

Roanoke planning commission to hold public hearing on possible changes to zoning code

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Earlier this year, the city of Roanoke held a series of public meetings to gather feedback on two issues that have generated significant controversy in recent years: a citywide rezoning that took effect in 2024, and a plan for the Evans Spring property.

On Monday, the Roanoke City Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on some changes that the planning department has recommended based on what it has heard from city residents on these two issues, as well as on a proposed vape shop zoning ordinance.

Citywide rezoning changes

In 2024, the city council amended the zoning code to allow for more types of housing in the city's neighborhoods, doing away with neighborhoods that had previously permitted only single-family homes. This was done in an effort to address a major housing shortage in the city. The city made slight tweaks and amended those changes later that year after a group of residents sued the city over the procedure it took in making the changes.

Many of the city's new council members, who started their terms in January 2025, said at the time that they thought the citywide rezoning could have been handled differently. Nick Hagen proposed and has been spearheading an effort to study and consider amending the code once again to address some residents' concerns – which include parking space and the possibility for high-density developments in areas where it wouldn't fit in with the existing neighborhood.

Among the zoning changes that the planning commission will take comments on during Monday's hearing are:

- Increase the lot area per dwelling unit and reduce the maximum number of units per lot in certain residential districts.
- Incorporate a maximum lot area in Residential Mixed-Density 1 and 2 Districts.
- Establish a minimum of one parking space required per unit for all apartment buildings and townhomes with three or more dwelling units.
- Add standards for apartment buildings with nine or more units in certain districts, including changes in roof pitch and the location of garage doors.
- Require a survey for the construction of a new principal building or accessory dwelling unit.

The proposed changes also would add a few new uses to the code:

Vape and tobacco establishments are identified as businesses where 10% of the floor area, display merchandise, sign area, inventory or sales are dedicated to vape or tobacco products. These shops would be allowed in three districts by special exception, but would be prohibited within 2,000 feet of a school, religious institution, child care center, public park or another vape and tobacco establishment.

Data centers would be permitted by special exception in planned unit development divisions, and data processing facilities would be permitted by special exception in various districts, as well as being a permitted use in Industrial 1 zones. Regulations would cover hours of operation, landscaping, noise and building design.

Inpatient mental health and substance abuse clinics would be permitted by special exception in three districts. The code would also add a definition for a clinic offering stays for less than 30 days.

The planning commission's agenda also lists a number of items to be "cleaned up" in the zoning code, including adding a requirement of a special exception for a microbrewery or microdistillery abutting a residential district, and adding a produce stand as a temporary use in multiple-purpose districts.

Monday's public hearing will take place at 1:30 p.m. in the City Council Chamber at 215 Church Ave. in Roanoke. The full agenda for the meeting can be found [here](#). For those who cannot attend in person, the hearing can also be livestreamed via YouTube.