

# ***Gaithersburg Diagnostic Report***

## **Presentation Transcript:**

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Good evening, everybody and welcome. Thanks for giving some time tonight. We're going to give it a few more minutes, see if some more people get on and we'll begin the presentation.

Once again, good evening to everybody who joined us and we'll be getting started in another couple minutes or so. We want to see if we can get some more people in the room before we begin.

Alrighty, I think we're going to go ahead and get started and hopefully more people will join as we move along. Next slide, please.

So the first slide we have folks in case you need closed captioning either for hearing impaired or you'd like to read it in Spanish, here are the directions on here I'll leave it up for another couple minutes I'd like to note also that if you are using the Spanish option when we get to the Q&A section, you can actually type in your questions in Spanish and we will be answering those a couple things. Also tonight is being recorded a recording. You know a copy of the recording will be posted on the project page next week.

So you can come back and watch and as the slide will that will be shown later, we will be accepting questions throughout the presentation using the Q&A feature So once again, let's give it another minute, hopefully some other people get on and this is how you use the closed captioning.

Alrighty, next slide please.

So again, welcome my name

is Rob Robinson. I'm the long range planning manager for the city of Gaithersburg. Joining me this evening is Greg Mann, our community Planning Manager and my counterpart in the Planning department and from the city side, we're overseeing the retail project also joining us from our consultant team Zone Co is Jocelyn Gibson, Project Manager, who you will hear a lot more from this evening. And Christopher Myers is one of the project planners for this project and we may or may not hear from Christopher later on so.

But he is here, and he is diligently tracking the questions that hopefully you guys will be submitting.

Next slide please.

And again, we're here, yes

So retold Gaithersburg, what is it? So retail Gaithersburg is the

name we're giving to our zoning code update project

and what we're doing. And this is an effort to revise our zoning code

Chapter 24 of the city code so it can better meet

community goals can be more understandable and easier to

use, and really focuses on making sure equity is considered

and addressed throughout zoning just as important

as of what is retail is what it is not retool

I. Gaithersburg is not the master plan.

Will not make land use recommendations for your individual

businesses or homes.

It will not change approved development plans

just because potentially something changes. You're not going to

have to come back and demo your house to meet a new

potential setback. You're not going to have to sell a car because

you might not meet the parking standard any longer. So retool Gaithersburg will

not be retroactive on existing developments any

way changes to the zoning ordinance? You will only have to comply

with if you make a physical change or submit something

new plans if you want to build an addition.

If you want to add a fence if you want to open a

a business, then the new restrictions under a new zoning ordinance will come

into effect.

So with that, I think I'm going to turn it over to Jocelyn to tell you, but so she can tell you about this evening's topic the diagnostic report. So go ahead and take it away, Jocelyn.

Great. Thank you, Rob. So we'll just start off with a project timeline just kind of let you know where you, where we are in the project so you'll see on your screen that there's a graphic that just kind of gives it a sort of general conceptual view. So we started off with a public project kickoff a few months ago and we once we had that kickoff meeting, we were doing a lot of analysis of this existing zoning code which really fed into this report that you're that we're reviewing tonight that is also available on the website.

So that's where we are right now in spring of 2023 we're kind of wrapping up this sort of number two place in the graphic identification of code revisions and I do want to remind you that everything you hear tonight from what you read about the report on the website, you can still give us feedback if there's an issue that you've encountered that you'd want to make sure as denoted, please feel free to provide some feedback via the website and via the there is a special email address for this project, so we

e will be checking that so.

Do you feel free to reach out and so

once we're through the diagnostic and this public presentation of the

diagnostic and make making final revisions from

any final feedback that comes back through this

ough this effort right now we'll be getting into some

e more specific ideation and assessment of

ow exactly things should change now that we have an idea of what sort of really the

he shortcomings are. And we've heard from the community, but we've heard from some

stakeholders and staff. So we'll be really looking into sort of what we call

kind of calibration.

Have some standards and the ways that they're going to change moving forward

and we'll obviously be getting feedback on that. I always use 2

2 words to describe that process. It's collaborative and iterative

You know, the community, communities know.

Know the places that they live, the spaces that they frequent, so

intimately. They know it better than anybody

else. So it is really helpful in a genuine

way to receive feedback from a community, especially when we

get into the specific details of how the code

might change through this update and then we get into drafting the full code

e and some public hearing processes which will get us into spring of 20

24.

So I do want to remind you that there is a Q and A

button on your toolbar. There's sort of a little graphic that presents

that. So please feel free at any point in the

presentation if there is a question that you would like to ask if you

u wanna ask it while you're thinking of it, we'll be sort of consolidating all

the questions and we'll be answering them at the end we do

o also have someone from the city

that is on the call that's able to

answer questions in Spanish. So please also feel free to you

To ask Spanish language questions as well.

So getting into the zoning diagnostic report.

So what is a zoning diagnostic report as I kind of talked

d about, it is the first step in the zoning code update process. So diagnosis

is kind of a medical term. So to really understand how the code

could be updated or revised, you first have to diagnose what's wrong with it, so

it's that's sort of the first step like what are the shortcomings and what are

the things that really need to be improved upon

revised, updated so that that's sort of in a

nutshell why we call the diagnostic report and it also helps to orient the  
e project. It's just a good first step to.

The team collaborating

ating and familiarizing in the zoning code, is a

quite

complex document. They tend to be quite long, so really familiarizing with

the complexity of the document too so and going through it with a fine tooth

comb so we don't just go

into the into analyzing the

e diagnostic report without some guidance from the community we can't go in

and say this is what we think without understanding what the community even wants.

To begin with, so there is some guidance from things like the strategic plan

best practices and zoning. We as consultants, we work in a lot

of other communities, so we have exposure to a lot of

different types of zoning codes, a lot of different types of issues

that you see in zoning codes in different types of solutions. So we can apply

a little bit of that. However, it's important to note that every community

is different. All of the solutions that you come up with have to

be contextual to that community and that's where also your feedback

as the public is very important to make sure that

we're getting.

They were getting it right to make sure it that it's both reflective of the community, it respects the existing urban fabric that's already there. So those are some important things, so long range plans also can really help provide a lot of guidance and they're kind of a pulse check with long range plans tend to have large robust public engagement components to embed into them. So you they reflect goals from land use from the community.

So the report structure just to give an overview, you again you can go into the website and you can see the full draft of the report Introduction Guiding principles Vision, Strategic plan, objectives, General observations, analysis and recommendations.

So we'll be reviewing, reviewing most of these things tonight. It is a very dense report. If you go onto the website and you see it, it's you know 60-70 pages, so there's that's a lot of material to cover. So we'll try to do that simply tonight and in a way that doesn't put people to sleep ideally, but so we'll get into some of these individual



I sections. So as I was talking about, it's really important that when you're coming in and reviewing zoning code, you understand. Where the community starting from understand the community context you understand what their land use goals are, so the guiding principles or some sort of general sort of guideposts that help us in the review of what we should be looking for. Zoning should regulate only what needs to be regulated. It should respect with existing and desired development patterns. It should be an implementation of the master plan. Again reflective of the communities objectives ensure compliance with Maryland Code land Use article. That's very important. You want and all facets your zoning code to be legally defensible and in keeping with state enabling legislation and zoning, should also center equity and then so going over to the strategic plan objectives. So there's a recently completed strategic plan and in the City of Gaithersburg and so you know it is also sort of a large document and we have distilled some of the land use goals from that plan to kind of guide again guide guide provide our review of the report in a way that is. Reflective and in keeping with stated community

goals.

So now we're just going to get into some of the general observations

from the report I will denote

that when it comes to zoning and it comes to a topic that

can be quite dense, maybe a little

specific, esoteric it, it's important that we both

keep it high level. So we're not getting too into the weeds, but we don't

we don't want to skip over anything and not

get into the weeds enough and not give you enough detail. So this is where asking

your questions, if something comes to your mind is important. Again, I'll just remind you of the

Q&A.

So moving into some of the general observations, so organization

usability, we sort of we had a lot of observations

related to this. One thing is with zoning standards, a lot of them

are numeric, a lot of them can be sort of distilled into a table format. So you

you think about yourself looking for information

about your zoning district, about your property and you might be looking for

your front, side, rear setback, this is something you need to

know if you can find that information in a

table versus.

Looking through long passages of text, you can kind of understand why that's

easier and more accessible to find that information. So making sure that we're presenting that information in tables we're removing text where possible and just making it really clear for people and then further to that having visual aids and graphics. So you know, this can really assist with understanding like visualizing the standards and where they apply. So when referring to a standard, a zoning standard in the code, you can provide a graphic that shows someone.

Exactly. Sort of how it applies on the site on their property so

So that's another thing that you can do to make a code more usable. There are currently little if very few graphics

s within the zoning code, almost none at all. So that's something that we can implement as we go through the code

update. Also something for just organization, usability, this happens in other communities where we work where for whatever reason some zoning

g districts are developed, but they are never mapped, they're never applied anywhere. So it's a zoning district that just doesn't apply to anything. It's just.

Additional text in the document that is making

it sort of more laborious to read and navigate, so removing some

of those zoning districts can just make the code more readable readable

e, and usable overall.

So language and consistency, this was particular

There were a lot of instances of this in

the Gaithersburg code where language is used inconsistently

A term might be might

t be term or concept might be in several different sections, but it stated inconsistently

in each of those sections. And so it's that gets

that gets challenging for the user. It gets challenging for the person who's trying

to administer the code and so that's

something that's important to.

Revise when we're going through the code update.

And so it in addition to the language being a

bit inconsistent the way that information could be

presented in sections that are similar like when you're

looking at zoning districts and you're looking for the information for each zoning

district, that information is presented inconsistently. So if you're flipping

through the, flipping through and trying to understand what different regulations are

in different districts, you have to look in different places and just standardizing

that can just make it a more usable user, user, user

friendly code. So that's another thing to focus on for the update.

Some terms are dated. We see this in codes that

haven't been updated in some time. It'll sort of apply

to some commercial uses that just kind of don't exist anymore. Further to that, oftentimes you'll see modern land use land uses that just are absent because they sort of existed post adoption of the code maybe, you know, which could be 30 years old. So that's something to just be attuned to making sure that the types of uses and the types of ways that people are using land. Are reflected in the code and accounted for. And then so definitions there's there are many absent definitions or sometimes they're too broad, they're not giving enough specificity to interpret the code effectively. So and again other things to focus on for the update, so procedure procedural clarity. So with procedures when you've got applicants, you know. Putting forth applications for zoning approvals The procedures just need to be need to be explained in a way that's going to provide as much clarity as possible, so using terms that are vague or processes that

vague, we just want to remove those so that if you're  
ou're applying for something if  
f you you're going through site plan review that everything is clear to you  
understand what the benchmark is like, what's the what's  
nd how do I have to present this information.

What are the benchmarks so striking  
the right balance between discretionary approvals and  
certainty for zoning approvals? So there is a one thing that is notable  
about the Gaithersburg zoning code is there are a lot of floating zones  
and waivers and things like this which do do provide  
a good amount of flexibility.

Within the code and those can be inherently positive  
e things, but I'm just making sure you're striking the right  
balance between giving some discretion. But  
also providing certainty for the applicant so that they  
understand the standards that they need to meet for this particular  
application and then also one thing that we observed  
d and also.

Heard. Is that some small  
amendments to plans  
within the MX and the CD CD zone, particularly CAN

be very onerous. So small changes to a development

plan are just the process is

maybe more extensive and challenging than it needs to be in

time consuming.

Zoning equity, so making sure

sure that diverse housing types are represented

and distributed throughout the city in a way that is thoughtful

and context sensitive, but just making sure that we're thinking critically about the

types of housing and where they're appropriate to locate them

providing more housing to provide relief on

the housing supply. So thinking about this critically again saying

ing this, I think it doesn't always just mean like a blanket density

it's again thoughtful and context.

Sensitive while also trying to

provide a diversity of housing types and accessible housing for the

people of Gaithersburg So

o also just making sure that when we're looking at the zoning

g for communities that we're thinking about the types of uses

that the community members use and need and making sure that

we are permitting them, we are

A, permitting them because sometimes they're not even permitted and B, we're just being thoughtful

about the locations where they're where they are permitted and so that's

s twofold. That's making sure that they are.

And it's inaccessible location but also not putting them in

n an inappropriate location. So again, that's one area where you want to strike a balance, but we just want

to be cognizant of that you

u know, home occupations are another one where we just need to make sure that

we're allowing them equitably across the city

and so something else to be conscious of there so

So the next one pertaining to the groceries, urban agriculture

farm stands, community gardens, sometimes in zoning codes, these things

aren't even listed and so you know, in many zoning.

This will have a provision that says if he uses not listed is not permitted and so

but these things really can impact food deserts

in communities and just making sure that there is access to fresh food

and so that's another thing to be conscious of and

then also making sure we've got flexibility for smaller

er scale and nimble commercial uses that could apply to

small scale entrepreneurs, minority business owners, So just making sure that

the zoning code is not facilitating the type of environment

where you have to have a large.

Minimum lot size you need you



u need you got X amount

t of lot coverage that leads to maybe

e an inefficient use of land that kind of maybe favors a larger

a larger entity and so just making sure that

we're creating opportunities for in the in within commercial zoning for those

e types of things we have communities that just want to make

e sure that the type of venue where someone could have a stall

sort of low capital.

Commercial opportunities are available, so that is a

kind of broad thing. Some places are exploring pop-up shops

and making sure that there's facility for that. So this is

kind of broad and it's kind of new and there's a lot of people who work in the

economic development space that are studying these types of things, but just

making sure we're not creating barriers for the smallest

business owners.

So we're getting into here the

more.

Section Based Analysis that Occurred Section

by section of the code. So some of the recommendations in here

again, we're trying to strike that balance between giving you

granularity and explaining the granularity of the analysis will not getting too into

the weeds because it's very easy to do with zoning. It's all it's  
very detail oriented document once you once you get into it so  
you can again you know you can go on to  
o the website and you can read the full report we've just sort of provided  
d what that looks like the button you can click on it's under the project updates portion  
of the website.

So these are getting into initial  
zone Co recommendations.

So these are just a couple quick ones on  
diversity of accessible housing, some things we observed

So I'm just making sure we're thinking critically  
about specific provisions that might be adding time

or cost to projects that are  
providing housing, making sure that they are achieving the

desired goals. So it might be a specific site  
standards it might be.

Specific design standards that are applied to a specific housing type  
and just making sure we're looking at those critically and they're not adding

additional time and cost in

a context of needing to provide potentially  
additional housing or additional diversity of

housing types, which is things that are also reflected

of note reflected in the strategic plan.

Evaluating accessory dwelling units

There's a fairly link. There's a fairly in-depth housing study

that is currently being undertaken, and so it discusses this

issue in greater detail. This was just sort of identifying that there

isn't sort of a consistent

t strategy around AU. They're urban cottages and permitted in some districts, but

we just having a thoughtful approach where in a context sensitive

approach where they can be permitted inappropriate

locations in an appropriate way that sort of.

Still create leaves a

a cohesive built environment.

Supporting infill and adaptive reuse, we did see

some specific.

And provisions that were maybe creating some

barriers to shared parking, so shared parking, especially in relation to some

of the economic development goals from the plan, shared parking arrangements

can be important for you know.

Making the best use of your land resources

It's better for the aesthetics of the built environment. It's better for

the environment itself. So just making sure that we are permitting that and especially as it pertains to infill development to that is an option and it doesn't have any small provisions that are creating barriers around that.

So there was a little bit of an assessment where the existing code might be creating some nonconformities that could be relieved within the new code. So instances where the code wasn't relational to what's on the ground and so that building was made nonconforming, which is just going to kind of make some redevelopment challenging. So just making sure we're getting out ahead of that.

So consider codifying changes where there are waivers or variances are typically received. I do think the waivers provide some good flexibility within the code, but just making sure if it's a waiver that is sort of coming up constantly and constantly approved that maybe that is something you can codify so it just becomes a permitted thing whatever that might be so.

And then getting into more specificity around permitted uses. So this is a bit general again we we kind of mentioned this earlier in the presentation that

sometimes there isn't a ton of clarity.

Around which uses are permitted? Which district it might refer back to

another district, which means that you can't just see you

u know, you look up your property, see if something is permitted on your

property, and it says, OK, well, you can go look at this district to see because it

you know.

It'll tell you if it's in, so just

reducing that, flipping back and forth and just making what's permitted in a given zoning district

very clear for the user. So this is something that kind of pop up

on a few different zoning districts.

So it when advancing equitable outcomes, so this is

a very common thing around the United States

for housing occupancy to be and how that is

sort of regulated or enforced to being predicated upon

a definition of family which might specify number

of blood relatives within a household it can you know there

are different ways that communities might define it however what

at we are finding is defining family is very problematic

There's lots of different types of.

Family relationships. There's lots of different types of householding units

I think probably across the United States is housing costs increase if they

y continue to increase, we'll see diversity of different types of householding units across communities and so defining families problematic and we are advising that be rethought and revised within the update removing instances of excessive lot lot sizes. So just looking at we had a question earlier about.

We you people appreciate green space. They appreciate e their yards and we definitely understand that. We definitely relate to that. Just assessing where you t sizes can be reduced just to allow some more housing to go in while not while not creating a stark urban environment, so just making sure it's context sensitive but t looking at minimum lot sizes critically.

So we talked about this a little bit with the categories and definitions for small, small scale, small scale commercial uses that support entrepreneurs. So there are a list of uses that we can add to the use table in various commercial districts and mixed use districts that will just facilitate that. So those are some pretty specific changes and then also in some of

the more subjective review processes there

are some terms about you know the objective through

gh this review process.

To is to assess X or Y one of the

e terms is you know as an example as caliber of user which

h would be potentially a term subjected to

whoever is reviewing. But that doesn't and we can see the ways probably

that there is some room for the way some.

That could be used in maybe a discriminatory way and it just needs some more specificity

around it.

Increase the certainty of regulatory process. So again

we do recognize that this is a balance there are

e a lot of flexible zoning districts within Gaithersburg and that there's a

lot of positivity in that, but there are some areas where there's

a sort of burden of proof for what the person is trying to accomplish within the

within the floating districts that you know can

maybe create some uncertainty and then also you

you know, just so just making sure that there's enough certainty around those processes

but the flexibility is positive. We don't want that to go away.

We just want to walk that line while where

we're we are explaining properly

what people need to do for certain approval processes that are more subjective.

So.

Again, just looking at some terms like internally

and externally compatible, just making sure we've got more clarity and the intent of that statement and then also revised simplifying

straight line site plan review processes especially in the e MXD and CD zones.

So organization and usability

so we.

We kind of talked about this earlier. There are some zones that aren't applied.

So we can remove those and decrease the length of the

code with the flipping around that someone might have to do, There's also room to consolidate zones that are substantially similar

That doesn't always look the same. It's not always throwing them together, you

know, Sometimes you might take an area with a bit of

a different development pattern and sort of you might

create create a specific development pattern district

or you could consolidate them and so that when we get into the next phase we'll be looking at things like that critically and.

Consolidate special use standards. Right now, they're kind



of scattered throughout the document. The special use standards and  
I believe there's some of them, are in the definition  
section. So special use standards, if you gotta use that, you just kind of want to make sure that  
there's additional buffering or you want to, you know, there's a special use standard  
applied to it, you know, hours of operation  
or something you'll see sometimes in codes but you  
u know, just if you want a special use standard, make, you know, consolidated  
section can be an effective way for people can just go go  
and defer to it.

There.

Language and consistency we did

e did talk about this earlier and so when we were looking at the section  
by section assessment, we did. We didn't list them all here  
but just where there's a lot of especially terms that relate to the  
use of property that are not used consistently. So that just needs to be  
dealt with.

Ensure that some

uses are listed to make sure that

they're listed. Things like stand alone a good example

e is parking lots and garages. That's a

use that, although very needed in some instances, you just want

to be conscious of making sure you do list them to assess whether they are permitted or not permitted if you know if you get too many surface parking lots in a given area, it can sort of degrade the urban environment so you just being really conscious about things like that.

So procedural clarity again we we've kind of hit on this a few times and that is because there are these very flexible zones within the city and so it does sort of they're inherently a little less concrete than if you had a zoning district that just had straight zoning standards without the sort of review process built in that does provide more flexibility, but just consolidating some processes with the general with some general procedures and those.

Actions and just sort of assessing the ways that we can streamline that language ensure that all approvals are based on a clear pass fail standards, this is easier said than done, but to the greatest degree possible. Just try to ensure that they're well defined citations and understanding of application procedures.

So what's next for this project after the diagnostic module? So we just reviewed at A

pretty high level some of the recommendations if you go  
o into the report, you'll see it gets a bit granular. It gets much  
more granular, but we next move  
into the calibrations, we've kind of assessed what's wrong and  
now and what's not working. If you go into the report, there's actually it it's  
s a lot of things that are working and are positive. So it's not all  
negative, but we when we get into the next phase we  
we will be.

Really assessing how things should change in a  
much more specific way. So as I said earlier it  
t is very important to hear from you  
again. The community members know the community better than anybody  
y else, so your input is very valuable  
So please keep it pace of the project and as we get into  
the calibration phase  
and so we'll just be looking at  
the specific changes that might occur in  
the update and just want a much more.

Granular way. Again I like to say that is a collaborative and it is a  
n iterative process. So sometimes it's  
s you know it, it's proposing solutions to

problems and sometimes they, you know there might be positive feedback there  
e might be negative feedback and it's really important that  
community weighs in on that, so please do  
d so just to remind you that you can go to the  
he project website.

It's got project updates. It lets you know how you can be involved. It's  
got some educational materials and a few different ways  
It shows you where there are resources related to the city of Gaithersburg. So it is  
really a good resource to stay abreast of what's going on in  
the project.

Again, this diagnostic report and this presentation  
will be available on the project page as well you can  
n also follow on social media if that's your preferred way to  
sort of receive communication. So there is an sort of  
showing the different forms of social media there  
and so I will open it up to questions  
s now and so I will pass it off to my colleague Christopher.

Thank you, Jocelyn. We have a question from the audience  
Which other communities are we being compared with?  
I don't. I would say that you're not being compared to any  
communities because like this diagnostic report.

We wouldn't have been able to anticipate what it was

going to say before going in, so

it it's not you

shared parking let's say that's just something that came up and the assessment so

o shared parking we may have worked in other communities where they did as they had

some really specific solution

n for facilitating shared parking and there's a lot of different ways that you can do that

t. It's not necessarily that you're being compared to any other community, it's

just that and you've got

your project team that is seeing a lot of.

Issues that have come up in Gaithersburg, your city project team, they're

very familiar with zoning, the built environment in

this community and then you got us, which we are learning, this community

we but we it's not necessarily you're

being compared it's more that we may have seen a solution in another community that

hat we could propose that we could say maybe this will

I work, but I would say comparison is not the right term to use.

A follow-up question. There's a lot of detail in the

diagnostic report and you you've mentioned the project website how to sign up for

or updated information. Send questions, learn about the project. How

can a homeowner get the most out of this report And the

the same question for a business owner, what should they be looking for in this?

So.

I would say that.

That is a two part answer one

is to understand the

things that are being noted

that will guide the update and the way that the

direction of that the updates are going and so

to understand that and I think the second part is

that it should, you should review it at this point in

time to assess whether if you have interfaced with the zoning code in

a specific way and you've had a specific experiences

with it.

That your denoting those and if you don't

see it present this challenge that you had some input

that you've learned or up

through your use of the code, just make sure that it's present within the

report and provide feedback if it's not. I also think as a as

first point that it could be this report

could be an opportunity to just educate yourself a little

bit if you're not someone that looks at the zoning code all the time and you're just sort of new to

to this topic, go into the map find your.

Property. Find your zoning district. Maybe go

in and just look a little bit at your zoning district and

what isn't entailed there and there

e may or may not be specific recommendations in the report

about that zoning district. Not every zoning district will change

There's a lot of built out areas in the city and they may not change you

ey likely won't change substantially, but just going

in and understanding how to navigate the information

that's in the code so that when we get to subsequent.

Parts of this process you're just a little more familiar than you

were before with how to navigate some of the specifics of zoning.

Can you summarize the broad goals of

the project Retool Gaithersburg?

So I I'm gonna, I'm gonna put that into

A2 parter. I think that there's a lot of

the sort of the code as a

document people use it. There's a staff at the city that

has to administer it and so that document and

nd the way that document is structured, the language it uses can

n kind of dictate how easy to use it

that it is. And so with Gaithersburg

g, there's already a lot of things that we can do to

just make it a code that's easier to use.

So that's one of the goals is just

t to make it a document that the community feels comfortable

with and that the information is easy to find

The document is easy to navigate. The second part is

communities. Communities have planning departments

Communities have land use goals and.

May. And then there's also public engagement, which should always

be an ongoing effort in every any project like this and I think

that the secondary goal is to strike a balance where the

e zoning code is respecting the existing development patterns

respecting the existing urban fabric, but

t also evolving to encapsulate the goals of the community

and what the community wants to see in the built

environment. So the zoning regulations

can especially have an impact.

That over time and so that second part is just making

g sure that the built environment, the zoning code

is producing the results that the community wants to see.



OK.

Other questions, how will the recommended changes to procedural requirements affect transparency and community engagement in zoning processes?

So the engagement

won't isn't going. That is not a part that we are going

to be affecting

those. The public engagement requirements are

often quite legal maybe mandated in the

broader municipal code and so the

there will still be high degree of

engagement public meeting presentation so the community can weigh in where

e the processing of that report

will entail.

Community input at several points like those things

won't be changing substantially. And Rob or

r Greg, if you want to jump in on this on this one, just

sed on sort of existing notifications and public

lic meetings, they did already take place, sure, as Jocelyn mentioned

things are required by law, but just being

being a good government organization, we're not out to

suppress public engagement and we fully support

transparency or looking at ways really.

This procedural thing as was mentioned

by Jocelyn earlier, part of the presentation is really trying to look

at ways.

To speed up process to help

people get to what they're trying to achieve through zoning through

plan approvals. Oftentimes, you know, excessive process can

be a disincentive to investment either in fixing up

your home or opening a business. So really what we're

trying to do is figure out ways to reduce

application costs and application time

process, but not at the expense of engagement

or transparency. We're always, you know, want to make sure

hear from our.

Public are our workers. Our residents are our visitors as

we move forward with things so hopefully that clears up sort of the

direction and goal that we're looking at when we talk about

you know, streamlining process.

That ties dovetails really nicely into the

next question. How do these recommendations

contribute to increased equity in Gaithersburg and CAN

Can you provide any specific example?

So I think that.

Coming out of this process, which was the diagnostic

we're at a place right now where we've assessed the ways

that the zoning code is sort of holding back

equity or is restraining and the way the

way that it could be changed to sort of facilitate it better just

through removing these provisions that are maybe

are maybe inhibiting more equitable development process more

equitable development outcomes. So I think

now I think right now a lot can be done.

Q.

Just sort of remove those barriers and then also there's I

spoke before about a sort

of tangential that the housing element

that is going on right now too, which is looking at the more potential proactive

solutions to that, so zoning code really

work for the within the scope of this project will be a big part of that will be

removing barriers that we're already starting to see within the code.

And the last question that I have so

far are what questions should constituents

be asking? Is there anything you've seen in other communities? Where at this point?

Community members, business owners have been asking that you haven't heard yet.

A That's a great

a great, that's a great question, I will say that.

This part in the process.

It's a lot of again, it's diagnosed, so we're

not necessarily putting a lot of specific like

highly specific updates forward because they do

require some.

Granular study of the built environment and the community

goals and things like that, so I wouldn't say

that now there has been there's been an absence of

of anything but I think in the next portion

of the project when we're putting forth more specific solutions

s, again the community is the most they are

the most familiar people there with the structure of the

community and how the community works and flows and so I think

in that portion when these solutions are coming forward a little bit.

It'll be important to have

feedback in those end to end, to have good questions

from the community then and that and I think.

That it always ends up being quite

specific to your property and your experience and the places

that you shop or the places that you work so

o I think thinking really critically about.

The zoning districts where you frequent and what

is being proposed for those zoning districts and sort of

working through those and providing feedback

to the project managers?

OK. I think that's all the questions that

we have for now. I'd ask Rob or Greg if there's

any other notes that you'd want to share

or anything else for the folks listening in I

Yeah, I know we're coming up on the end of about

15 minutes left. So if anybody in the audience has any other

questions, please enter them

now so we can get to them. Just some quick follow up stuff you

Jocelyn mentioned as they get through

h this diagnostic patient over the course of the summer.

We want to have stakeholder meetings and focus groups and things like that, so if you're out there and you're interested, please register again through the project page. Also, I posted up in the Q&A section on the link to the unique email address so after tonight's meeting, please feel free to email or issue comments to retool at [gaithersburgmd.gov](http://gaithersburgmd.gov).

Especially if you have an issue or if you think there's a topic you would be particularly interested in serving in a focus group about if we if that topic comes up for one.

Again, we really appreciate everybody giving the time. We encourage you to stay involved, to get your neighbors involved, to get your coworkers involved to get your bosses involved, any connection you have to the City of Gaithersburg. Zoning touches everyone's lives here either directly, visibly, or indirectly that you may not expect

So the more voices we hear from, the better the final product will be as Jocelyn was mentioning, we need.

Everybody's input us as planners and city staff. We have our own perspectives

we have our own knowledge, but as was mentioned, many of you know are here 24 hours a day. You've been here for years. You've seen changes to the city. So we sort of really need to hear from you so  
o again, get involved with the project page, sign up for updates you know, submit questions and answers sort of  
f track when we have additional public forums, you know try to get  
t the word out, tell your neighbors those who couldn't attend tonight to who.

Watch this video. It looks like it's only going to be about 50 minutes you  
ke 15 minutes out of your day to sort of listen to what was being discussed. I'm rambling on a bit, I  
wanna turn it over to see if you Jocelyn has any parting  
rting words or Greg has any thoughts.

So.

Yeah, I think we've really hammered on this one that people should continue to stay updated and stay  
involved. And again, there's  
an email address where you can ask questions to  
Zoning is dense and it's can be a challenging topic so that  
is also an option for you to so yeah, I  
that I think that is it for me I

I know we're finishing a little ahead of schedule

Did any Christopher, did any additional questions come in and then these  
the final moments.

No, but I did recall there

was one question from the earlier session I think

is good to raise and this actually goes to

Rob and Greg, someone from the earlier session

had asked if staff had identified any

elements that come up again and again which

could be addressed so that the zoning processes could be

smoother. And I don't know, Rob, if that's something that can be addressed

in this setting or not.

I think at a very high level

yes, we've known about some of the issues, one of the big ones and

did not to make sausage because it's going to be further explored

but it's in the amending of existing schematic development

plans or sketch plans. There's two options and one

of the options is meant to sort of expedite the process, but it can

actually add one to two more months of process on

to it. So it's things looking at that, it's ways that we

can simplify and make it easier



for the developer.

The homeowner or the business owner to change or amend plans

Greg can probably speak to some of the Euclidean zones. Sometimes there's

not necessarily a super clarity what

t is the difference between concept and preliminary

and final and the submission requirements and some of the

stuff required at different stages maybe doesn't make sense. So Greg, if you got

a quick minute if you have something to speak to.

Yeah, I mean, we definitely have acknowledged certain things, like in our definitions

what is a structure? What's not? So we definitely

acknowledge that it's something further explore to Rob's

s point about procedural process

We've definitely also looked at things where you know right now

the way the code is written, all commercial

additions have to go to the Planning Commission for their approval

but residential additions up to a certain square footage can be handled at administrative

or staff level.

So again, it puts a little more process and a little

more time on commercial properties or trying to go through

probably most times it could be very minor amendments

So yeah, there's definitely a lot of different aspects of the code

that you know, the planning staff has already acknowledged need to be further looked at and probably cleaned up with this process.

Christopher, from your recollection is because we have about, you know 10 minutes left where there any other questions that jump out at you from this afternoon session that may be beneficial to ask this evening.

Yeah, but at least one more an audience member had asked Are there provisions for zoning text amendments in the future? Once the code has been updated, that would keep the new code clean and consistent.

You're so as we talked about during the afternoon session the last time our zoning ordinance was comprehensively looked at was 1960 so almost 60 years ago and ever since then

has been morphed and bandaged and put together and held together with duct tape of zoning text amendments. The world will

always change. The real effort of retool Gaithersburg is to give us this proactive approach to zoning that's really trying to look forward.

And not have to warrant as many text amendments

The world will constantly change overtime and text amendments are necessary aspect of that because as great as Zone Co is and as smart as our staff is, we can't foresee everything. So there's going to be something that warrants it, but we want to build a strong enough foundation that you know this zoning ordinance will be useful for decades to come that we're not redoing this exercise every 10 years. But that again it's not to say there won't be text amendments that aren't warranted.

Over the next 10 years or next 20 years, we're just hoping to minimize them.

Justin, was there anything you wanted to add to that?

No, I think

Rob, OK. Rob framed that nicely and there was, I think

one more great question that relates to that

directly and audience member had asked will there be clarity created

for some definitions through semantics and the example

that they highlighted was the definition of green area, so

what really counts as green area and what does not?

As Jocelyn mentioned multiple times in her presentation, much

at the prodding of city staff definitions are

a huge issue with our zoning

oning ordinance. Clarity is of the

st importance to us. We want to remove this confusion. We

e want to establish clear standards as it

relates to definitions. You know not only what the that

we're using language that's not confusing, such as green

area, which really means open space, which is

completely different.

Then green necessarily because it can be hard escaped, so we want to

o make sure we're clear in our definitions. We want to be clear on how

those definitions are to be applied in the zones and if

f there are standards, we want to be clear in what those

standards are. So there's not this thing of where you look at an

area and go, is it X or is it? Why? I really can't tell

from the definition. We want to make sure

So this was, you know, one of the main impetuses for beginning retool

if nothing else was just to clean up definitions.

And the like, but this is building

upon obviously. Jocelyn, if you have additional thoughts, chime in.

Yeah, I know, I agreed. We

looked at some of the definitions and coming in and where they're absent or

just sort of odd or contain

use standards that are should be in a special

use standards section. Those are just some of the things. There's just kind of an array

of issues that need to be addressed. So we'll

definitely, that's high on the list of things

we've already started working through understanding exact exactly

where there's duplication.

Absence of definitions or definitions

that just.

Will need to be revised, so that is something that

we've already tried to sort of get our arms around understanding so

o in that which was part of the part of the diagnostic review.

Christopher, we have time for maybe one more if you

u have handy another question that came from this

afternoon session. Otherwise we will begin once again

in thanking everyone and signing off a few minutes early.

No, I think that covers all of the

the questions that we had. Great. Yeah.

Well again folks, thank you for taking an hour out of

f your evening. Again, I cannot encourage you enough. Please stay involved

Please help spread the word and get other people involved in

this project. It is still will be going on for months ahead. You know, no decisions have been made, no final actions have occurred yet. We've really just gotten over the first big hump and again we we want to hear from you, Jocelyn Christopher, Greg Parting g, thoughts, comments.

Just echoing what you said. Again, we appreciate everyone taking time out of their busy schedules to meet with us today and we look forward to continuing to work with the community as we move through this project.

Yeah. Thank you for attending everybody.

Alrighty, if that's it. Thanks again everyone. And as I mentioned, transcripts, recordings, etcetera should be posted up on the project page next week

Take care and have a great evening.

Great. Thank you, everybody.