



ROBERT G. CASSILLY

Harford County Executive

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Harford County Executive Cassilly Initiates Legislation for Comprehensive Zoning Review

BEL AIR, Md., (Feb. 22, 2024) – Harford County Executive Bob Cassilly on Tuesday sent legislation to the County Council to begin a required comprehensive zoning review in June that will be finalized one year later. Zoning determines a property's permitted uses and includes agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial classifications.

Required by the Harford County Code every eight years, a comprehensive zoning review allows property owners to request a change in their property's existing zoning designation. The Harford County Department of Planning & Zoning first reviews each application to ensure the owner's request is consistent with the county's land use plan.

Typically, the county master plan update would precede a comprehensive zoning review, but the existing land use map remains consistent with the land use policy of the Cassilly administration, and Harford's master plan update is not required to begin until 2026, per state law. In addition, because bills under consideration by the Maryland General Assembly may alter local planning authority and decision-making, the county executive is waiting on final passage of those state bills before embarking on a master plan update, which would take 2 – 3 years to complete.

Rezoning applications for the 2024/2025 Comprehensive Zoning Review will be accepted beginning on Monday, June 3, 2024. Applicants must pay a fee of \$800, and applications must be submitted in person to Planning & Zoning at 220 S. Main Street in Bel Air.

The application window closes on Friday, August 2, 2024. After the Department of Planning & Zoning completes their review of each application, meetings will be held by the citizen-member Planning Advisory Board to receive public comments. All recommendations will be sent to the county executive for review and final submission to the County Council, which is anticipated in March 2025. The County Council will then hold public hearings before voting on each property under consideration.

“My administration is committed to a fair and transparent process during this required comprehensive zoning review,” County Executive Bob Cassilly said. “I encourage all our citizens to be engaged as decisions are made that will affect our quality of life for years to come.”

All properties with a rezoning application under consideration will have a sign posted with information on public hearings and a QR code for easy access to details.

Throughout the review process that begins in June 2024, citizens will be able to track properties online through the Harford County Comprehensive Zoning Tracker. The tracker will be accessible from the homepage of the county website and updated in real time as applications are received and processed. The properties under review will be identified with red crosshatch markings on a countywide map. Clicking on a marked parcel will access multiple tabs of information, including the existing zoning, requested zoning, and assessment data. Within this feature is a link to the “document archive” which will display the rezoning application. The tracker also includes options to create, save and print maps.

As a companion to the tracker, a rezoning log will be posted online and updated in real time. The log will list affected parcels by council district and by the date the application was filed, with direct links back to the property’s location on the tracker map. Columns will be added to the log showing recommendations made for each parcel by the Planning Advisory Board, the Department of Planning & Zoning, and the final decision of the County Council.

Prior to development of the tracker and online log, citizen access to rezoning requests was limited to a hard copy of the log. The log was available for viewing upon request at the Department of Planning & Zoning but only during regular business hours. This option is still available for those without computer access.

In late April, complete information about Harford County’s 2024/2025 Comprehensive Zoning Review, including FAQs outlining the process, will be linked on the homepage of the county website, www.harfordcountymd.gov. Citizens with questions may also call 410-638-3136, or email comprehensivezoning@harfordcountymd.gov.

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