



Baltimore County 2024 Comprehensive Zoning Map Process

Director's Report
March 27, 2024

Introduction

The Baltimore County 2024 Comprehensive Zoning Map Process began on September 1, 2023, in accordance with Article 32 Title 3 Part II of the Baltimore County Code. This process is statutorily required to occur every four (4) years and includes separate filing deadlines for the public, the Planning Board and the Director of Planning and County Council members.

In general, the Department of Planning took a reasonable and measured approach in the review of the requested changes in zoning. These recommendations are the result of a careful and extensive review process that included multiple County agencies.

Policy Guidelines

This is the third Comprehensive Zoning Map Process (CZMP) since the adoption of Baltimore County Master Plan 2020 and the first that utilized Baltimore County Master Plan 2030. Baltimore County has used the Urban Rural Demarcation Line (URDL), Master Plan 2030 Place Types and other land use concepts in order to assess proper zoning classifications and districts. It is essential to apply a consistent policy to the requested changes in zoning classifications. Therefore, the zoning analysis focused on consistency with Master Plan 2020 and now Master Plan 2030, changes in the area, existing and surrounding zoning, existing and surrounding land uses and public infrastructure.

The Department, and other County agencies, began reviews of the filed zoning requests while Master Plan 2020 was still in effect. Therefore, the Land Management Areas and consistency with Master Plan 2020 were part of the publicly available Staff Analysis. The County Council adopted Master Plan 2030, with amendments, through Resolution 4-24, on February 20, 2024. Therefore, the final recommendations are based on Master Plan 2030, including the Place Types described in it.

Council's amendments removed, or altered, a number of the Node Place Types that were provided in the draft Master Plan 2030, creating voids in the Place Type mapped areas. These have been designated as *Undefined* in the land use Place Types. The absence of a land use designation in these areas prevented determinations of consistency or inconsistency with Master Plan 2030.

In the Department's review of commercial zoning requests, consideration was given to areas of distress that may need flexibility in the zoning to promote a vibrant commercial corridor. This included several of the existing shopping centers along arterial roads and main streets. In order to support the County's goals to increase the amount of attainable housing, the Department

included recommendations for the placement, or retention, of the Commercial, Community Core (CCC) District on various properties.

The Department considered limiting the encroachment of commercial activity into the residential areas and took into consideration the appropriateness of the modification based on the surrounding commercial activity. Furthermore, in response to community concerns, the Department did not support requests to add the Automotive Services (A.S.) District.

The Department was also attentive to requests that would reduce the residential densities and, therefore, limit the number of residential units that can be built. In order to provide the homes and apartments needed for the County's population, the Department sought to allow the potential creation of more housing where residential uses are appropriate.

There were several requests to adjust zoning classifications to allow non-conforming uses to become conforming uses. The Department recognizes that non-conforming uses or less intense non-conforming uses may require expansion or redevelopment on sites where the use is currently occurring. The Department considered the surrounding land uses, the impact to the surrounding area and how the current operation is being conducted.

A substantial number of requests were received where the applicant did not indicate a change in the zoning and did not provide a justification. Therefore, staff could not evaluate the basis nor merit of the requests. As a result, staff recommended no change for these requests since there was no justification for a change.

Finally, there were numerous issues requesting the Neighborhood Commons District (NC). The Department recognizes the need to preserve land and provide open space. However, rezoning these properties has no beneficial impact on the preservation of the properties since many of them already have stricter legal mechanisms in place, such as deeds or covenants, which protect the land from development.

Department of Planning Recommendations

The Department utilized a number of staff resources to complete their analysis. This included research regarding development proposals, zoning history, applicable school capacity, infrastructure and field visits. Staff coordinated comments from several county agencies to obtain up-to-date information on the properties. Additionally, staff met with the applicants and attended public hearings to obtain community comments.

A total of 389 rezoning requests were received, totaling 9,439.55 acres. Requests for the NC zoning designation, alone, totaled 2,174.84 acres. The Department of Planning recommended zoning changes to 73 issues which involved 725.89 acres.

The Department of Planning has completed the process of reviewing the zoning classifications as required under the Baltimore County Code. These recommendations will now be considered by the Baltimore County Planning Board. Their recommendations will then be submitted to the County Council.

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