

Intro to Planned Unit Developments

USNA Community Benefits Committee
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What is a planned unit development?

An overview from Greater Greater Washington: “Many residential or mixed use construction projects, whether carried out by a homeowner or a developer, meet the letter of DC’s current zoning laws. In these cases, the city deems the plans “by right” and goes on to issue a construction permit. But other times, zoning rules allow for flexibility in their interpretation, and “zoning relief” can be granted. A Planned Unit Development gives developers more significant zoning relief. This can come by way of allowing a building to be taller or denser than what the zoning code says is allowed, or building a residential or commercial building in space that’s zoned for industrial. Because a PUD can provide substantial zoning relief, developers are expected to provide benefits to the community in return. The PUD process also provides the community an opportunity to engage with and influence the project in a substantial way. So while a PUD often means a developer can build higher or denser buildings, it also means the community can get things like streetscape improvements, community resources, or additional affordable housing.”

Who approves PUDs?

The Zoning Commission (three district residents, one representative of the Architect of the Capitol, one representative of the National Park Service).

What community benefits have been received in the past?

Benefits proffered by the developer and may be to the neighborhood, Ward, or District. They’re evaluated by the Zoning Commission and enforced by district agencies such as the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA). Here is a [database](#) of past benefits, and a [full list](#) of evaluation standards. Benefits can include:

- Minority business and first-source employment
- Contributions to D.C. public schools, libraries, or neighborhood centers
- Affordable housing
- Uses of importance to the community/District
- Sustainable (green) building elements
- Services for elderly, handicapped, children, etc.
- Public space improvements
- Community meeting space
- Subsidized retail space for local businesses
- Transportation-related measures

How do community groups participate in the Zoning Commission?

May submit written comments in advance, or attend the public hearing to testify in person. May request party status if uniquely impacted by the proposal.

Which agencies are involved in the PUD process?

- Office of Zoning: Receives application materials, administers the PUD process, sends notifications
- Office of Planning: Prepares setdown, makes a recommendation, given “great weight” at the public hearing
- DDOT: Deals with transportation and public space issues
- Fire, Police, DDOE

What is the typical process?

1. Meetings between applicant and ANC/community
2. Applicant files notice of intent to file with ANC and Office of Zoning
3. Office of Zoning refers application to ANC and relevant agencies
4. Office of Planning writes a setdown report
5. Zoning Commission holds a public meeting where it decides whether to hold a public hearing
6. Applicant continues to meet with the ANC and community
7. Applicant files pre-hearing statement
8. Office of Zoning schedules public hearing and receives reports and recommendations from the Office of Planning, agencies, ANC, community groups, and individuals
9. Zoning Commission holds public hearing and takes proposed action
10. Zoning Commission takes final action

Further reading

- [Planned Unit Developments overview \(D.C. Office of Planning\)](#)
- [Planned Unit Developments, explained](#)
- [Planned Unit Development \(D.C. Municipal Regulations\)](#)
- [An analysis of PUD regulations and processes in Washington D.C.](#)
- [PUD evaluation standards](#)