers related to the usage of the structure. Barndominiums and shouses, for instance, typically offer ample space for inhabitants to engage in home occupations. However, residential zoning standards often restrict the total floor area devoted to a home occupation to 10 percent of a home.

Additionally, the mixed-use nature of these structures may preclude their construction in certain zones and require a rezoning request from the applicant. This request may be at odds with neighboring properties or community plans.

Furthermore, many communities impose limitations based on stereotypes, rather than actual neighborhood impact. Restrictions such as prohibiting the use of accessory buildings for home businesses or requiring additional off-street parking further hinder the ability to run a home occupation. These barriers make it harder for homeowners to fully utilize their properties for both residential and business purposes.

Outdated building codes pose obvious barriers to unconventional housing in instances where those codes narrowly define permissible construction methods or building materials

Outdated or Incomplete Building Codes

Once a proposed home clears the zoning hurdles, it still must meet the jurisdiction's building codes. Outdated building codes pose obvious barriers to unconventional housing in instances where those codes narrowly define permissible construction methods or building materials. However, many local jurisdictions have adopted or are compelled to use residential building codes based on the most recent version of the International Residential Code (IRC). For these jurisdictions, specific housing types may have trouble

satisfying standards, without local addendums or modifications.

The 2021 version of the IRC states that its provisions are “not intended to prevent the installation of any material or to prohibit any design or method of construction” ([§R104.11](#)). But the base code does not explicitly address most of the unconventional housing types discussed above. In many states, it is the jurisdiction's responsibility and prerogative to adopt supplemental sections of the building code that may apply to nontraditional construction methods or materials. For instance, [Appendix AW](#) of the 2021 IRC addresses the requirements for 3D printed structures.

The 2021 IRC also states intermodal shipping containers must meet the more rigorous structural requirements of the International Building Code (IBC) if they are to be used as a structure ([§R301.1.4](#)). Additionally, these structures may have trouble meeting room height requirements. The minimum room height requirement in the 2021 IRC is seven feet ([§R305.1](#)) and the standard shipping container has a height of 8.5 feet. This 1.5-foot difference can easily be taken up with heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems.

While barndominiums and shouses may not have trouble complying with the IRC, they may have features, like large attached garages or workshops, that trigger stricter fire safety standards (MDLI n.d.). Additional challenges related to energy efficiency, structural security, and ventilation code requirements may impact design and hinder the construction of such homes.

Earth-shelter homes bring forth other challenges for zoning and building officials. There are no authoritative building codes that explicitly address these homes; consequently, building officials are often on their own to interpret whether a proposed structure satisfies local requirements.

Potential Regulatory Reforms

Planners and local officials have various tools at their disposal to address and remove regulatory barriers to

unconventional housing types. Some of these approaches, such as flexible zoning regulations or more adaptable building codes, can be broadly applied across multiple housing types. Other strategies may be more specific to certain housing types, such as unique considerations for shipping containers or earth-sheltered homes. By identifying the right mix of reforms, communities can foster more inclusive and forward-thinking housing solutions.

Remove Ambiguity Through New Use Definitions and Permissions

Clarifying zoning codes by defining unconventional housing types as distinct uses can help remove regulatory uncertainty and streamline their development. Several jurisdictions have taken this approach, creating specific definitions for housing types like barndominiums, shipping container homes, or earth-sheltered dwellings within their codes (Table 1).

Table 1. Examples of Use Definitions

Jurisdiction	Use Definitions
Ellsworth, KS	<i>Earth-sheltered dwelling.</i> A single-family dwelling constructed so that fifty (50) percent or more of the exterior surface area of the building, excluding garages and other accessory structures, is covered with earth. Such a dwelling is a complete structure that does not serve just as a foundation or substructure for above-grade construction. A partially completed building shall not be considered earth-sheltered. Bulk regulations shall be measured from the structural part of the dwelling as distinguished from the earth covering. (§17.08)
Haines Borough, AK	<i>Container home</i> means a shipping container or Conex-like container that has been converted into a dwelling. (§18.20.020)
Hickman, NE	<i>Cargo container dwelling:</i> a dwelling unit constructed of one or more new or used cargo containers used for multi-modal shipping. <i>Grain bin dwelling unit:</i> A dwelling unit constructed of one or more grain bins, new or used meeting the definition of dwelling unit above. <i>Quonset home:</i> A home constructed beneath and in a structure referred to as a Quonset. <i>Shouse:</i> A combination of a dwelling unit and machine shed under a common or connect roofing system. <i>Tree house:</i> A dwelling unit where the primary structure of the unit is based on one or more tree clusters. (§2.03)
Jamestown, ND	<i>Shouse</i> (use definition) means a structure that contains a dwelling unit within or attached to an oversized garage, storage space, or personal workshop. Shouses are generally constructed of seam metal, with residential-style doors and windows along the primary frontage. (§2.2)
Maupin, OR	<i>Barndominium</i> means a steel structure originally intended for agriculture, commercial or industrial use that is placed upon a lot or parcel and has living quarters constructed within it to serve as a single-family dwelling. <i>Cargo container conversion</i> means one or more cargo containers designed to ship cargo by land, sea and air that is converted into a single-family dwelling. Such cargo containers must be certified by the seller to have never been used to carry hazardous material. (§18.10.030)
Rabun County, GA	<i>Non-traditional dwelling</i> means a dwelling unit built using non-traditional methods of construction to include: Container homes, tree houses, yurts, sub-terranean homes, and quonset huts. Non-traditional dwelling units must meet minimum square footage requirements and be accompanied by a Georgia certified engineers set of stamped blueprints confirming said dwelling can be built to International Building Code (IBC). (§56-1)

By establishing these as distinct uses, planners can explicitly identify where these housing options are permissible or conditionally permissible, such as through discretionary use permits. This ensures that applicants and officials can navigate the approval process more effectively, reducing delays and disputes.

Authorize Unconventional Building Materials

Explicitly authorizing the use of unconventional building materials in zoning and building codes can significantly reduce regulatory barriers for nontraditional homes. For jurisdictions with appearance standards, specifying permissible materials—such as metal for barndominiums, shouses, grain-bin homes, and shipping container homes—can streamline approval processes and provide clarity for developers and homeowners.

This proactive approach allows communities to guide aesthetic and structural outcomes, while supporting creative housing solutions. By including these materials in local standards, planners can balance innovation with neighborhood compatibility, ensuring these homes meet safety and design expectations without unnecessary hurdles.

For example, Rancho Palos Verdes, California, explicitly authorizes the use of cargo containers as “integral structural elements” for residences ([§17.76.180.D](#)). Similarly, Franklin County, Florida, permits single-family *metal structures* and *pole barn dwellings*, subject to use-specific standards ([§5.5-2](#)).

Create Limited Exemptions from Zoning Standards

Limited exemptions from zoning standards can play a vital role in accommodating unconventional housing types. Adaptive reuse projects, such as converting grain bins or barns into residential spaces, often face challenges meeting strict dimensional or site development standards originally designed for traditional homes. Granting exemptions for elements like setback requirements or building height can make these projects feasible while maintaining compatibility with surrounding uses.

Similarly, earth-sheltered homes, which may not align with typical zoning

parameters due to their unique design, benefit from exemptions related to lot coverage or daylight access standards. These targeted adjustments ensure zoning flexibility without compromising broader planning objectives.

For example, Linwood Township, Minnesota, explicitly exempts earth-sheltered homes from roof pitch and overhang standards ([§30-994](#)). Similarly, Three Rivers, Michigan, exempts earth-sheltered homes from a prohibition on basement dwelling units ([§30-10](#)). Manchester, Georgia, establishes broad support for “emerging building and housing technologies,” clarifies that there is no minimum building height for residences, and exempts below-grade spaces from lot coverage calculations ([§466](#)).

Broader adaptive reuse authorizations can help unconventional homes that entail the reuse of a nonresidential structure, like a grain bin or barn. For instance, Luddington, Michigan, exempts the adaptive reuse of any structure that is at least 30 years old and over 3,000 square feet in size from dimensional standards ([§900.3:33](#)).

Liberalize Home Occupation Standards

Liberalizing home occupation standards can facilitate the development of barn-dominiums and shouses, which naturally lend themselves to more extensive and intensive home-based businesses due to their size and layout. Adopting flexible



An accessory dwelling unit constructed from a shipping container
(Credit: Kubed Living)



A barndominium under construction in Trempealeau County, Wisconsin
(Credit: [Wikideas1/Wikimedia Commons](#))

regulations allows residents to maximize the utility of these mixed-use spaces.

Planners and local officials can balance flexibility and oversight by using objective, use-specific standards or discretionary use permits. These approaches, particularly in suburban residential districts, help accommodate a wider range of home occupations while addressing potential impacts on surrounding neighborhoods, fostering both innovation and community compatibility (see “[Equitable Zoning for Home Occupations](#)” in the September 2023 issue of *Zoning Practice*).

Address Compatibility Concerns Through Objective Use-Specific Standards

Community concerns about unconventional housing types often revolve around specific characteristics, such as aesthetics, height, or site layout. Objective use-specific standards provide a practical way to address these concerns, without an overreliance on discretionary permits.

By establishing clear, measurable requirements—such as setbacks, façade treatments, or noise limitations—planners can ensure compatibility while giving developers greater certainty about project outcomes. This approach not only reduces administrative burden but also

fosters community trust by demonstrating that potential impacts are being addressed in a consistent and transparent manner.

For example, Antelope County, Nebraska, has established detailed use-specific standards for *grain bin homes*, *cargo container homes*, *Quonset homes*, *shouses*, and other “special types” of dwelling units ([§8.15](#)). Similarly, Sandy, Utah, has special development standards for *earth-sheltered dwellings* ([§21-11-4](#)).

Create a Planned Development Option or Zoning Overlay

Another possible innovative solution is the creation of overlay zones specifically designed for unique housing types. Overlay zones can provide tailored regulations that address the distinct characteristics and needs of these homes, such as shipping-container homes or earth-shelter houses. By establishing these zones, planners can facilitate the approval process and ensure that these housing options are compatible with existing communities.

Update Building Codes

As new technologies and materials emerge, it is crucial for building codes to evolve accordingly. Planners should advocate for updating building codes to

integrate these innovations, ensuring that unique housing types meet safety and performance standards. For instance, 3D-printed homes and modular constructions often use advanced materials and construction techniques that traditional codes may not cover. Updating these codes can help streamline the permitting process and promote the adoption of cutting-edge construction methods.

Additionally, establishing guidelines for sustainable and resilient construction can encourage the development of environmentally friendly and disaster-resistant homes. Planners can collaborate with industry experts to create standards that promote the use of renewable materials, energy-efficient designs, and construction practices that enhance the durability and sustainability of unique housing types.

To illustrate, Valley Center, Kansas, includes special requirements for *3D printed concrete buildings* in its building code ([§14.04.040](#)). And Cleveland, Wisconsin, establishes distinct building code requirements for *earth sheltered homes* ([§10-7-13](#)).



An earth-shelter home under construction in Hawley, Massachusetts
(Credit: Formworks Building)

Conclusions

Unconventional homes are gaining traction as innovative alternatives to traditional housing. Each of the types discussed above offers unique benefits and challenges, underscoring the need for adaptable zoning and building codes. Modernizing regulations to accommodate these structures can encourage their integration into communities while ensuring safety and sustainability.

Engaging the community is essential for understanding what unique housing types residents are interested in and the barriers they are encountering. Planners should actively seek input on the specific challenges and preferences of their community. By listening to residents, planners can identify the obstacles that prevent the construction or occupancy of unconventional housing types and work collaboratively to address these concerns. This approach not only ensures that planning decisions reflect community needs but also fosters a sense of shared responsibility in shaping the future of housing in the area.

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BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
PROPOSED TEXT AMENDMENT

Text Amendment Request:

In an effort to further maintain the historic character of Front Royal’s historical district, we are writing to formally request a zoning text amendment to limit all new construction in the residential portion of the district to only single-family homes and preserve all existing single-family homes as single-family homes.

Proposed Amendment Language:

1. New Construction in the Residential Historic District:

All new construction within the boundaries of Front Royal’s Historic District shall be limited to single-family residential structures. Multi-family or commercial developments shall not be permitted in the residential portion of this district.

2. Preservation of Existing Single-Family Homes:

Any existing single-family home within Front Royal’s Historic District shall be preserved as a single-family home. The conversion of any existing single-family dwelling into a multi-family dwelling, commercial property, or any other non-residential use shall be prohibited.

HISTORIC DISTRICT OVERLAY AREAS

(Adopted 10-23-78; Amended Entire Section 4-13-92 and 3-22-93)

175-82 STATEMENT OF INTENT (Historic District)

A. The intent of this Article is to promote and protect the health, safety, comfort, recreation, prosperity and general welfare of the community through the identification, preservation and enhancement of buildings, structures, neighborhoods, landscapes, places and areas which have special historical, cultural, artistic, architectural or archaeological significance as provided by §15.2-2306 of the Code of Virginia, as amended.

(Amended VA Code Reference 9-25-00-Effective Upon Passage)

B. It is hereby recognized that the deterioration, destruction or alteration of said buildings, structures, places and areas may cause the permanent loss of unique resources which are of great value to the people of Front Royal, Warren County, the State of Virginia and the nation and that the special controls and incentives are warranted to ensure that such losses are avoided when possible.

C. The purposes of establishing historic resource overlay areas are:

1. To preserve and improve the quality of life for residents of the Town of Front Royal by protecting familiar and treasured visual elements in the area.
2. To promote tourism by protecting historical and cultural resources attractive to visitors and thereby supporting local business and industry.
3. To stabilize and improve property values by providing incentive for the upkeep and rehabilitation of older structures and by encouraging desirable uses and forms of economic development.
4. To educate residents on the local cultural and historic heritage as embodied in the Historic District Overlay Areas and to foster a sense of pride in this heritage.

- 60
- 61 5. To promote local historic preservation efforts and to encourage the identification and
62 nomination of qualified historic properties to the National Register of Historic Places and the
63 Virginia Landmarks Register.

- 64
- 65 6. To prevent the encroachment of additions or new buildings and structures that are
66 architecturally incongruous with their environs within areas of architectural harmony and
67 historic character.

68 **175-83 DEFINITIONS (Historic District)**

69 As used in this Article, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated:

70

71 **ALTERATION** - Any change, modification or addition to a part of or all of the exterior of any
72 building or structure.

73

74 **BUILDING** - Any enclosed or open structure which is a combination of materials to form a
75 construction for occupancy or use.

76

77 **CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS (C of A)** - The approval statement signed by the
78 Secretary of the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) and the Zoning Administrator that certifies
79 approval by the BAR of the appropriateness of a particular request for the construction, alteration,
80 reconstruction, repair, restoration, demolition or razing of all or a part of any building within an
81 historic district overlay area, subject to the issuance of all other permits needed for the matter
82 sought to be accomplished.

83

84 **CONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES** - Properties so designated on the inventory map of landmarks
85 and contributing properties, which is adopted as a part of this Article, being generally those
86 properties which, by reason of form, materials, architectural details and relation to surrounding
87 properties, contribute favorably to the general character of the part of the historic district in which
88 they are located but, by reason of recent age, lack of historic significance or other factors, are not
89 designated as local historic landmarks under the criteria of this Article.

90

91 **DEMOLITION** - The dismantling or tearing down of all or part of any building and all operations
92 incidental thereto.

93

94 **EXTERIOR FEATURES (ARCHITECTURAL APPEARANCE)** - The architectural style,
95 general design and general arrangement of the exterior of a building or other structure, including
96 the color, the kind and texture of the building material and the type and style of all windows, doors,
97 light fixtures, signs, other appurtenant fixtures and other natural features, such as trees and
98 shrubbery, that are subject to the public view from a public street, public way or other public places.

99

100 **HISTORIC DISTRICT OVERLAY AREA or HISTORIC DISTRICT** - Any area delineated
101 by the Town Council and consisting of public or private property within the Town, containing one
102 (1) or more historic landmarks as established by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources,
103 or one (1) or more areas, neighborhoods, sites, places, structures, objects, artifacts or buildings in
104 which historic events occurred or reflecting significantly the lives of historic personages or great
105 ideas or ideals of the people, having special public value because of notable architectural,
106 economic, ethnic, military, natural, political, religious or social factors, such landmarks, buildings,
107 structures or areas having been designated by the Council as being of such historic, architectural
108 or cultural interest and significance as to warrant conservation and preservation. Such designated
109 district or districts shall not extend farther than the property line of the land pertaining to such
110 historical landmarks, sites, buildings, signs, appurtenances, structures or objects.

111

112 **LOCAL HISTORIC LANDMARK** - Any site (including significant trees or other plant life
113 located thereon), building or structure of particular historic significance. "Landmarks" include
114 sites, buildings or structures where the cultural, political, archaeological, spiritual, economic,
115 social or artistic history of the community, state or nation is reflected or exemplified or which are
116 identified with historic personages or with important events in local, state or national history or
117 which embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural specimen, inherently valuable
118 for a representation of a period, style or method of construction or a notable work of construction
119 or a notable work of a master designer or architect whose individual genius influenced his age.
120 Listing on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places is
121 encouraged for all "local historic landmarks."

122

123 **NEW CONSTRUCTION** - Any construction within an historic district overlay area that is
124 independent and exclusive of an existing building or structure or part thereof.

125

126 **NONCONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES** - Properties with little historic or architectural value and
127 with little or no contribution to the historic character of the district because of their recent age or
128 alteration in such a way as to destroy their architectural integrity.

129

130 **RECONSTRUCTION** - Any or all work needed to remake or rebuild all or a part of any building
131 to a sound condition but not necessarily of original materials.

132

133 **REPAIRS** - Any work or all work involving the replacement of existing work with equivalent
134 material for the purpose of maintenance but not including any addition, change or modification in
135 construction.

136

137 **RESTORATION** - Any or all work connected with the returning to or restoring of a building or a
138 part of any building to its original condition through the use of original or nearly original materials.

139

140 **REVIEWING BODIES** - All individuals, boards or elected/appointed bodies, given review
141 authority under this Article, including the Zoning Administrator, Board of Architectural Review
142 and Town Council, upon appeal.

143

144 (Added 10-27-97-Effective Upon Passage)

145

146 **SIGNIFICANT CHANGE** - A permanent change that alters the general appearance (architectural
147 character) of a building.

148

149 (Added 10-27-97-Effective Upon Passage)

150

151 **STRUCTURE** - Anything man-made, including but not limited to main buildings, outbuildings,
152 fences, walls, lampposts, light fixtures, signs, signposts, billboards and paving.

153

154 **SUBSTANTIAL EXTERIOR ALTERATION** - Any change, other than incidental repairs, to the
155 supporting members of a building or portion thereof, such as the addition, removal or alteration of
156 bearing walls, columns, beams, girders, roofs or foundations, that are visible on the exterior of the
157 structure.

158

159

175-84 BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW (Historic District)

A. Establishment and Terms of Office:

1. A Board to be known as the "Board of Architectural Review (BAR)" is hereby established and shall consist of five (5) voting members who shall be appointed by the Town Council. All members shall have a demonstrated interest competence or knowledge in historic preservation. One (1) member shall be a property owner/resident of an historic district overlay area and one (1) shall have professional training or equivalent experience in architecture, history, American studies, architectural history, archaeology or planning. All members shall be residents of Warren County, with knowledge of and demonstrated interest in the historic character of the Town. These members shall serve terms of four (4) years each. (Amended 10-27-97, 1-8-01, 1-12-04-Effective Upon Passage)
2. BAR members may be reappointed for consecutive terms.
3. The BAR shall elect from its own membership a Chairman and Vice Chairman, who shall serve annual terms as such and who may succeed themselves. The Board shall appoint a Secretary who shall serve at its pleasure.
4. When a vacancy occurs, a new appointment shall be made by the Town Council for the unexpired terms within sixty (60) days after the vacancy occurs. The Town Council shall publicly announce and solicit qualified candidates for Board of Architectural Review vacancies.
5. Any appointed member of the BAR may be removed from office by the Town Council for inefficiency, neglect of duties or malfeasance. An appointment to fill a vacancy shall be only for the unexpired term on the vacancy.
6. Members shall make every effort to attend at least one (1) training session annually sponsored by the Department of Historic Resources, the Preservation Alliance of Virginia or other organizations that are involved with historic preservation issues, design and review standards or other work of the BAR.

B. Duties, powers and responsibilities: The Board of Architectural Review shall have the power and authority for issuing or denying certificates of appropriateness for construction, reconstruction, substantial exterior alteration, razing or relocation within the historic district overlay area. In addition, the Board shall have the following duties:

1. To assist and advise the Town Council, the Planning Commission and other Town departments, agencies and property owners in matters involving historically significant sites and buildings or other properties in historic districts, such as but not limited to appropriate land usage, parking facilities and signs.
2. To continuously evaluate conditions and to advise owners of historic landmarks or contributing structures or other properties in historic districts on problems of preservation.
3. To conduct studies deemed necessary by the Town Council or the Planning Commission concerning location of historic districts and means of preservation, utilization, improvement and maintenance of historic assets in the Town.
4. To propose additional historic districts or additions or deletions to districts.
5. To adopt standards for review to supplement the standards set forth in this Article.
6. To establish an appropriate system of markers for selected historic sites and buildings, including proposals for the installation and care of such historic markers, and to invite each owner of a building of historical significance to display the marker thereon.
7. To cooperate with and enlist assistance from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and other interested parties, both public and private, in its efforts to preserve, restore and conserve local historic landmarks, buildings, sites or areas within the Town.
8. To prepare and adopt specific guidelines, illustrated as necessary, for those historic districts which have special characteristics and architectural features that are peculiar to the district and which should be preserved and to make these guidelines available to property owners

225 within each historic district and to the general public. After these historic districts are
226 approved, specific guidelines shall be adopted for such historic districts as may require
227 specific guidelines.

- 228
- 229 9. To sponsor public information activities, when deemed appropriate, publicizing historic
230 preservation efforts, which activities may include, but not be limited to, speaking
231 engagements, handouts, press releases and films.

- 232
- 233 10. To hold public meetings as often as necessary to fulfill the responsibilities assigned by this
234 Article.

235

236 C. Organization and Meetings:

- 237
- 238 1. The Chairman shall conduct the meetings of the BAR.

- 239
- 240 2. The Secretary shall keep the minutes of the meetings and a permanent record of all
241 resolutions, motions, transactions and determinations.

- 242
- 243 3. All members of the BAR, except for advisory members, shall be entitled to vote; and the
244 decisions of the BAR shall be determined by a majority vote.

- 245
- 246 4. A quorum of three (3) voting members present is required before the BAR may take any
247 official action.

- 248
- 249 5. The BAR shall meet within twenty (20) days after notification by the Zoning Administrator
250 of an application for a certificate of appropriateness or a permit requiring action by the
251 BAR.

- 252
- 253 6. The Board of Architectural Review shall have regularly scheduled meetings at least four
254 (4) times a year. The meetings of the BAR shall be open to the public, and a full and

impartial hearing shall be granted. All regularly scheduled meetings shall be conducted in the evening hours for the convenience of the public.

7. The BAR shall vote and announce its decision on any matter properly before it not later than forty-five (45) days after the conclusion of the hearing on the matter, unless the time is extended with the written consent of the applicant.

8. In matters covering the procedures for meetings not covered by this document, the BAR may establish its own rules, provided that they are not contrary to Town policy or the intent of this Article.

D. Authority to Receive Funding and Advisory Services:

1. All persons interested in the preservation of historic buildings or historic sites in the Town are invited to make gifts, devises and bequests to the Town to be used for that purpose. All such donations, other than money, shall be subject to acceptance by the Town Council. All donations of money shall be made through the Department of Finance, and it is hereby authorized and directed to receive such donations and to deposit them in a special fund to be known as the "Historic Buildings and Sites Trust Fund, " and shall be used only for the purpose of preserving and promoting the preservation of historic buildings and sites in the Town. Expenditures from such fund shall be made by the Town Manager as authorized, from time to time, by the Town Council.

2. The BAR may seek federal, state or private grants or funding to assist in the performance of its duties as herein defined.

3. Within the limits of funds that may be made available to the BAR for the performance of its work, the BAR may obtain services of qualified persons to advise and assist the BAR as required.

4. Upon request of the BAR, with approval by the Town Manager, the departments, boards, commissions, offices and agencies of the Town government shall furnish to the Board such

287 available information and render such service as may be required for the exercise of the
288 powers and performance of the duties of the BAR.

289 175-85 CREATION OF HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND LANDMARKS

290 A. The Board of Architectural Review shall prepare and recommend for adoption as part of this
291 Article a district boundary map and an inventory map covering the area or areas to be considered
292 for inclusion in an historic district overlay area. These maps, when adopted in accordance with
293 the provisions of the Code of Virginia Section 15.2-2285, shall be as much a part of this Article as
294 if fully described herein and shall be filed as a part of this Article by the Clerk of the Town of Front
295 Royal. The inventory map shall delineate local historic landmarks, contributing properties
296 and noncontributing properties. The inventory and district boundary maps may be amended, from
297 time to time, in the same manner as the Zoning District Map.

298
299 (Amended VA Code Reference 9-25-00-Effective Upon Passage)

300
301 B. The Board of Architectural Review may propose to the Planning Commission and the Town
302 Council such amendments as deemed appropriate, including the establishment of historic districts
303 or revision to existing historic districts. Upon receipt of said proposal, the Council may initiate
304 such amendment pursuant to Section 175-146. The Board of Architectural Review shall prepare
305 and submit simultaneously with said proposal a report to substantiate establishment of a historic
306 district or a proposed amendment. Such report shall establish and define the historic district
307 boundaries, as delineated upon an appropriate map, as well as describe the historic and/or
308 architectural significance of the buildings, structures or sites to be protected, and the special
309 characteristic, qualities and/or fabric to be preserved, and shall describe present trends and
310 conditions, current and long-range planning and desirable public objectives for preservation. The
311 report may also include plans for public action in or adjoining a district that is likely to affect its
312 character or development.

313
314 C. Applications for the creation or expansion of an historic district or for the designation of
315 landmarks or landmark sites may also be filed by the Planning Commission, the Town Council,
316 the owner, the contract purchaser with the owner's written consent or the owner's agent or sixty
317 percent (60%) of the owners of all buildings within a proposed historic district. All requests shall
318 be made in the same manner as other zoning amendments, as provided for in Section 175-146.

D. Any historic district and any historic district map which have been created and adopted by the Front Royal Town Council prior to the amendment of this Article shall not be repealed but shall remain intact and in effect, subject now to the provisions of this amended Article.

E. Any historic district created and adopted by the Front Royal Town Council after February 1, 1993, shall remain in effect, except as amended or modified pursuant to the regulations herein, for an initial maximum period of ten (10) years from the date of its adoption. Subsequent action by the Front Royal Town Council shall be made to continue the district beyond the initial ten-year period.

F. Upon the presentation of a request to withdraw from an adopted subarea within the historic district overlay area, with such request having been duly executed by at least sixty-seven percent (67%) of the owners of taxable parcels (with a vote for each separate tax parcel) within the designated historic subarea, the Town Council, at its next meeting, shall take appropriate action to remove the historic district designation. This provision shall be applicable only where the historic resource overlay area shall have been in place for a period of not less than two (2) years.

175-86 CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF HISTORIC DISTRICTS OR LANDMARKS

Criteria for evaluating the merits of a given structure or space shall be based on architectural features as well as historic factors. Certain buildings or areas, although not associated with an historic personage or event, may be valuable examples of the Town's physical and cultural heritage. Structures of local significance shall be evaluated, as well as those of state and national significance, and any structures individually listed upon the National Register of Historic Places or the Virginia Landmarks Register shall be designated upon the Town Register. In addition, such evaluation shall be based on the following specific matters:

A. Architectural and landscape style: The evaluation shall respect the qualities of each architectural and landscape style and shall judge a structure's merit on how well it exemplifies the distinguishing characteristics of said style. Consideration will be given to:

1. The significance of the architectural design.
2. The scale and/or interrelationships of the structures and/or environmental features.
3. The significant patterns of development.
4. The quality of workmanship.

5. The amount of surviving original fabric.
6. The original location and use.
7. The remaining outbuildings or dependencies.
8. The surrounding environment; gardens, landscaping and walks.
9. The aesthetic quality.
10. The original integrity of the structure and its details.

B. Historical and/or cultural significance:- Structures or spaces relating to one (1) or more of the following criteria will be considered historically or culturally valuable:

1. Association with an historic personage.
2. Association with an historic event.
3. Work of the leading architect or master craftsman.
4. Site or structure of cultural significance.

C. In addition, sole or infrequent surviving building types and structures not historic in themselves but adding to the character of an historic district need to be looked at as potentially deserving preservation.

175-87 BOUNDARIES OF HISTORIC DISTRICTS OR LANDMARKS

A. The boundaries of an historic district or overlay area shall, in general, be drawn to include areas containing buildings or places in which historic events occurred or having special public value because of notable architectural or other features relating to the cultural or artistic heritage of the community of such significance as to warrant conservation and preservation. The district may include either individual buildings or places of such character and a reasonable distance beyond, or it may include areas or groupings of structures which have significance relative to their patterns of development or social and economic or architectural interrelationships even though some structures in the area might not possess significant merit when considered alone. In any case, the location of the district shall be based upon careful studies that describe the characteristics of the area and support the purposes of conservation and preservation.

B. The boundaries of an historic district shall conform to the boundaries of individual lots of record. Where a street is proposed as an historic district boundary, the edge right-of-way adjoining the district shall be deemed the district boundary.

385

386 C. Historic districts are created as special overlay districts to be superimposed on other zoning
387 districts contained in these regulations, and are to be so designated on the Official Zoning Map.
388 The uses, housing types, minimum lot requirements, minimum yard requirements, maximum
389 height and accessory uses and accessory signs shall be determined by the regulations applicable to
390 the other districts over which the historic districts superimposed, except as these other districts
391 may be modified by application of the regulations in the historic district.

392

393 D. A map delineating the adopted boundaries of each historic district shall be maintained in the
394 office of the Zoning Administrator.

395 **175-88 CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS REQUIRED (Historic**
396 **District)**

397 A. No building or structure within the Chester Street and downtown business areas of the Historic
398 Front Royal District shall be erected, reconstructed, altered or restored unless and until an
399 application for a certificate of appropriateness shall have been approved under the provisions of
400 this Article.

401

402 B. No building or structure within the downtown residential area of the Historic Front Royal
403 District or property designated as a local historic landmark shall be erected, reconstructed or
404 undergo substantial exterior alteration unless and until an application for a certificate of
405 appropriateness shall have been approved under the provisions of this ordinance.

406

407 C. No building existing in any designated historic district shall be demolished or removed, in whole
408 or in part, unless and until an application or a certificate of appropriateness shall have been
409 approved by the Board of Architectural Review.

410

411 D. No application for a certificate of appropriateness to demolish a building in any historic district
412 shall be considered by the BAR until a public hearing has been held thereon, pursuant to the notice
413 of public hearing as required in Section 15.2-2204, Code of Virginia, as amended.

414

415 **(Amended VA Code Reference 9-25-00-Effective Upon Passage)**

175-89 BOARD REVIEW OF MAJOR ACTIONS (Historic District)

A. The following major actions and any other actions not specifically exempted by the terms of this ordinance or which, in the opinion of the Administrator, may constitute a major permanent and detrimental change to the character of an historic district shall be approved only after a public meeting and favorable action by a majority vote of the Board of Architectural Review:

1. The razing, demolishing or moving of a designated landmark or contributing structure.

2. Construction of any new main building, or an accessory building which exceeds five hundred (500) square feet in size within a designated historic district or on a site adjacent to a designated landmark site.

3. Any addition to or substantial alteration of a designated landmark or structure on a contributing property, which increases the square footage of the structure or otherwise alters substantially its size, height, contour or outline.

4. Any significant change or alteration of the exterior architectural style of a designated landmark or contributing property.

5. Any addition to a non-contributing structure, which alters substantially the size height, contour or outline by increasing the square footage and/or volume of the structure by one hundred percent (100%) or more of the original structure.

6. Any fence or sign that is not in conformance with the design guidelines adopted in accordance with this Article.

7. Any other major actions not specifically covered by the terms of this section but which would have a substantial effect on the character of the Historic District.

B. The Board of Architectural Review shall be guided in its review by the guidelines and criteria established in Section 175-91. The BAR shall have authority to request modifications in order to comply with the guidelines and criteria.

448

449 C. The Board of Architectural Review shall not disapprove an application except with respect to
450 the criteria and guidelines set forth in Section 175-91. The BAR shall give reasons for its decisions,
451 shall act promptly on applications before it and shall coordinate its procedures with those of other
452 agencies and individuals charged with the administration of this Article. The BAR shall be strict
453 in its judgment of plans for those structures designated as landmarks and contributing properties
454 but shall be lenient in its judgment of plans for non-contributing properties. For plans involving
455 new construction the Board's concern shall focus on whether such plans are compatible with and
456 enhance the historic or architectural value of surrounding structures or the surrounding area.

457

458 D. In all final decisions rendered pursuant to this Article, the BAR shall briefly state its findings
459 in writing, and in the case of disapproval, it may make recommendations to the applicant with
460 respect to the design, texture, material, color, line, mass, dimension or lighting of the alteration or
461 the improvement involved. The requirements of this section shall be deemed to have been satisfied
462 if such findings and recommendations, if any, are set forth in the regularly maintained minutes of
463 the BAR.

464

465 (Amended/Added "C & D" 10-27-97-Effective Upon Passage)

466 **175-89.1 ACTIONS REQUIRING ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (Historic**
467 **District)**

468 A. The following actions will require administrative review by the Zoning Administrator:

469

470 1. The razing, demolishing, or moving of a non-contributing structure or a structure which is
471 substantially damaged to the point of being completely uninhabitable.

472

473 2. Construction of a new accessory structure less than five hundred (500) square feet in size
474 within a designated historic district or on a site adjacent to a designated landmark site that
475 is generally in keeping with the character of the historic district and its surroundings.

476

477 3. Substantial alteration of a non-contributing structure.

478

4. Any addition to a non-contributing structure, which increases the size (square footage and/or volume) of the structure by less than one hundred percent (100%) of the original structure.

5. Landscaping, fences and signs in conformance with the design guidelines adopted in accordance with this Article.

B. The Zoning Administrator shall be guided in his decisions by the standards and guidelines adopted by the Board of Architectural Review and shall have authority to request modifications of specific proposal in order that the proposal may comply with said standards and guidelines. In any case where the Administrator is uncertain of his authority to act on a particular application under this section or in any case where the Administrator and the applicant cannot agree on changes in the proposal, the application shall be referred to the Board of Architectural Review for action by said Board. In case of disapproval by the Administrator, the applicant may appeal the Administrator's decision within thirty (30) days thereof to the Board of Architectural Review. The Administrator shall keep a record of his decisions under this section and shall report such decisions to the Board of Architectural Review at its next regular meeting.

(Amended Entire Section 10-27-97-Effective Upon Passage)

175-90 EXEMPTIONS FROM REVIEW (Historic District)

Certain minor actions which are deemed not to permanently affect the character of the historic district are exempted from review for architectural compatibility. Such actions shall include:

1. Repainting resulting in the same or a similar color. (Original painting of masonry surfaces is not exempted from review.)

(Amended to add "*similar*" 6-22-15-Effective Upon Passage)

2. Repair or construction in kind, resulting in no significant changes in appearance or form.

3. Addition or deletion of storm windows and doors, window gardens, awnings, temporary canopies or similar appurtenances and window air conditioners.

4. Addition or deletion of television or radio antennas, skylights or solar collectors in locations not visible from a public place.

5. Installation of plant materials but not including landscape treatment which substantially alters the contour of a contributing property or involves landscaping or construction of fences, pools and the like that affect the appearance of a contributing property.

6. Permitted outside storage in a residential or commercial district that does not require structural changes.

7. Improvements, alterations and renovations that can be accomplished without obtaining a building permit, except fences, signs, and window replacement.

8. Any changes to a structure that are not visible from a public street, alley or public place.

9. Temporary window signs. **(Amended Entire Section 10-27-97-Effective Upon Passage)**

175-90.1 AUTHORITY TO STOP WORK (Historic District)

The Zoning Administrator shall have authority to order that work be stopped and that an appropriate application be filed or reviewed in any case where, in his opinion, the action may produce arresting and spectacular effects, violent contrasts or materials or colors and intense and lurid colors or patterns or a multiplicity of incongruous details clearly inconsistent with the character of the present structures or with the prevailing character of the surroundings and the historic district or when it appears that the work does not conform to the list of administrative review or exempted actions stated herein and, in fact, is more extensive than originally represented.

(Added 10-27-97-Effective Upon Passage)

175-91 GUIDELINES AND CRITERIA FOR REVIEW (Historic District)

A. All reviewing bodies shall be guided by the following guidelines and criteria:

1. The historic archaeological or architectural value and significance of a structure and its relationship to the historic value of the surrounding area.

542

543 2. The age and character of the historic structure, its condition, and its probable life expectancy
544 and the appropriateness of the proposed changes to the period or periods during which the
545 structure was built.

546

547 3. The general compatibility of the site plan and the exterior design arrangement, texture and
548 materials proposed to be used.

549

550 4. The view of the structure or area from a public street or road, present or future.

551

552 5. The present character of the setting of the structure or area and its surroundings.

553

554 6. The probable effect of proposed construction on trees, wooded areas or historic sites.

555

556 7. Any other factors, including aesthetic factors, which the reviewing bodies deem to be
557 pertinent.

558

559 8. The appropriateness of the exterior architectural features of such building or structure to the
560 compatibility with the exterior architectural features of landmarks, buildings or structures in
561 the district, taking into consideration the following:

562

563 a. General design.

564 b. Character and appropriateness of design.

565 c. Form.

566 d. Proportion and scale.

567 E. Mass.

568 f. Configuration.

569 g. Arrangement.

570 h. Texture.

i. Material

j. The permanent color of exterior materials (excluding paint).

k. The relationship of such elements to similar features of structures in the immediate surroundings.

l. Congruity with the character of the Historic District.

B. The reviewing bodies shall not adopt or impose any specific architectural style in the administration of this Article.

C. The reviewing bodies shall also be guided by the purposes for which landmarks, landmark sites and historic districts are designated and by the particular standards and considerations contained in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

(Amended Entire Section 10-27-97-Effective Upon Passage)

175-92 ISSUANCE OF CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS (Historic District)

A. Within fifteen (15) days of approval for construction or alteration pursuant to 175-88, a certificate of appropriateness signed by the Zoning Administrator and bearing the date of issuance but subject to the provisions of 175-92B, shall be made available to the applicant.

B. Any certificate of appropriateness issued pursuant to 175-88 shall expire of its own limitations twelve (12) months from the date of issuance if the work authorized by said certificate has not commenced and, further, if any such work is suspended or abandoned for a period of twelve (12) months after being commenced. Any period or periods of time during which the right to use any such certificate is stayed pursuant to this Article shall be excluded from the computation of the twelve- month period.

(Amended Entire Section 10-27-97-Effective Upon Passage)

175-93 BUILDING DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION (Historic District)

A. No historic landmark, building or structure within any historic district shall be razed, demolished or moved until the razing, demolition or movement thereof is approved by the Board of Architectural Review or approved on appeal as provided herein.

B. Notwithstanding the provisions of Subsection A, the owner of a historic landmark, building or structure shall, as a matter of right, be entitled to raze or demolish such a building or structure, provided that:

1. He has applied to the Town Council for such right;

2. The owner has, for the period of time set forth in the time schedule hereinafter contained and at a price reasonably related to its fair market value, made a bona fide offer to sell such building or structure and the land pertaining thereto to any person, firm, corporation, government or agency thereof or political subdivision or agency thereof which gives reasonable assurance that it is willing to preserve and restore the building or structure and the land pertaining thereto. In order to demonstrate the making of a bona fide offer to sell, the owner shall file a notice with the Zoning Administrator identifying the property and stating the offering price and the name of the real estate agent, if any. No time period set forth herein shall begin to run until said notice has been filed. Within five (5) days of receipt, copies of the notice shall be delivered by the Zoning Administrator to the members of the Town Council, the members of the Planning Commission and the Town Manager; and

3. No bona fide contract, binding upon all parties thereto, shall have been executed for the sale of any such building or structure and the land pertaining thereto prior to the expiration of the applicable time period set forth in the time schedule hereinafter contained. Any appeal from the decision of the BAR, whether instituted by the owner or by any other proper party, notwithstanding the provisions herein pertaining to a stay on appeal, shall not affect the right of the owner to make the bona fide offer to sell. No offer to sell shall be made more than one (1) year after the final decision of the BAR, but thereafter the owner may renew his request to the BAR to approve the razing or demolition of the historic landmark, building or structure. The time schedule for offers to sell shall be as follows:

OFFERING PRICE

MINIMUM OFFER-TO-SELL

Period (Months)

Less than \$25,000.00	3
\$25,000.00 to \$39,999.99	4
\$40,000.00 to \$54,999.99	5
\$55,000.00 to \$74,999.99	6
\$75,000.00 to \$89,999.99	7
\$90,000.00 or more	12

4. For the purpose of this Article, a bona fide offer to sell shall be defined as a selling price not greater than ten percent (10%) more than the fair market value appraisal of a certified land appraiser employing appropriate, recognized appraisal criteria for the area in question. The Town shall retain the right to contest the bona fide nature of the offer as follows: the reasonable relationship of the offering price to the fair market value of the historic landmark, building or structure, by filing injunctive proceedings in the Warren County Circuit Court, whenever the Town obtains an appraisal of the property in question by a certified land appraiser at a value at least ten percent (10%) below the offering price asked by the owner, regardless of any conflicting appraisal obtained by the property owner.

175-94 APPEALS (Historic District)

A. Any applicant aggrieved by a final decision of the Board of Architectural Review may appeal said decision to the Front Royal Town Council, provided that such appeal is filed, in writing, with the Town Clerk within ten (10) days after the final decision is rendered by the BAR. The Town Council will hear the matter at its next regularly scheduled meeting and will render its decision on the appeal at the following regularly scheduled meeting. The Council, in its discretion, may consider additional evidence and submissions during the period between meetings and at the second regularly scheduled meeting prior to rendering its decision.

B. Any applicant aggrieved by a final decision of the Board of Architectural Review following the decision rendered on appeal to the Front Royal Town Council, may appeal said decision to the Circuit Court of Warren County, Virginia, by filing a petition at law setting forth the alleged illegality of the BAR's action, provided that such petition is filed with the Circuit Court within thirty (30) days after the appealed decision of the Front Royal Town Council. The filing of said petition with the Circuit Court shall stay the decision of the BAR pending the outcome of the appeal, except that the filing of such petition shall not stay the decision of the BAR if such

decision denies the right to raze or demolish an historic landmark, building or structure. The Circuit Court may reverse or modify the decision of the BAR, in whole or in part, if the Court finds, upon review, that the decision is arbitrary and constitutes an abuse of discretion. The Circuit Court may also affirm the decision of the BAR.

175-95 MAINTENANCE, PUBLIC SAFETY AND PERMITTED USES (Historic District)

A. Nothing in this Article shall allow the BAR to prevent the routine maintenance or repair of any exterior elements of any building or structure so long as there is no change in form or materials; nor shall anything in this Article be construed to prevent the construction, reconstruction, alteration or demolition of any exterior elements that the authorized municipal officers shall certify as required by public safety.

B. Nothing in this Article shall be construed to prevent any use of any land, building or structure permitted by the regulations prescribed in this Chapter for the district in which such land, building or structure is otherwise located. Due to peculiar conditions of design and construction in historic neighborhoods where buildings and structures are often built close to the lot lines, it is in the public interest to retain a neighborhood's historic appearance by granting variances to normal yard requirements, where appropriate and where it is deemed that such a variance will not adversely affect neighboring properties. The BAR may recommend to the Board of Zoning Appeals that such variance to standard yard requirements be made.

175-96 YARD VARIANCES (Historic District)

Due to peculiar conditions of design and construction in historic neighborhoods where buildings and structures are often built close to the lot lines, it is in the public interest to retain a neighborhood's historic appearance by granting variances to normal yard requirements, where appropriate and where it is deemed that such a variance will not adversely affect neighboring properties. The BAR may recommend to the Board of Zoning Appeals that such variance to standard yard requirements be made.

175-97 (RESERVED)

175-98 EXEMPTION FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Historic District)

The Front Royal Town Council may exempt public structures, works, utilities and buildings from compliance with this Article where public safety is endangered or an emergency situation arises. Retroactive approval for emergency work undertaken shall be sought within thirty (30) days following completion of the work. All work shall strive to maintain architectural compatibility within the historic district for its public works and structures.