

Arlington County, VA Special GLUP Study Process

Administrative Guide
June 2019



Table of Contents

- 03** Introduction
- 04** Initial Application Checklist
- 05** Application Review Process
- 09** Additional Process Information

Introduction

This document will serve as a process overview to aid applicants, commissioners, community members, staff and elected officials in understanding the Special General Land Use Plan (GLUP) Study process from start to finish.

The GLUP is Arlington’s primary policy guide for the future development of the County. The Plan establishes the overall character, extent and location of various land uses and serves as a guide to communicate the policy of the County Board to residents, the business community, developers and others involved in the development of Arlington County. In addition, the GLUP serves as a guide to the County Board in its decisions concerning future development. The GLUP is one of eleven elements which currently comprise the [County’s Comprehensive Plan](#). Supporting documents include sector, area and revitalization plans, which detail specific land use, density, building form and other policies.

The GLUP can be amended in two different ways. The first is through a County-led planning process to implement policies from a sector, area or revitalization planning effort. The second is at the request of a developer and/or property owner. When a GLUP amendment request is made in keeping with the recommendations of a relevant adopted plan, it is considered concurrently with an associated site plan or use permit, along with any potential rezoning request.

In 2008, the County Board adopted a new policy regarding GLUP amendments. The “Policy for Consideration of General Land Use Plan Amendments Unanticipated by Previous Planning Efforts” calls for a community review process in those instances where a requested land use change is inconsistent with an adopted plan or when the request is in an area without an adopted plan. The policy includes the following language “... a proposed GLUP amendment for any site not identified in a County Board adopted planning study as appropriate for such a GLUP amendment will not be considered until such a planning study or analysis has been completed and presented to the County Board.” A study of this nature was deemed necessary to assess whether proposed changes to the GLUP are consistent with the County’s long-term planning principles and goals.

In determining how to implement the County Board’s new policy, staff worked closely with members of the [Planning Commission](#). A [Long Range Planning Committee](#) of the Planning Commission (LRPC) review process that provided for a high-level review of the requested amendments to the GLUP separate from and prior to any site plan or use permit project review was developed. This process was subsequently refined with a revised process established as of June 30, 2019.

Initial Application Checklist

Applicants for Special GLUP Studies are required to provide the following materials and accompanying graphics using the online Special GLUP Study Application on the Permit Arlington portal*:

- Statement of Justification, including a narrative and exhibits, describing the following:
 - The property location and size;
 - Current and proposed GLUP designations for site and surrounding sites;
 - Current and proposed zoning designations for site and surrounding sites; and
 - A detailed explanation and justification for the requested GLUP designation, including consistency with a relevant Sector or Area Plan (if applicable), consistency with surrounding properties and any other land use considerations applicable to the project site for staff consideration.
- Transportation information, including a narrative and exhibits – proximity to transit, potential new streets or connections, existing counts on all frontages, pedestrian counts; and
- Other information necessary for staff analysis, to be determined in consultation with staff based on the site.

*As of June 30, 2019, Permit Arlington is not yet active. Paper submissions will be accepted at the Zoning Office until the online portal is activated.

Application Review Process

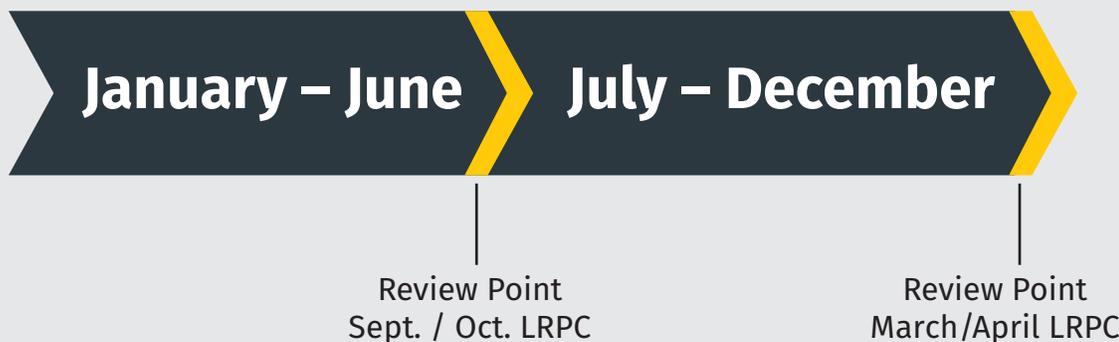
All applicants are encouraged to schedule an initial meeting with Comprehensive Planning staff prior to filing an application for a Special GLUP Study which will serve as an opportunity to discuss potential issues and aid the applicant in determining whether to submit the application as a Special GLUP Study or Special GLUP Study Plus.

Tier 1 – Initial Review

1. Submit the Initial Review Special GLUP Study Application through the Permits Plus portal and pay the Initial Review Fee for either a Special GLUP Study or Special GLUP Study Plus Application (see the [County's Fee Schedule](#) for specific fee amounts).
2. The County is currently administering Special GLUP Study requests on a biannual basis.

The review cycle is as follows:

- Applications received between January and the end of June will be reviewed by staff in preparation for a September or October LRPC meeting; and
- Applications received between July and the end of December will be reviewed by staff in preparation for a March or April LRPC meeting.



3. Initial Review LRPC Meeting – The LRPC meeting will include a staff evaluation of all applications received during the aforementioned application windows. The LRPC will then discuss the application(s) and provide its input.
 - As part of this evaluation, staff and the LRPC will discuss if a Special GLUP Study, Special GLUP Study Plus or different type of process, such as a small area planning process or a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) exchange, might be more appropriate and/ or expeditious and is recommending a particular process. Also, if a site is part of a Phased Development Site Plan (PDSP), additional evaluation is needed to address how a proposed GLUP change would relate to the existing PDSP.
 - Additional criteria for selection may include:
 - i. Would the amendment possibly advance broader County goals?
 - ii. Is there already an existing adopted plan or district designation on the GLUP for the subject area and/or adjacent area? If there is an existing plan or district recommendation for a specific area, a change to the GLUP may be less likely to be recommended. What conditions have changed to warrant revisiting the adopted policy?
 - iii. Is the area currently under study?
 - iv. Is this a larger or more complex (i.e. topographical, contextual, etc.) site? Are surrounding properties similar and should they potentially be included in the study? Would it be more appropriate to address the area through a small area plan?
 - v. Is there a Phased Development Site Plan (PDSP)? Would it be more appropriate to undertake a PDSP review as opposed to a Special GLUP Study?
 - Following the LRPC meeting, the LRPC Chair will send a memorandum to staff summarizing the input of the LRPC.
4. The Tier 1 – Initial Review process concludes with a letter from the Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development (CPHD) Director stating whether the Special GLUP Study request has been accepted, denied, or deemed more appropriate for another form of land use analysis. If one is recommended, an estimated timeline for the study will also be provided.

An applicant may contest a letter of determination to not pursue a Special GLUP Study by filing a GLUP Amendment application with the applicable study fee. The GLUP Amendment request would be heard by the Planning Commission and the County Board at public hearings. The County Board would make the ultimate determination whether to direct the County Manager and staff to undertake the requested Special GLUP Study and consider any other potential adjustments to the work plan.

Tier 2 – Full Study

If a letter of determination recommending a Special GLUP Study is issued, the applicant would proceed with the following actions/process:

1. The applicant files a Full Special GLUP Study Application through the Permits Plus portal and pays the Full Study Fee for either a Special GLUP Study or Special GLUP Study Plus Application (see the [County's Fee Schedule](#) for specific fee amounts).
2. Once the application is received and the fees are paid, staff will provide an update on the timeline for the Special GLUP Study or Special GLUP Study Plus. In addition to the application materials submitted for the Initial Review, staff will request the following:

Full Study Application Materials

Special GLUP Study

- Transportation analysis scoped in consultation with County staff
- Other information necessary for staff analysis, to be determined in consultation with staff based on the particular site

Special GLUP Study Plus

- Transportation analysis scoped in consultation with County staff
- Three-dimensional modeling of the existing conditions of the subject site and contextual area, as well as modeling of various scenarios reflecting the requested GLUP designation or designations and other GLUP designations to be determined by staff in conjunction with the LRPC
- Other information necessary for staff analysis, to be determined in consultation with staff based on the particular site.

3. A typical Special GLUP Study will include the following:
 - History of GLUP and zoning designations;
 - Existing GLUP and zoning designations;
 - Analysis of relevant plans and policies;
 - Proposed GLUP amendment request – uses, density, heights, etc;
 - 3-D modeling of existing conditions and what the proposed GLUP designation would allow; and
 - Preliminary transportation analysis

The LRPC will be consulted throughout the Special GLUP Study process. The number of LRPC meetings is dependent on the size and scope of the study. This will be determined in the initial study scoping phase with staff. Staff, in consultation with the LRPC Chair, will determine when a study is ready to conclude the LRPC meetings and move to public hearings with the Planning Commission and County Board.

4. Following the Special GLUP Study process, a “request to advertise” or “not to advertise” GLUP amendment staff report will be brought, along with a comprehensive study document outlining staff’s analysis, findings and recommendations, to the Planning Commission as an action item, permitting public comment and a Planning Commission vote with a recommendation or recommendations.
5. The “request to advertise” or “not to advertise” report and comprehensive study document will then be brought to the County Board for final action, thereby concluding the Special GLUP Study process.
 - Authorizing advertisement, it should be noted, would not imply that the County Board supports the proposed amendment, but that it is in the realm of consideration, subject to an appropriate site plan; and
 - Should an appropriate site plan be filed in the future for the subject site, staff would, at that time, develop a recommendation on any proposed changes to the GLUP and zoning designations that is informed by the findings of the Special GLUP Study.

Additional Process Information

Stakeholder Participation

Representatives of immediately affected civic associations are notified of meetings and one representative per association is invited to participate fully “at the table” in the LRPC discussions. Depending upon the scope of the request, representatives of affected homeowner associations and relevant commissions and other stakeholders may be invited to participate at the discretion of the LRPC member chairing the process. Civic association representatives may choose to make a presentation during the Tier Two-Full Study to provide contextual information and share the neighborhood’s views, which should be coordinated with staff prior to the initial LRPC meeting.

In addition to civic association representatives, representatives from other stakeholder groups, such as relevant commissions, committees and the like, may be invited to participate “at the table” at the Chair’s discretion. This has been the precedent for Special GLUP Study Plus projects, but may apply to both Special GLUP Study and Special GLUP

Applicant Participation

At the LRPC Chair’s discretion, the applicant may be invited to participate “at the table” during a Tier One-Initial Study and/or a Tier Two-Full Study. In addition, the applicant may verbally present information on the broader land use context and the rationale for their requested GLUP amendment with a limited number of presentation slides following staff’s presentation. The intent of this presentation would not be to market the project and should not resemble the type of presentation that an applicant makes at a [Site Plan Review Committee](#) (SPRC) meeting. The LRPC Chair will also make it clear that the applicant could speak should there be a public comment period during the LRPC meetings. Applicant presentation requirements include:

- A limited number of slides are permitted during both the initial Special GLUP Study and full Special GLUP Study processes, unless the LRPC Chair and staff determine that additional material should be presented;
- The purpose of the presentation should convey the applicant’s overall rationale for requesting the GLUP amendment and associated supporting information;
- The presentation should not be a “marketing” presentation focused on the project; and
- Presentation slides must be submitted at least five days in advance of the LRPC meeting for review by staff and the LRPC Chair.

Supplemental GLUP Amendment Requests

In conjunction with the LRPC Chair, staff will evaluate whether requests to analyze additional GLUP and zoning categories once a process has started on a case-by-case basis and determine whether the additional request can be accommodated in the current study. If additional GLUP designations are to be studied, the additional request will be subject to an additional fee (see the [County's Zoning Fee Schedule](#)).

In some instances, staff, consulting with the LRPC Chair, may alternatively request that an applicant refile a Special GLUP Study application with the revised request during the next Special GLUP Study application window. The applicant may pay a reduced fee for the new application based on the level of analysis performed by staff on the previous study of the site in question.

Associated Zoning Ordinance Amendments

In the event a [Zoning Ordinance amendment](#) is submitted along with a GLUP amendment request, staff will consult with the LRPC and the [Zoning Ordinance Committee](#) of the Planning Commission (ZOCO) chairs to determine on a case-by-case basis how this specific request should be evaluated. At that point, it would be determined which subcommittee it should be reviewed by and in what order, and who should be invited to attend the meetings prior to proceeding with the required Special GLUP Study process.

For More Information

Contact the Comprehensive Planning Section of the Planning Division of the Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development at: 703-228-3525 or cphd@arlingtonva.us.

For additional information on Special GLUP Studies, including completed Special GLUP Studies: <https://projects.arlingtonva.us/plans-studies/general-land-use-plan/special-studies/>.

Arlington County Zoning Fee Schedule:
<https://building.arlingtonva.us/zoning-fee-schedule/>.

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