

ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT 25-12

UNIVERSITY BOULEVARD (UB) OVERLAY ZONE

Description

This ZTA creates a new overlay zone along portions of University Boulevard, implementing some of the zoning and land use recommendations from the University Boulevard Corridor Plan.

ZTA 25-12
Completed: 10-2-2025

MCPB
Item No. 06
10-09-2025

Montgomery County
Planning Board
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COUNCIL SPONSORS

Council President Stewart on behalf of the Planning Board

PLANNING TEAM

Design, Placemaking and Policy on behalf of East County Planning

PLANNING BOARD DATE

October 9, 2025

REVIEW BASIS

Chapter 59



Summary:

- Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 25-12 - University Boulevard (UB) Overlay Zone will help implement the zoning and land use recommendations of the University Boulevard Corridor Plan (UBCP).
- The recommendations addressed by the UB Overlay Zone include modified development standards in the CRN zone on sites under 15,000 square feet, allowing CRN properties to be improved with non-residential uses allowed by the R-60 Zone, and limitations on auto-centric uses.
- A District Council public hearing is scheduled for October 28, 2025.
- This ZTA will be considered alongside the UBCP at a future Planning, Housing and Parks committee meeting.

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SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

RATIONALE FOR INTRODUCTION

This Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 25-12 University Boulevard (UB) Overlay Zone is introduced as part of the implementation of the draft University Boulevard Corridor Plan (UBCP). This corridor plan reimagines the University Boulevard corridor from downtown Wheaton to Four-Corners as a more dense, walkable, and accessible boulevard. The Planning Board Draft UBCP was transmitted to the District Council on July 1, 2025, who had two public hearings on September 10 and September 16, 2025.

ZTA 25-12 was recommended for introduction by the Planning Board on June 12, 2025, and was introduced by Council President Stewart on behalf of the Board on September 9, 2025. The District Council will have a public hearing on the overlay zone on October 28, 2025.

The recommendations and analysis of this report are based on how the UB Overlay Zone would help implement the Planning Board's draft of the UBCP. The plan is currently being reviewed by the Council's Planning, Housing, and Parks (PHP) committee and decisions made by PHP may impact the overlay zone and this ZTA. Because the PHP has not made any final decisions at this point, Planning Staff is not recommending any additional changes to the text of the UB Overlay Zone other than one recommendation for clarity proposed in this report.

SECTION 2: UB OVERLAY ZONE

The following sections of this report describe each of the sections in ZTA 25-12, the UB Overlay Zone.

PURPOSE

The first section of the UB Overlay Zone is the purpose section, beginning on line 41 of the ZTA. The purpose section intends to provide a brief overview of why the overlay zone is created, mirroring themes from the UBCP. The purpose reads as follows:

The purpose of the UB Overlay Zone is to increase the diversity and supply of housing in a compact, transit-oriented form of growth that supports Bus Rapid Transit on University Boulevard and Colesville Road, creates complete communities, and improves safety for all travelers.

LAND USES

The land use section of the overlay zone, starting on line 46 of the ZTA, is divided into two sections. The first applies only to properties that will be zoned CRN and are intended to maintain certain

allowed land uses from the existing R-60 zone. Provisions include allowing Accessory Dwelling Units on properties improved with single-unit living, and allowing properties to develop with non-residential uses as allowed in the R-60 zone, even when the C portion of the CRN zone is mapped at 0 FAR. Examples of non-residential uses allowed in the R-60 zone as a limited or conditional use include various home-based occupations, daycare centers, and small professional services offices.

The second section within Land Uses is a list of uses prohibited within the entire UB Overlay Zone, regardless of the underlying zone. The prohibition applies to new applications; any existing instances of these prohibited uses will remain protected by Section 7.7.2. Nonconforming Uses. Most of these uses are automobile focused and are not compatible with the vision of the UBCP. Prohibited uses include:

- Light Vehicle Sales and Rental (Indoor and Outdoor)
- Car Wash
- Filling Station
- Repair (Major and Minor)
- Drive-Thru
- Medical/Scientific Manufacturing and Production
- Self-Storage
- Storage Facility

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

The Development Standards section of the UB Overlay Zone, starting on line 66, has three sections specific to development on CRN zoned sites. One for sites less than 15,000 square feet in size, one for sites 15,000 square feet or larger in size, and one that applies to all sites.

For sites that are less than 15,000 square feet in size, the overlay zone requires developments to follow the development standards for a duplex building type in the CRN zone, regardless of which building type is proposed. Additional requirements include limiting lot coverage to 35 percent, requiring at least one entrance of any building to face a street, waiving open space requirements, and requiring parking to be screened pursuant to the design requirements of 6.2.9.B. conditional uses in a residential zone. These standards intend to provide clarity to both developers and existing residents on what type and form of development can be expected on smaller infill sites. The combination of duplex standards and 35 percent site lot coverage provides adequate room for development projects at an FAR of around 1.0, while also ensuring setbacks between buildings and space to provide parking and stormwater.

Development sites 15,000 square feet or larger may follow the underlying zoning standards of the CRN zone for the applicable building type; however, the build-to-area would be standardized to a maximum of 10 feet. These larger sites have more opportunity for creative site design that can introduce areas with slightly higher intensity development envisioned by the UBCP without changing

the residential character of the area. To achieve the vision of the plan, however, the build-to-area needed to be reduced, ensuring that buildings are pulled closer to the street, creating a continuous street edge along University Boulevard.

Finally, all sites in the CRN zone, regardless of size, should locate parking behind the front building line. This helps meet the design goals of the UBC Plan and makes for a better pedestrian experience along the sidewalks and side paths.

REVISIONS TO DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Planning Staff recommends two minor revisions, the first modifying the 35% lot coverage to a 35% site coverage, and the other to clarify that the duplex building standards should be the duplex-side standards. The proposed modification to the 35% coverage standard is both for simplicity of use and to be more consistent with similar recent approvals such as ZTA 25-02. The introduced ZTA 25-12 requires a 35% lot coverage limit. Planning Staff recommend changing this to a 35% site coverage limit. In our existing zones and optional methods of development, coverage is consistently applied by lot for detached homes and duplexes, but is applied by site for townhouse and multi-family housing. When creating lots for townhouses, end unit townhomes end up on larger lots than middle units, creating unequal lot coverage values with low coverage on end unit lots, and high coverage on middle unit lots. Utilizing a site coverage rather than a lot coverage allows an averaging across all the lots that are part of the site. The result on the maximum allowable coverage is unchanged, but this change allows greater flexibility in building design and subdivision layout.

The other Planning Staff modification recommends clarifying using the duplex building type standards as duplex-side. The CRN zone has two types of duplex standards, duplex-side, and duplex-over. The most impactful difference is the duplex-side has narrower requirements for lot width and lot size, because it assumes subdivision of the land. This is more fitting with how Planning Staff envision small site developments in the CRN zone with duplex, triplex, and townhouse building types on subdivided fee-simple lots.

UBOZ AND MORE HOUSING NOW

On July 22, 2025, with Ordinance 20-20, the District Council adopted ZTA 25-02, Workforce Housing – Development Standards, as part of the broader More Housing NOW legislative package. This ZTA introduced a new Optional Method Workforce Housing (OMWH) development type in the R-40, R-60, R-90, and R-200 zones. The OMWH allows duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, and smaller apartments on certain eligible residential parcels along designated transportation corridors. Parcels fronting on University Boulevard in the R-40, R-60, R-90, and R-200 zones are considered eligible. ZTA 25-02 took a narrowly tailored countywide approach to corridor planning, and the UBCP and the UB Overlay Zone build on that vision with a local master plan that envisions additional house-scale development along

the University Boulevard Corridor that supports Bus Rapid Transit, fosters complete communities, and enhances safety for travelers.

Both ZTA 25-02 and the UB Overlay Zone aim to allow house-scale development of small multi-unit types on existing residential parcels. However, their approaches differ: ZTA 25-02 used development standards based on current optional methods of development that allow similar building types, while the UB Overlay Zone specifically used duplex standards and proposes to rezone properties to the CRN zone. Both zones limit building heights, set neighborhood appropriate setbacks from neighboring parcels, and restrict coverage to keep new development proportional to current residential standards.

The main difference between the UB Overlay Zone and ZTA 25-02 is that the UB Overlay Zone slightly broadens the eligible area to include residential lots within blocks facing University Boulevard, rather than only specific lots directly facing the boulevard. It also does not restrict lot consolidation; instead, it applies different standards for larger projects. Another difference between ZTA 25-02 and the UB Overlay Zone is that ZTA 25-02 also includes the provision of including Workforce Housing units in new OMWH developments with 3 or more units and requires a site plan for all projects, regardless of size. By comparison, the CRN Duplex standards the UBOZ recommends would only require site plan if an application was for more than 10,000 square feet in floor area, or taller than 40 feet in height.

SECTION 3: CLIMATE ASSESSMENT

Bill 3-22, passed by the County Council on July 12, 2022, requires the Planning Board to prepare a climate assessment for each Zoning Text Amendment, Master Plan, and Master Plan Amendment, effective March 1, 2023. Each Climate Assessment must include the potential positive or negative effects a ZTA may have on climate change (including greenhouse gas emissions) and on community resilience and adaptive capacity. The climate impact assessment for ZTA 25-12 is attached in Attachment B.

Because the UB Overlay Zone is an implementation element from the UBCP, which has its own climate assessment, Planning Staff anticipate minor to no impacts to greenhouse gas emissions, adaptive capacity, or community resiliency as a direct result of the overlay zone.

The climate assessment for the UBCP itself anticipates minor to moderate negative and positive impacts on the county's goals of addressing greenhouse gas emissions, and slight to moderate negative impacts on greenhouse gas sequestration. The assessment recognized that at total buildout, the plan could have up to 35% higher emissions over current zoning, largely due to increased population and the impacts that have on overall emissions. The lack of any substantial additions to open space or vegetative planting areas also influenced the negative impacts on sequestration. The new developments, however, are anticipated to be a more efficient use of land, resulting in per-capita reductions in energy use. Both positive and negative impacts were also identified for adaptive capacity and resiliency for the UBCP plan; however, the assessment found more positive than

negative impacts overall. By creating opportunities for more families to live along a major corridor, more families will experience better community connectedness and will have improved access to commercial centers, parks, institutional uses, and multi-modal transportation options.

SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

Planning Staff recommends that the Planning Board support ZTA 25-12 for the University Boulevard Overlay Zone transmitting comments in support to the District Council, with revisions to update lot coverage to site coverage for smaller development sites in the CRN zone, clarifying developments under 15,000 square feet should use the duplex-side standards of the CRN zone. This overlay zone is a major component in implementing the recommendations of the UBCP.

Approval of this overlay zone is necessary to align with the passage of the UBCP. Both must occur before the Sectional Map Amendment in order to avoid conflicts between development review criteria and the vision of the master plan.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Introduction Packet ZTA 25-12

Attachment B: Climate Assessment ZTA 25-12