Planning Commission
Regular Meeting
Agenda Item 4.c.

Agenda Item: **Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment ZOTA #26-01, to amend Chapter 78 (ZONING), ARTICLE XIV (Signs), Section 78-140.4 (Prohibited signs), Section 78-140.6 (General standards for all signs), Section 78-141.8 (Sign Standards for Planned Development—Transit Related Growth Districts), and Article XVIII (Definitions), Section 78-180 (Definitions) to update sections to include standards for signage in the Herndon Transit-Oriented Core (HTOC), provide a nit limit for signage, and include definitions pertinent to signage in the HTOC**

Meeting Date: April 27, 2026

Category: Public Hearings

Prepared by: Angelina Jones, Lead Planner / Design and Development

Description:
This zoning ordinance text amendment (ZOTA) will establish sign standards for the Planned Development – Transit Oriented Core (PD-TOC) zoning district. Property owners that develop in PD-TOC are currently unable to obtain any sign permits and the town cannot issue any sign permits in the PD-TOC zoning district until an amendment is adopted. This ZOTA will also update the existing sign standards in the Transit Related Growth districts. Additionally, staff drafted minor updates to the sections on prohibited signs and general standards for all signs related to the inclusion of the HTOC standards in Article XIV. Staff relied on guidance found in the *Urban Design and Architectural Guidelines for the Herndon Transit-Oriented Core* (638949943148500000) to develop the proposed sign standards for the HTOC.

Background/Timing Impact:
The Town of Herndon initiated the Planned Development - Transit-Oriented Core (PD-TOC) zoning district in 2017. This area is also referred to as the Herndon Transit-Oriented Core (HTOC) in associated planning documents.

Work Session Discussion:
The following is a summary of the Planning Commission's comments during the April 13, 2026, work session and additional information related to those comments:

- The Commission requested that property owners impacted by the ZOTA be notified of the proposed changes.
    - The only legal notification for a ZOTA is the legal advertisement in the newspaper. There is no requirement for property owner notification with a

ZOTA. ZOTA #26-01 updates the existing Sec. 78-141.8 tables to create sign standards for properties within the PD-TOC as the Zoning Ordinance does not currently have standards to allow the installation of signage in this district. Staff has determined that there are not substantial changes to the sign standards within the Transit Related Growth Area (TRG) proposed in this ZOTA. Therefore, staff has sent letters notifying commercial property and business owners within the PD-TOC of the proposed new standards for that zoning district.

- The Planning Commission asked whether moving LED displays are permitted and staff confirmed that they are prohibited in the Town of Herndon Zoning Ordinance.
    - Adding provisions to allow for moving LED displays in town is beyond the scope of this ZOTA as initiated by Town Council in February 2026. This may be considered under a future and separate ZOTA initiation.
- The Planning Commission asked for additional context related to Fairfax County's standards for LED signs and other signage within their metro corridor.
    - Town of Herndon staff has included a townwide limit of 100 nits for electronic displays during nighttime hours as part of the proposed language for ZOTA #26-01. This is consistent with the nit levels allowed within or adjacent to most residential districts within Fairfax County. For more information, please refer to the Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance Subsection 7101.1.A(4) (Document Viewer | Zoning Ordinance).
    - Staff updated the proposed ZOTA language pertaining to nit limits to clarify the limit is for electronic displays during nighttime (see below for additional information).
    - The zoning districts adjacent to the Reston Town Center and Wiehle-Reston East are a mix of Planned Units and Industrial. The zoning districts adjacent to the Innovation Center metro stop are a mix of Residential, Planned Units, and Industrial. The Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance does not provide sign specific guidance for individual zoning districts beyond dividing them into standards for either residential districts or commercial and industrial districts. For more information, please refer to the Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance Article 7 (Document Viewer | Zoning Ordinance).
    - Regulations for signs for zoning districts with a P (planned) designation and some with a C (commercial) or I (industrial) designation can be modified with a special exception. For more information, please refer to the Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance Subsection 7102 (Document Viewer | Zoning Ordinance).
- The commission requested that staff consider increasing the limit on the number of tower signs per building.
    - In consideration of similar developments adjacent to the Town of Herndon along the Dulles Toll Road, staff are recommending an increase to two tower signs allowed per building, but no more than one per elevation (see below for additional information).
- The Planning Commission asked whether "1st floor" or "ground floor" should be

referenced in the tables associated with Sec. 78-141.8.
    - For consistency with the existing tables in other sections of Article XIV, staff has changed the proposed language to use the term “ground floor” throughout (see below for additional information).
- The commission asked if the language for the allowable maximum width of Canopy Signs could be changed to state they can be no larger than 90% the width of the associated canopy.
    - Staff has made this change for clarity (see below for additional information).

Changes made to the proposed ZOTA language since the Work Session discussion:

- Sec. 78-140.6(d)(3) updated to read: *All electronic display signage is limited to a maximum of 100 nits between dusk and dawn* (Lines 53-54).
- The allowable number of Tower Signs was updated to read: *Up to 2 per building with no more than 1 per elevation on properties abutting the Dulles Toll Road* (Line 66).
- *1st floor* changed to read *ground floor* throughout (Lines 61 and 67)
- Canopy Sign width changed to read: *Maximum width 90% the total width of the canopy* (Line 61).

Fiscal Impact:
If adopted by the Town Council, this ordinance will permit review and approval of signage in the PD-TOC, which will allow businesses and residential developments to successfully operate, adding to the town's tax base.

Legal Impact:
If adopted by the Town Council, this amendment will be effective on and after its date of adoption.

Staff Recommendation/Next Steps:
Staff recommends approval of the proposed ZOTA language.

Attachments:
1. Ordinance (Proposed Language)
2. Legal Ad