

DMV Zoning Pre-Check Checklist

Run a LotIQ Check

What to check before you buy, design, or demo a lot in DC, Maryland, or Northern Virginia

Before you hire an architect, check the zoning.

For lot feasibility in the DMV, the first professional is usually a civil engineer or site engineer. They help review zoning, setbacks, lot coverage, FAR, height, easements, grading, stormwater, and the buildable envelope before design money is spent.

1) Property Snapshot

PROPERTY ADDRESS

CITY / COUNTY / JURISDICTION

DATE REVIEWED

LOT SIZE / DIMENSIONS

ZONING CLASSIFICATION

REVIEWED BY

CIVIL ENGINEER / SITE ENGINEER

2) Zoning Checklist - Rules That Control What You Can Build

DONE	ITEM TO CHECK	NOTES / NEXT STEP
<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Zoning classification confirmed	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Allowed residential use / teardown-new build confirmed	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Front, rear, and side setbacks checked	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Maximum lot coverage reviewed	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	5. FAR or floor area limits checked, if applicable	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Height limits reviewed, especially on sloped lots	<input type="text"/>

Quick reminder:

A beautiful design that does not fit zoning is not a home plan. It is an expensive piece of art.

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Zoning review should happen before the architectural design, not after.

3) Buildable Envelope + Site Limits

DONE	ITEM TO CHECK	NOTES / NEXT STEP
<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Actual buildable width and depth calculated after setbacks	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Corner lot or side-street setback rules checked, if applicable	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	9. Easements, rights-of-way, and utility corridors checked	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	10. Overlay, historic district, municipality, or HOA/design review checked	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	11. Tree, floodplain, stream buffer, or environmental constraints checked	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	12. Garage, pool, deck, driveway, and accessory structure rules checked	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	13. Civil engineer / site engineer review completed	<input type="text"/>

4) Decision Summary

<input type="checkbox"/> Low concern - continue due diligence	OVERALL NOTES <input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Needs professional review before design	
<input type="checkbox"/> High-risk issue found - price or plan may need to change	
<input type="checkbox"/> Do not proceed yet	

5) Notes for Civil Engineer / Site Review

Architect vs. civil engineer:

The architect designs the house. The civil engineer helps confirm what the lot can realistically support.

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Use this as a starting point before you buy, design, or demo.

6) Next Steps

Check zoning before you design the house.

Use LotIQ to get a quick first-pass look at zoning, setbacks, buildability, and hidden constraints. Then have the findings reviewed by the right professionals before buying, designing, or demoing.

LotIQ: <https://lotiq.irongateusa.com>

7) Action Items

- Run a LotIQ analysis
- Pull survey, plat, deed records, and easements
- Confirm zoning classification with the local jurisdiction
- Send zoning notes to a civil engineer or site engineer
- Confirm buildable envelope before architectural design
- Update budget and design assumptions before moving forward

8) Extra Notes

Related Iron Gate Guides

- [Can I Build on This Lot?](#)
- [How Big of a House Can I Build on My Lot?](#)
- [Setback Requirements Explained](#)
- [Can You Build an ADU in Montgomery County, MD?](#)
- [Montgomery County Building Permits: Homeowner's Guide](#)
- [LotIQ: Check zoning, setbacks, and buildability](#)

Disclaimer: This checklist is for general informational purposes only. It is not legal, engineering, architectural, or permitting advice. Zoning requirements vary by jurisdiction and property. Always verify requirements with the local zoning office and consult a qualified civil engineer, site engineer, or other appropriate professional before making purchase, design, or construction decisions.