



Zoning Text Amendment to the Charles County Zoning Ordinance ZTA #22-170 WCD Watershed Conservation District August 2023

WHAT: What is the Watershed Conservation District, and what is a Zoning Text Amendment?

- The Watershed Conservation District (WCD) is a Base Zone that was created in 2017. Charles County uses zones—areas that are specifically mapped-- to identify areas of land that can be used for different purposes. Every Base Zone has a specific objective that helps manage land use.
- The WCD consists of approximately 34,440 acres in the northwestern area of the County.
- The objective of the WCD includes natural resource protection and limiting sprawl development.
- A Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) is a proposed change to the Charles County Zoning Ordinance, which includes regulations pertaining to WCD.

WHY: Why is a Zoning Text Amendment being considered?

- During the March 9, 2021 County Commissioner meeting, the County Commissioners directed staff from the Department of Planning & Growth Management (PGM) to draft 3 possible changes to the WCD relating to 1) the minimum lot size requirements, 2) intrafamily transfer qualifications, and 3) the conflicts with the amended 2016 Comprehensive Plan.

A summary of the proposed amendments is:

- Proposed Change 1: Correction of the Table of Permissible Uses (Figure IV-1) and the Uses Corresponding with Table of Permissible Uses (Section 297-212).
 - * This ZTA proposes to correct several inconsistencies between the Zoning Ordinance and the Table of Permissible Uses.
- Proposed Change 2: Reduction of the minimum lot size required in the WCD: This ZTA proposes to change the Schedule of Zone Regulations (Figure VI-10) to modify the minimum lot size required in the WCD from twenty (20) acres to three (3) acres.
 - * For example, under the current regulations, an 80-acre piece of property could only be subdivided into 4 equal 20-acre lots; however, under this proposed language, that 80-acre piece of property could still only be subdivided into 4 lots, but those new lots could be as small as 3 acres.
 - * The density requirements are not changing and will remain one (1) unit per twenty (20) acres.
 - * The above changes give landowners flexibility while continuing to limit development.
- Proposed Change 3: This amendment proposes to remove the 10-year ownership requirement for intra-family transfers.
 - * The above change would create flexibility for intrafamily transfers.
- Proposed Change 4: Elimination of conflicts between the Base Zone Regulations (Section 297-98) and the amended 2016 Comprehensive Plan:
 - * In October of 2021, the County Commissioners amended the 2016 Comprehensive Plan by Resolution 2021-26, which redesignated the land use district of certain properties surrounding the Maryland Airport so that they are no longer within the Watershed Conservation land use district.
 - * This ZTA proposes to remove language from § 297-98D because it is not consistent with the amended 2016 Comprehensive Plan.

WHEN: When are these amendments being discussed?

- PGM Staff drafted the changes above and will present these changes to the Planning Commission on August 21, 2023
- The Planning Commission will conduct a Public Hearing on August 21, 2023 to consider the proposed amendments.
- At the close of the public hearing, the Planning Commission may vote to make a recommendation to the Charles County Commissioners regarding the acceptance of the amendments, or the Planning Commission may choose to schedule a final vote for a future meeting.
- The Board of Charles County Commissioners will hold another public hearing. They may vote to accept the amendments at the close of the public hearing, or they may choose to schedule a final vote for a future meeting.

WHO: Who is impacted by the watershed conservation district?

- This ZTA affects property owners whose property is zoned Watershed Conservation District (WCD).

HOW: How can I learn more or give my opinion?

- There is a Public Hearing on August 21, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. to consider the proposed ZTA
- The draft ZTA and its accompanying Staff Report (including a map of the WCD) is available online for review (www.CharlesCountyMD.gov/government/boards-commissions/current-boards-commissions-meetings-after-july-1-2022).
- Viewing and participation information is provided in detail on the Planning Commission's Hybrid Meeting Information webpage (www.CharlesCountyMD.gov/government/boards-commissions/planning-commission/planning-commission-virtual-meeting-information).