

Montgomery Planning Public Benefits in Development Review

Montgomery Planning

9/10/2026



Agenda

1. History of Public Benefits in MoCo
2. Update Process
3. Incentive Zoning Update

History of Public Benefits in MoCo

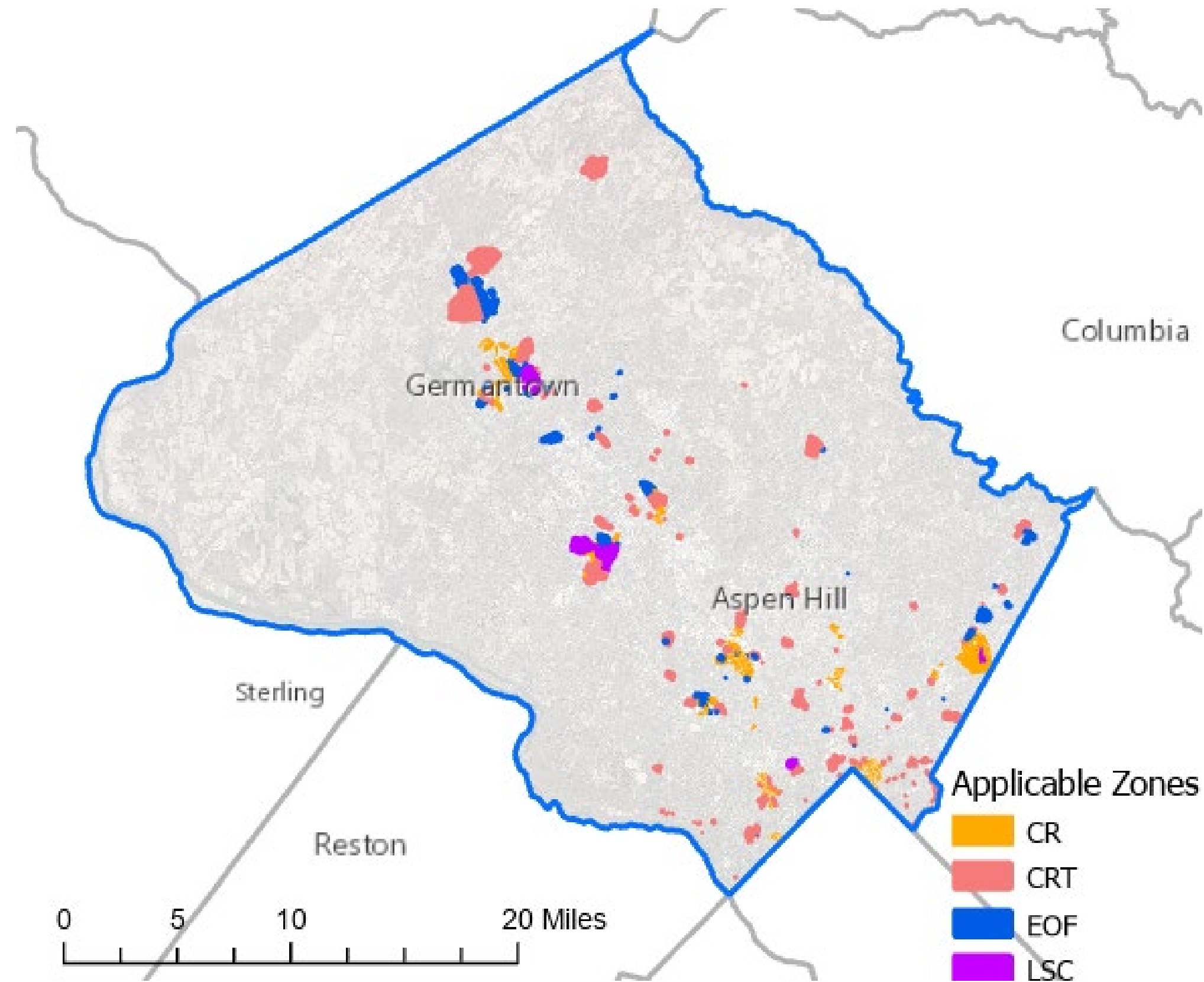
History of Public Benefit System

- 2010: CR zones and Public Benefit points-based system created for White Flint Sector Plan
- 2014: Countywide Zoning Update created CR zones and Public Benefit points-based system
- 2023-2025: Analyze and propose updated to the Public Benefit System
- 2026: Updated Public Benefit system in effect



History of Public Benefit System

- Applies to four zones: CR, CRT, EOF, & LSC
- Approximately 3% of the county's land area
- Example zoning:
 - **CR-3 C-2.0 R-3.0 H 100'**
 - **LSC-2.0 H-150'**

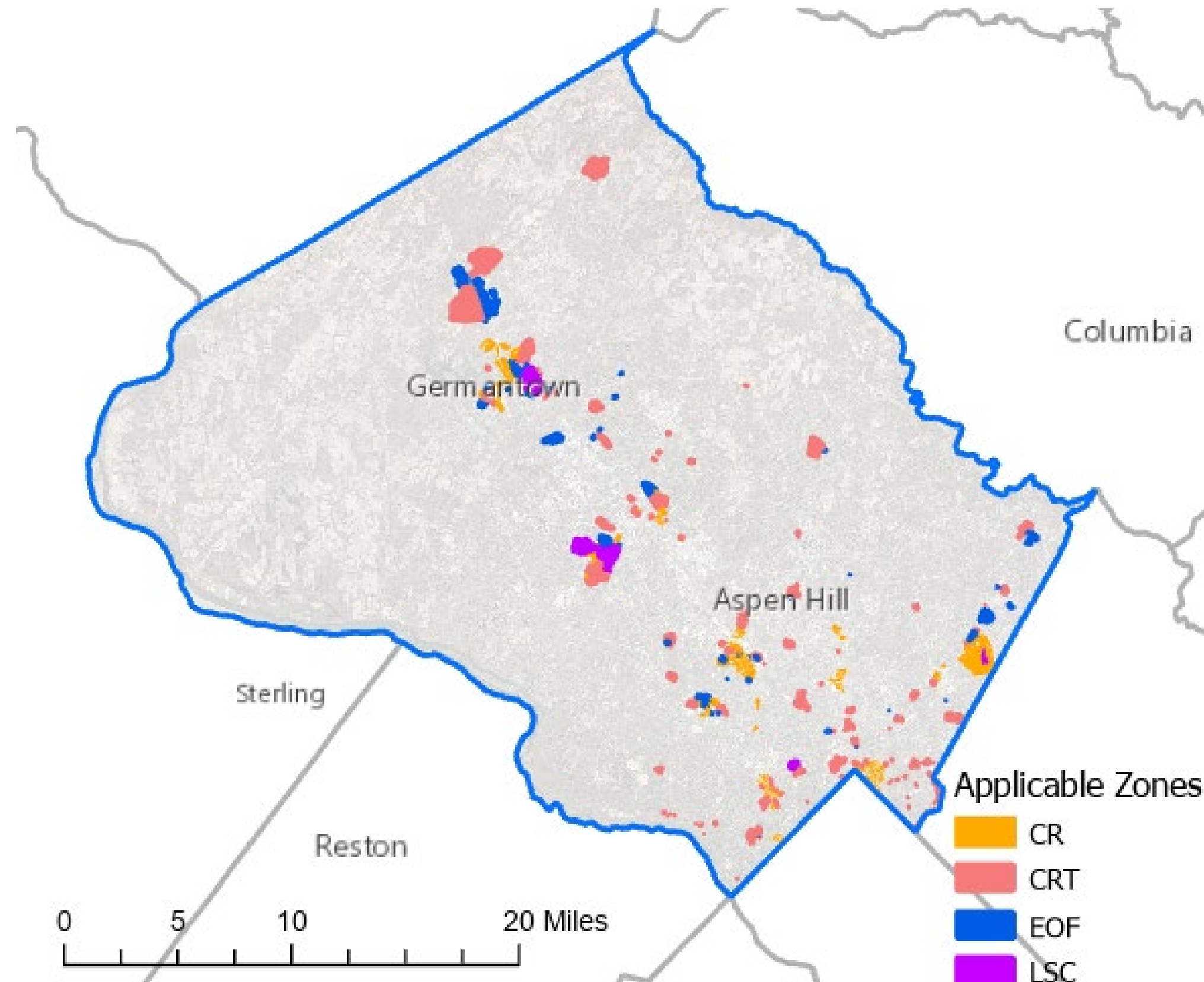


History of Public Benefit System

- **Development** can occur in two ways:
 - Standard Method: **> 0.5 or 1 FAR** can occur by right
 - Optional Method: **Greater than FAR threshold** requires planning review and public benefits

SKETCH PLAN: Maximum height density, massing, outline of public benefits

SITE PLAN: Site development details, landscaping, parking, APF, calculation of public benefits



Public Benefits Overview – Points Based System



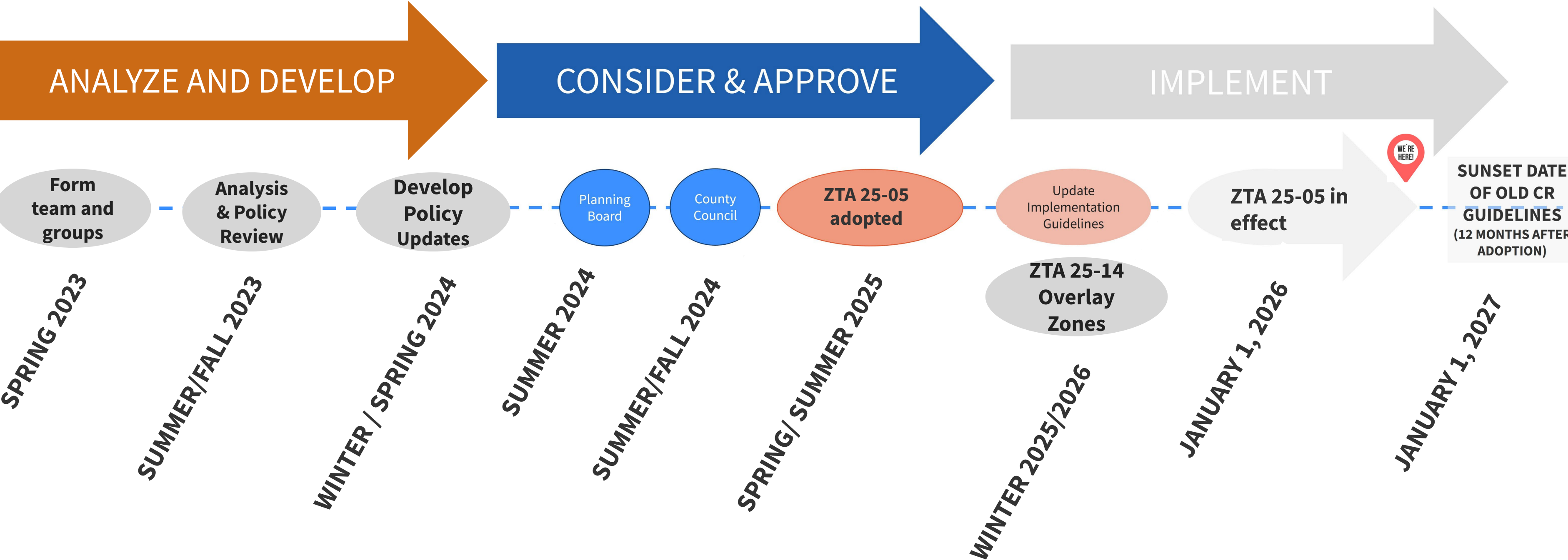
Zone	Tract Size or Max Total FAR	Public Benefit Points (minimum)	Number of Benefit Categories
CRT	< 10,000 SF OR <1.5 max FAR	25	2
	≥10,000 SF OR ≥1.5 max FAR	50	3
CR	< 10,000 SF OR <1.5 max FAR	50	3
	≥10,000 SF OR ≥1.5 max FAR	100	4
LSC	< 10,000 SF OR <1.5 max FAR	15	1
	≥10,000 SF OR ≥1.5 max FAR	30	2
EOF	< 10,000 SF OR <1.5 max FAR	30	2
	≥10,000 SF OR ≥1.5 max FAR	60	3

Category 1:	Major Public Facility	Maximum Points	Category 5:	Quality Building and Site Design	Maximum Points
Subcategories:	None. Planning Board approves or denies the choice of public facility included in a project	70	Subcategories:	Architectural Elevations	20
				Exceptional Design	10
				Historic Resource Protection	20
				Public Art	20
				Public Open Space	15
				Structured Parking	20
				Tower Step-Back	10
Category 2:	Transit Proximity				
Subcategories:	None. Points awarded based on distance and type of transit.	50			
Category 3:	Connectivity and Mobility		Category 6:	Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment	
Subcategories:	Advance Dedication	30	Subcategories:	Building Lot Terminations	30
	Minimum Parking	10		Cool Roof	10
	Neighborhood Services	15		Energy Conservation and Generation	15
	Public Parking	25		Habitat Preservation and Restoration	20
	Through-Block Connection	20		Recycling Facility Plan	10
	Transit Access Improvement	20		Transferable Development Rights	20
	Streetscape Improvement	20		Tree Canopy	15
	Trip Mitigation	20		Vegetated Area	10
	Way Finding	10		Vegetated Roof	15
				Vegetated Wall	10
Category 4:	Diversity of Uses		Category 7:	Retained Buildings	
Subcategories:	Adaptive Buildings	15	Subcategories:	None	100
	Care Centers	20			
	Dwelling unit Mix	10			
	Enhanced Accessibility	20			
	Live/Work	15			
	MPDU (b)	n.a.			

The update process

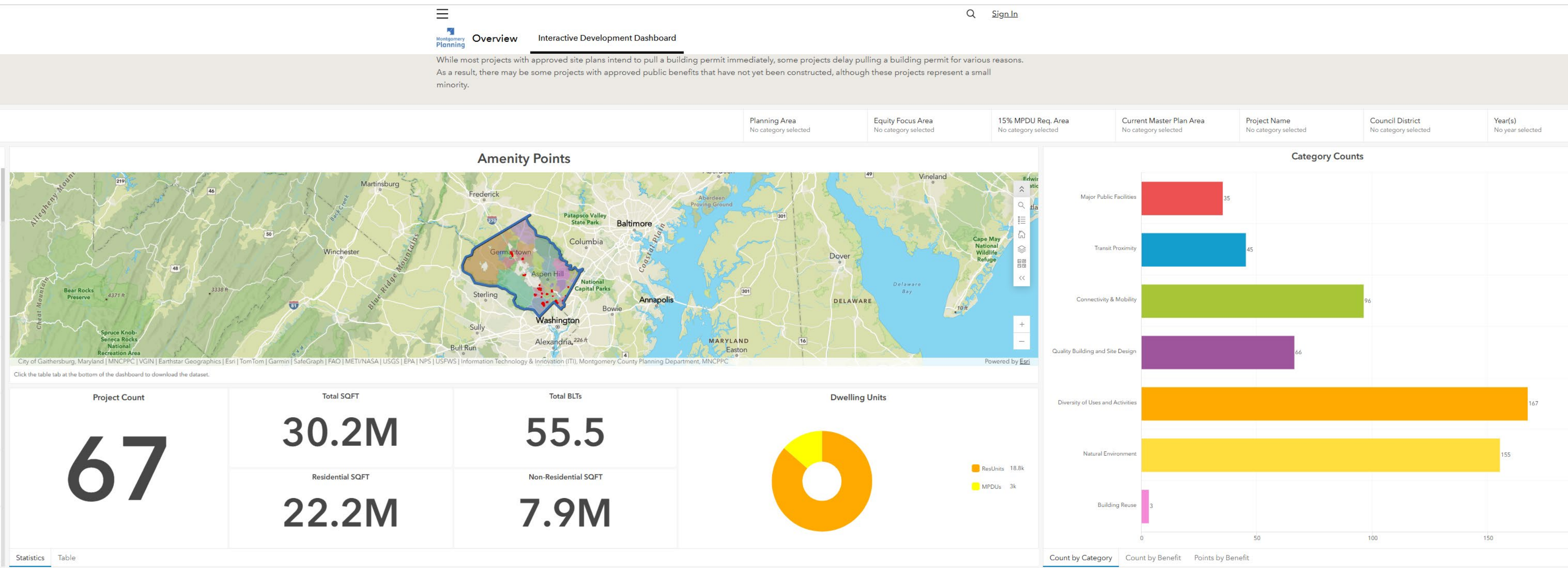
The update process

Timeline



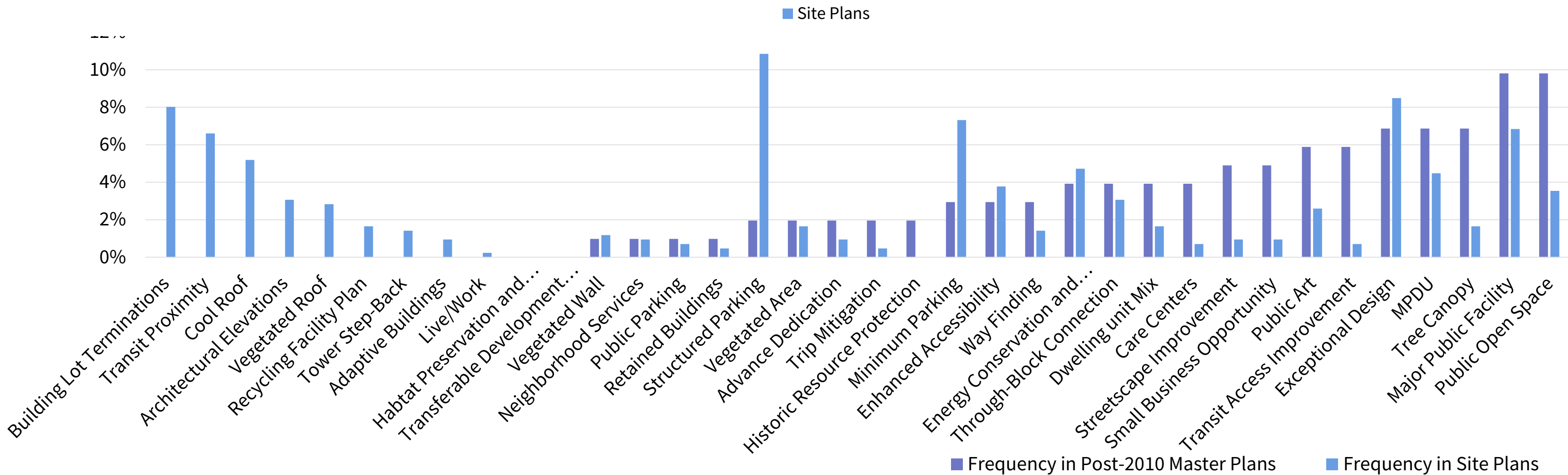
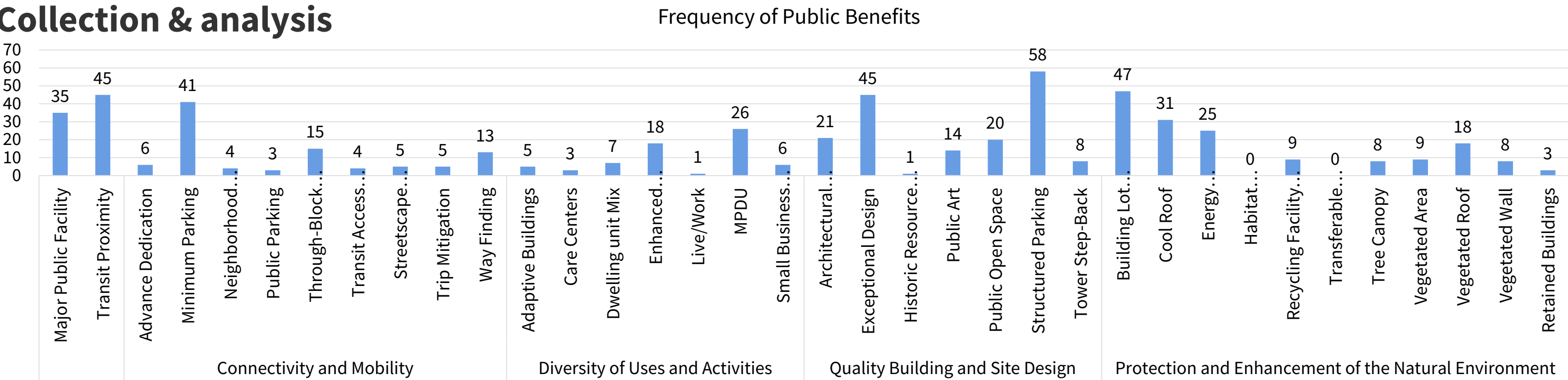
The update process

Data Collection & analysis



The update process

Data Collection & analysis

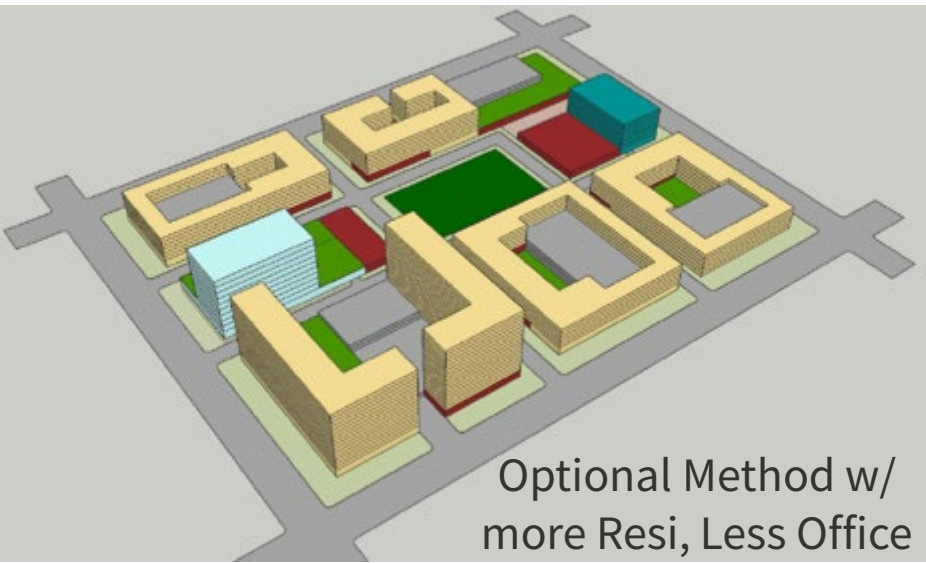
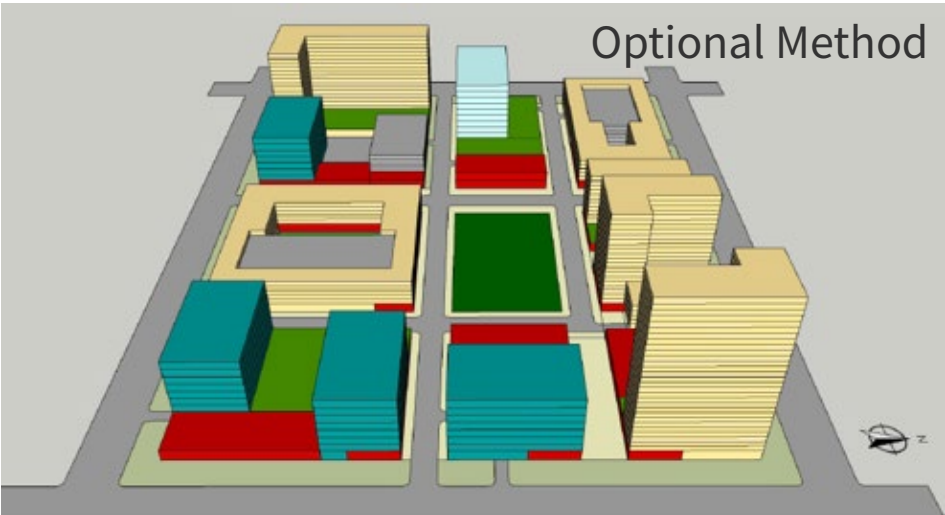
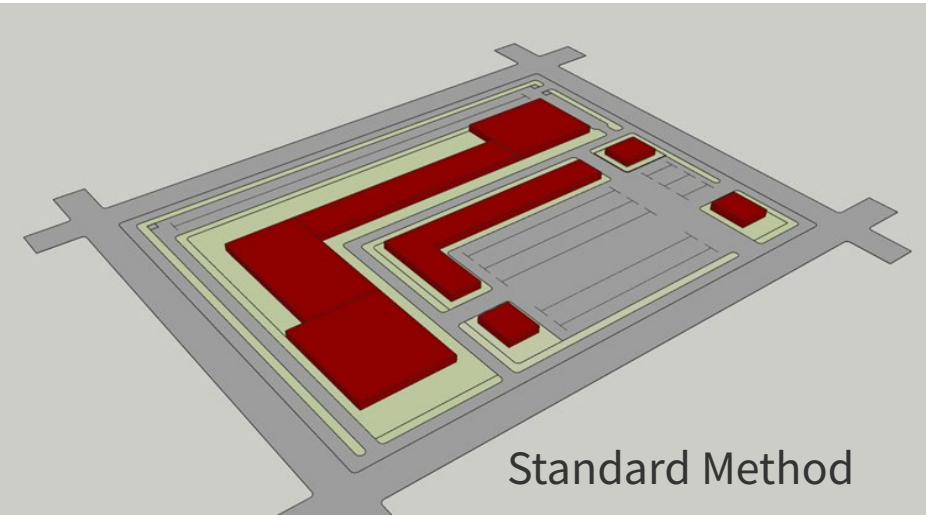


The update process

Cost Analysis

Public Benefit	Public Benefits	Unit	Cost Estimate	
			Min.	Max.
Major Public Facilities	Developed Park	per square foot	\$25	\$200
	Bike Share	mid-size station	\$55,000	\$55,000
Connectivity and Mobility	Advance Dedication	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
	Minimum Parking	per space	\$2,800	\$55,000
	Neighborhood Services	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
	Public parking	per space	\$2,800	\$70,000
	Through-Block Connections	per square foot	\$40	\$85
	Transit Access Improvements	per square foot	\$40	\$85
	Streetscape Improvements			
	Streetscape	per square foot	\$60	\$85
	Underground Utilities	per linear foot	\$1,200	\$1,800
	Trip Mitigation	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Diversity of Uses and Activities	Way Finding	Total	\$10,000	\$40,000
	Adaptive Buildings	% increase in hard construction costs	2%	5%
	Care Centers	per square foot	\$141	\$158
	Dwelling Unit Mix	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
	Enhanced Accessibility for Seniors or the Disabled	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
	Live/Work	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
	Moderately Priced Dwelling Units	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Quality Building and Site Design	Small Business Opportunities	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
	Architectural Elevations	per square foot	\$20	\$73
	Exceptional Design	per square foot	\$20	\$73
	Historic Resource Protection	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
	Public Open Space	per square foot	\$25	\$200
	Public Art	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
	Structured Parking	per space	\$35,000	\$55,000
Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment	Tower Step-Back	per square foot	\$20	\$73
	Building Lot Termination (BLT)	per BLT	\$250,000	\$250,000
	Cool Roof	per square foot	\$5	\$10
	Energy Conservation and Generation			
	Energy Conservation	% increase in hard construction costs	2%	10%
	Energy Generation	per watt	\$3.50	\$5.25
	Habitat Preservation and Restoration	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
	Recycling Facility Plan	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
	Transferable Development Right (TDR)	per TDR	\$20,000	\$20,000
	Tree Canopy	per tree	\$800	\$800
	Vegetated Area	per square foot	\$10	\$20
	Vegetated Roof	per square foot	\$35	\$45
	Vegetated Wall	per square foot	\$80	\$150

Example Prototypes:



Benchmarking Case Studies: Highlights

Austin, TX

- Downtown Density Bonus Program
- Promotes a vibrant dense downtown
- Provides height and density bonus
- Includes gatekeeper requirements

Detroit, MI

- Community Benefits Ordinance
- Project specific benefits and bonuses
- Minimum project size requirements
- Includes significant community input

Seattle, WA

- Incentive Zoning Program
- A short menu of five amenities
- Includes off-site payment options
- Includes gatekeeper requirements

Arlington County, VA

- Green Building Incentive Policy
- Requires min. LEED Gold standard
- Offers bonus FAR bonuses tied to thresholds of energy performance

Fairfax County, VA

- Utilizes the proffer system
- Project based negotiations
- Offers regulatory and financial incentives to entice development in specific areas

Washington, DC

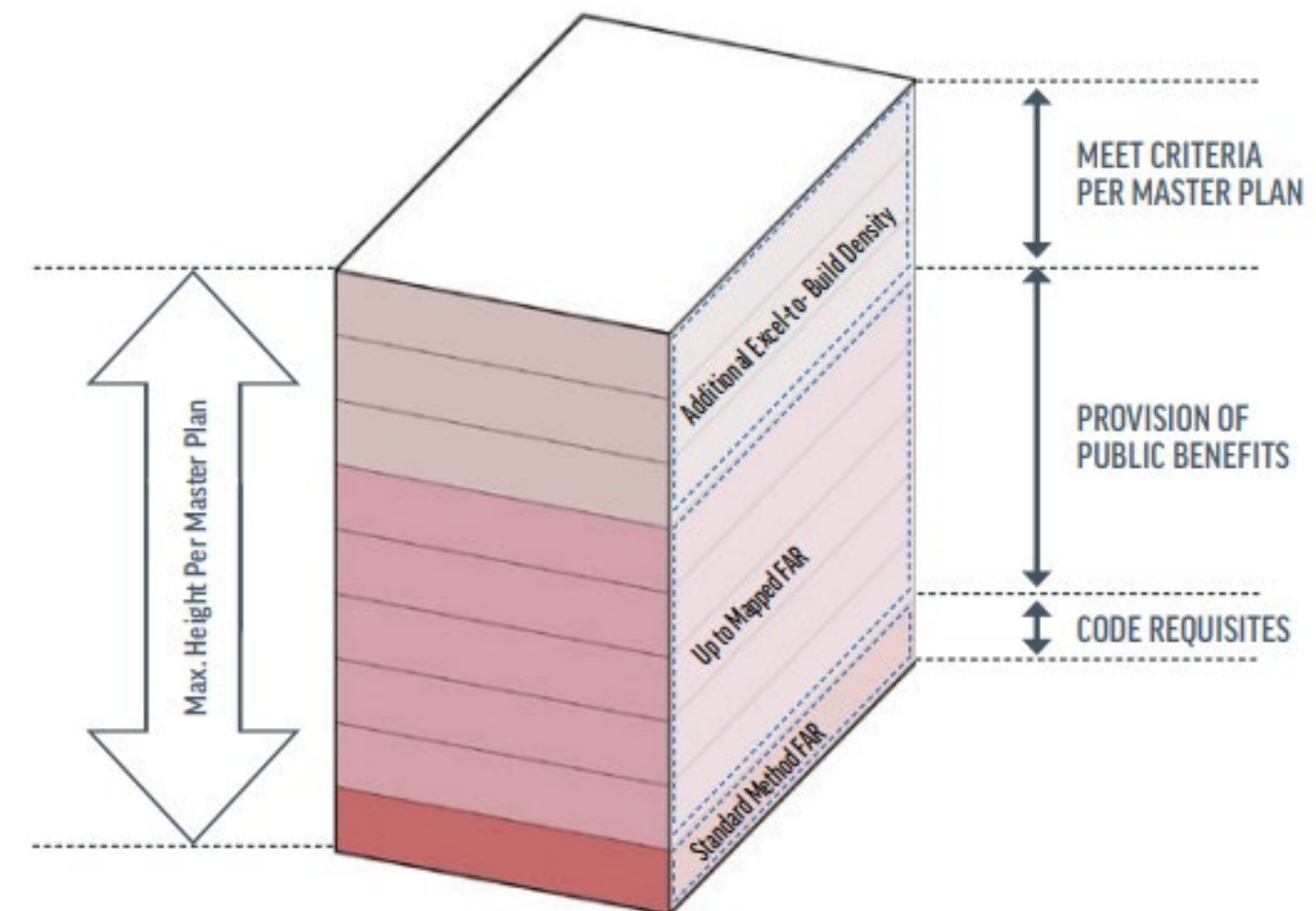
- Green Area Ratio program
- Sets min. lot coverage for green features
- Utilizes a checklist for compliance
- Offers FAR bonus

Incentive Zoning Update

Updated Incentive Zoning Public Benefits

MAJOR POLICY CHANGES

- Remove EOF and LSC from the public benefit system
- Establish a standardized Optional Method threshold 0.5 FAR
- Switch from point based to FAR based evaluation
- Offer payment in lieu options, allow alternative compliance, all under certain criteria where practical
- Align public benefits and categories with county policy priorities
- Allow master plans flexibility in modifying public benefits and allowing 'excel to build density'



Updated Incentive Zoning Public Benefits



INCENTIVE DENSITY IMPLEMENTATION

GUIDELINES FOR CR AND CRT ZONES



Updated Incentive Zoning Public Benefits



Updated Incentive Zoning Public Benefits

TIERED BENEFITS FOR FLEXIBILITY

Public Benefit Category	
Public Benefit	
TIER 1 0.25 FAR	Small -scale public benefit incorporated into the project.
TIER 2 1.0 FAR	Medium-scale public benefit incorporated into the project.
TIER 3 1.5 FAR	Substantial public benefit incorporated into the project.
TIER 4/TOP TIER Up to mapped FAR	An extraordinary public benefit incorporated into the project. No payment in lieu options. NO OTHER PUBLIC BENEFITS REQUIRED

Updated Incentive Zoning Public Benefits

TIERED BENEFITS FOR FLEXIBILITY

TIER	Green Buildings
TIER 1 0.25 FAR	Must meet the Alternative Compliance Path for the International Green Construction Code (IgCC) and achieve LEED Silver plus 21 points
TIER 2 1.0 FAR	Must meet the Alternative Compliance Path for the International Green Construction Code (IgCC) and achieve LEED Gold
TIER 3 1.5 FAR	Must meet the Alternative Compliance Path for the International Green Construction Code (IgCC), achieve LEED Gold, and either provide full electrification of the building or utilize mass timber framed construction
TIER 4 Up to mapped FAR	Must meet the Alternative Compliance Path for the International Green Construction Code (IgCC) and achieve LEED Platinum

Updated Incentive Zoning Public Benefits

Optional Method Projects in the CR and CRT Zones

At least one benefit from:

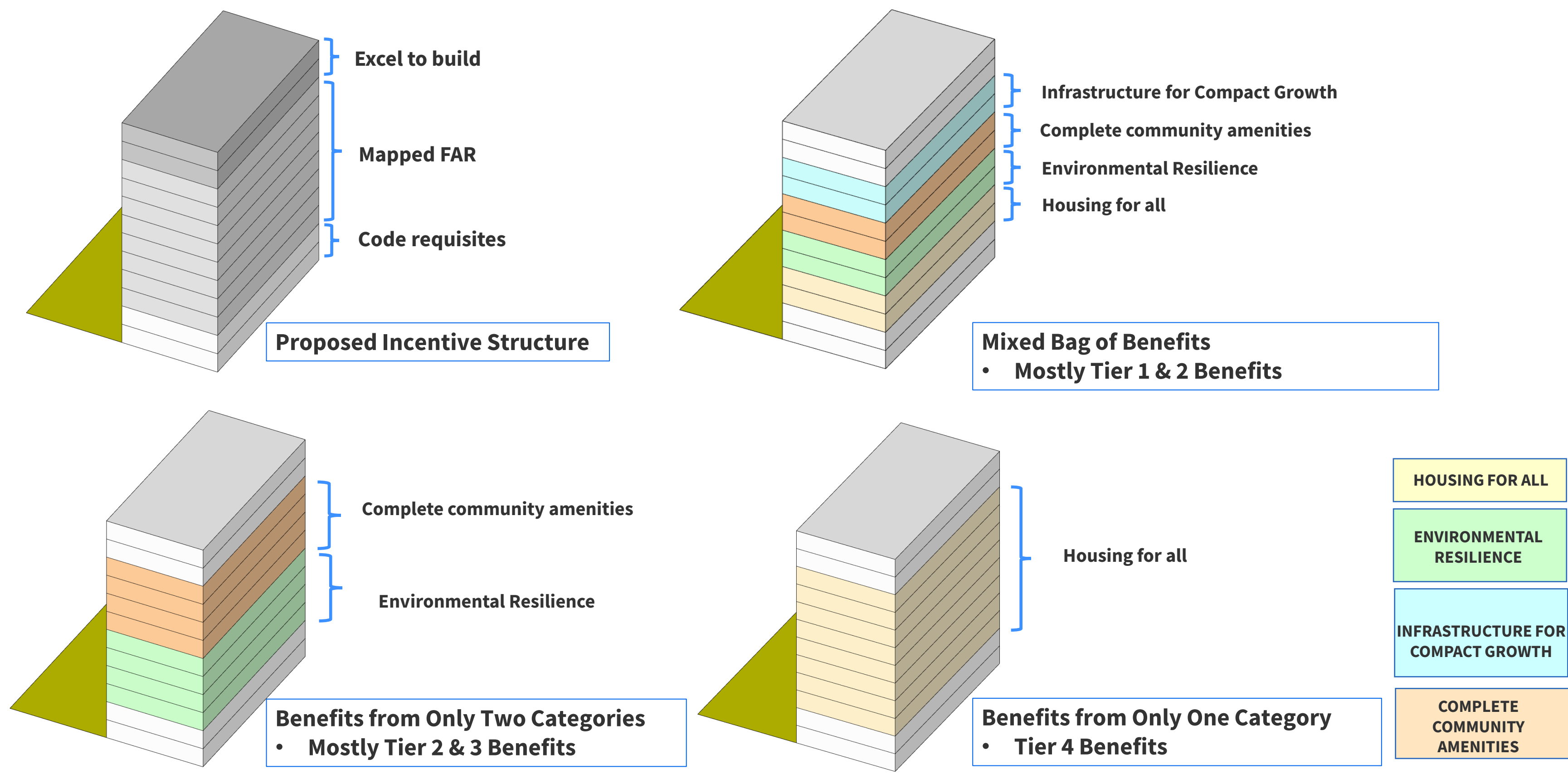


EXCEPTIONS:
- Project providing a Tier 4 Benefit

OR
- Project only required to provide 0.25 FAR of incentive density

Section 59.4.7.1.B.1

Updated Incentive Zoning Public Benefits



What we are seeing so far

Montgomery Pearl



Environmental Resilience: Energy Efficiency
Infrastructure for Compact Growth: Undergrounding of utilities
Complete Communities: Design Excellence

Friendship Commons



Complete Communities: Great Public Realm, dedicate and construct 3 acre public park (Tier IV)

Thank you!

For more info:

[Incentive Zoning Update website](#)

✉ atul.sharma@montgomeryplanning.org / grace.bogdan@montgomeryplanning.org

🌐 montgomeryplanning.org

@montgomeryplanning

@montgomeryplans

@montgomeryplanning

@montgomeryplanning

🌐 [@montgomery-county-planning-department](#)

📍 **Montgomery Planning**

