Zoning Modernization AC44 Implementation Priorities
Attachment A – Staff Analysis
Albemarle County Board of Supervisors Work Session
March 4, 2026

Phase 2 Review

Phase 2 of Zoning Modernization focuses on a comprehensive formatting and organizational modernization of the County's Zoning Ordinance. This phase applies the plain language principles, modern structure, and user-friendly formatting established in Phase 1 to the remainder of the ordinance. The key elements of this phase include:

- User-friendly formatting with consistent numbering, clear headings, and improved cross-references
- Conversion of dense legal language into plain, active voice regulations
- Consolidation of use standards from multiple scattered sections into a single, organized article
- Removal of duplicative or redundant regulations
- Updates to comply with the Code of Virginia
- Simplified development review process

As the focus of Zoning Modernization's Phase 2 is reorganization and rewriting, without substantive regulatory changes, this will immediately make the ordinance more accessible and easier to use for staff, applicants, and the public.

Phase 2 Projected Timeline

Spring/Summer 2026: Complete drafting of remaining articles
Summer/Fall 2026: Internal staff review and revision
Fall/Winter 2026: Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors review and public hearings
Winter 2026: Adoption

AC44 Comprehensive Plan Actions Summary

The AC44 Comprehensive Plan includes a comprehensive Implementation Chapter with 378 specific actions organized across nine topic areas: Development Area Land Use, Rural Area Land Use, Transportation, Thriving Economy, Housing, Environmental Stewardship, Parks, Recreation & Open Space, Cultural Resources, and Community Facilities & Infrastructure. These actions represent the community's priorities as identified through extensive public engagement during the comprehensive plan update process. Analysis of Part 3: Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan reveals significant interconnection between topic areas, with several recurring themes appearing across multiple chapters—particularly regarding housing diversity, mixed-use development, environmental sustainability, and multimodal

connectivity. Of the 378 total actions in the implementation chapter, 37 actions have direct implications for zoning regulations.

To develop a manageable and strategic approach to Phase 3, staff conducted a detailed review of both the implementation chapter and the narrative and illustrative text of the comprehensive plan. This review revealed that while the implementation actions provide a strong groundwork, the plan's narrative references numerous additional implementation items, regulatory approaches, and community priorities that are not formally listed as numbered actions. Through a systematic analysis of all nine topic-area chapters, staff identified additional regulatory steps or implementation items embedded in the plan text that will be necessary to fully realize AC44's vision. These unlisted items range from specific design standards (building stepbacks, block lengths) to new use definitions (wildlife sanctuary, outdoor athletic facilities) to regulatory frameworks (Community Resiliency Hubs, Activity Center overlays). Many of these topics are partially addressed by existing listed actions, but require specific regulatory detail not captured in the Plan's listed actions.

Working collaboratively with the AC44 Comprehensive Plan team, departmental leadership, and the County Executive's office, the Zoning Modernization team conducted a prioritization analysis to identify which comprehensive plan actions and unlisted regulatory items should be addressed in Phase 3.

Staff developed the recommended priority list using the following criteria, in accordance with the guidance of the AC44 Comprehensive Plan and the Board's expressed priorities:
- Alignment with AC44 Big Moves and implementation chapter priorities
- Impact on multiple community goals (e.g., items that address both housing affordability and environmental objectives)
- Readiness for implementation (clear regulatory pathway vs. needing additional policy decisions or studies)
- Frequency of requests or waivers under current ordinance
- Ability to leverage ongoing work (e.g., existing zoning text amendments or Phase 2 work)
- Immediate improvement of Board-identified regulatory gaps

Through this process, staff consolidated the zoning-related listed actions and unlisted regulatory steps into seven major thematic priorities, resulting in 24 total implementation items recommended for Phase 3. The remaining actions were categorized as Tier 2 priorities or Tier 3 priorities.

Tier 2 priorities in Phase 3 of Zoning Modernization include a number of zoning ordinance changes on smaller topics, such as updating soil volume standards for tree wells along streets and updating the County's recreation and open space requirements. While these actions are important to achieve many of the aims of the comprehensive plan, they are not as crucial to the underlying bones of the County's vision for itself and may be addressed in the later stages of Phase 3, or even after completion of the project as individual zoning text amendments.

Comprehensive plan actions listed as Tier 3 priorities are largely reliant on detailed, community-specific planning, as in the projected Rural Area Plan, and will be addressed after the completion of those planning efforts.

Recommended Zoning Modernization Priorities

The following list presents the recommended priorities for Phase 3 of Zoning Modernization; it is not ordered by importance or timeline precedence. Please see Attachment C for a full list of recommended Tier 1 implementation actions, and note that numerous actions meet the objectives of multiple recommended priorities, and are intentionally listed under each appropriate priority.

1. Affordable housing initiatives
2. Activity Center initiatives
3. Economic Development initiatives
4. Modernize and streamline the development review process
5. Increase density across the Development Area
6. Increase mixed-use accessibility across the Development Area
7. Rural Area special topics