



TO: Planning Commission and the Citizens of Purcellville
FROM: Daniel Galindo, AICP – Senior Planner
SUBJECT: Planning and Zoning Glossary
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The planning and zoning terms defined below are provided to assist the public's understanding and discussion of the proposed Zoning District Use Changes; these should not be construed as representing legal definitions.

Commission Permit (CP): An approval by the Planning Commission verifying that any street, park, public area, public building, public structure, public utility or public service corporation (other than a railroad facility or underground natural gas or underground electric distribution facility of a public utility), whether publicly or privately owned, is in keeping with the adopted Comprehensive Plan before the public facility is constructed or established. See Article 8, Special Use Permits and Commission Permits, of the Zoning Ordinance.

Land Use: A broad term used to classify land according to present use such as residential, agricultural, commercial, industrial, recreational, and public. Each zoning district (except PDH) lists specific land uses that are allowed in that district as **Permitted Uses** or **Special Uses**.

PDH-only Uses:

Allowed Use (A): A specific land use that would be allowed within a PDH development if designated on the required development plan of an approved PDH rezoning application.

Principal Permitted Use (PPU): A specific land use listed in Article 4, Section 12.2 of the Zoning Ordinance that is allowed within a PDH development, regardless of the presence of **Secondary Permitted Uses**, when designated on the required development plan of an approved PDH rezoning application.

Secondary Permitted Use (SPU): A specific land use listed in Article 4, Section 12.3 of the Zoning Ordinance that is only allowed in a PDH development which contains one or more **Principal Permitted Uses** when designated on the required development plan of an approved PDH rezoning application.

Permitted Use (X): A specific land use or structure that is allowed under a particular zoning district classification without the need for a special permit. Also known as a by-right use.

Nonconforming Use: A land use that does not comply with the regulations of the zoning district it is in or does not comply with other land-use regulations. A legally nonconforming use is one that existed prior to new or amended zoning regulations and will generally be allowed to continue operation. In Virginia, nonconforming uses are governed by § [15.2-2307](#) of the *Code of Virginia* and may continue unless discontinued for more than two years. Also known as grandfathered uses.

Special Use (SUP): A specific land use, which by its nature, can have an undue impact upon or can be incompatible with other land uses and therefore needs a site specific review. After review, such a use may be allowed to locate within given designated zoning districts, if appropriate, with or without imposing special requirements or conditions. In Purcellville, a special use is subject to public hearings by the Planning Commission and Town Council with approval by the Town Council. Unlike **Proffers** which are voluntary, the Town Council may impose reasonable conditions to assure, for example, compatibility and safety. See Article 8, Special Use Permits and Commission Permits, of the Zoning Ordinance. (See also **Special Exception**)

Overlay Zoning District: A zoning district superimposed on another that is typically designed to protect a particular natural or cultural resource with both zoning districts governing the use of the property. For example, the Town's Historic Corridor and Floodplain districts are overlay zoning districts.

Proffer: A written condition offered voluntarily by a property owner as part of a rezoning. Once accepted by the Town Council, a proffer becomes a legally binding condition that runs with the land which is in addition to the zoning district regulations applicable to a specific property. Accepted proffers may be modified only by an action of the Council after required public hearings. Proffers are not common across the U.S. and are governed by § [15.2-2303](#) of the *Code of Virginia*.

Special Exception (SE): An exception to the yard or height requirements of the zoning ordinance for a particular property under specific circumstances, or a specific land use, which by its nature, can have an undue impact upon or can be incompatible with other land uses and therefore needs a site specific review. After review and a public hearing, the Board of Zoning Appeals may alter such yard or height requirements or authorize such use within given designated zoning districts, if appropriate, with or without imposing special requirements or conditions. See Article 9, Section 5, Special Exceptions, of the Zoning Ordinance. (See also **Special Use**)