



**CITY OF ABERDEEN
PLANNING COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2023**



Grasmere Pocket Park



Rock Glenn Park



North Deen Skate Park

This report was prepared by the Aberdeen Planning Commission and the Director of Planning and Community Development for the City of Aberdeen for the period of January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023, and adopted by the Aberdeen Planning Commission.

PLANNING COMMISSION

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Michael Hiob, Vice Chairman
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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Rolla Chng, City Engineer

ABERDEEN PLANNING COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2023

INTRODUCTION

The Code of the City of Aberdeen, Chapter 235 Development Code §10 establishes the rules of procedure and responsibilities for the Planning Commission. The Commission's responsibilities are:

1. Preparing and recommending a Comprehensive Plan that will be used as a guide for future decisions about land uses, and addressing environmental resources, population, demographics, housing, transportation, water resources, community facilities, economic development, historic resources, and municipal growth.
2. Reviewing and recommending approval of preliminary site plans and preliminary and final subdivision plats.
3. Recommending zoning boundary changes to the Zoning Map and text amendments to the Development Code and Subdivision Regulations.
4. Recommending rezonings and annexations that are consistent with the adopted Comprehensive Plan.
5. Recommending changes in land use or development that arise from local, State, or Federal programs or policies.
6. Recommending acquisition and development of lands for City open space, parks, and recreation.
7. Make recommendations to the City Council on items of concern or interest.

The Planning Commission's Annual Report highlights the major planning, zoning, and development activities that occurred during the 2023 calendar year. This year's Annual Report includes the adoption of the 2022 Comprehensive Plan update prepared by the consulting team of Wallace Montgomery. For the Plan update, the Planning Commission adopted a resolution recommending the Plan be adopted by the Aberdeen City Council.

The Planning Commission and the Department of Planning and Community Development initiated the Comprehensive Rezoning Process in May 2023 after the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan. Over 5,000 letters explaining the comprehensive rezoning process were mailed to property owners. The Department received 23 rezoning applications for review and began reviewing other areas of the City that were recommended for rezoning by Wallace Montgomery.

Other activities by the Department of Planning and Community Development included issuance of building permits, review and recommendations on site plans and subdivision plats, review of forest stand delineation and forest conservation plans and traffic impact studies, work on a City-initiated annexation, drafting amendments to the Development Code, applying for federal grants for the Aberdeen Transit Oriented Development Station Square project, assisting with land acquisitions, and planning for parks and recreation improvements.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the City of Aberdeen has an estimated population of 18,006, making it the largest municipality by population in Harford County. The City is served by a diverse transportation system including one interstate highway (I-95), one federal highway (US Route 40) and five state highways (MD 22, MD 132, MD 462, MD 715, and MD 7), MARC

commuter rail service, AMTRAK passenger rail service, Harford Transit LINK, and MTA bus service.

The City of Aberdeen is a full-service municipality providing many public services for its citizens. The City has its own planning and zoning authority, water and sewer services, police department, and public works department. Fire protection service is provided by the Aberdeen Volunteer Fire Department, Inc. Harford County Government is responsible for public schools, libraries, courts, additional police protection, health, parks and recreation, transit links, and other community services.

PLANNING IN ABERDEEN

Legal Authority

The authority to plan for the City's development and to enact and enforce laws relating to land planning and zoning is derived from the Local Government and Land Use Articles of the Annotated Code of Maryland and the City Charter.

Land use planning and regulation in Aberdeen is the responsibility of five official bodies: the City Council, the Department of Planning and Community Development, the Planning Commission, the Board of Appeals, and the Architectural Review Committee. The City Council adopts the Comprehensive Plan, enacts legislation to ensure compliance with the Plan, adopts amendments to the Development Code and the Zoning Map, guides implementation of goals and strategies, and funds capital improvements related to the Plan.

The Department of Planning and Community Development is responsible for the administration of planning and zoning within the City and advises the Planning Commission and the Board of Appeals regarding all zoning cases, annexations, subdivisions, site plans, zoning reclassifications, and amendments to the Development and Subdivision Regulations. The Department also reviews the Growth Management requirements relating to new development activities.

The Board of Appeals consists of five members and one alternate appointed by the City Council. The Board considers applications for special exceptions, variances, interpretations of the Development Code, and appeals from administrative decisions related to planning and zoning.

The Architectural Review Committee (ARC) consists of five members appointed by the City Council. The ARC reviews site, signage, and landscaping plans for development projects located in the three established overlay districts.

PLANNING COMMISSION

The Planning Commission is made up of seven members who are appointed by the City Council for staggered five-year terms. The Commission elects a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson from its membership for terms of one year, with eligibility for re-election. Mr. Mark Schlottman is Chairman of the Planning Commission. Mr. Michael Hiob is Vice Chairman of the Planning Commission.

The Commission meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m., in the City Council Chambers, 60 North Parke Street, Aberdeen. When warranted, the Commission will also hold special meetings. The agenda is posted on the City's website and all meetings are open to the public.

The Commission is directly involved with all phases of the planning process. Certain powers and duties of the Commission are mandated by the Local Government and Land Use Articles of the Annotated Code of Maryland and the Code of the City of Aberdeen. The Commission is required to file an Annual Report on its activities with the Mayor and Council and the Maryland Secretary of Planning.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTIVITIES

2022 Plan Aberdeen – Comprehensive Plan Update

The City's Department of Planning and Community Development held a kick-off meeting with Wallace Montgomery to prepare the 2022 Comprehensive Plan update in November 2021. Aberdeen's Comprehensive Plan was last updated in 2011. Wallace Montgomery used the 2011 Plan as a baseline and the planning team evaluated existing conditions and trends; reviewed studies, data, and reports that were completed since the last Plan update; identified and analyzed priority issues and had a rigorous public participation process with surveys, social media alerts, and workshops.

The planning team developed a community public opinion survey, a SWOT Analysis, homework assignments for elected officials, City staff, and various volunteer committees, and held stakeholder input meetings that included discussions with the Planning Commission, Economic Development Commission, City Council, and external agencies. Three community Visioning Workshops were held to receive input for the Comprehensive Plan update. The 2011 Vision Statement was reviewed, and it was unanimous that it no longer addressed the City's needs or desires for the community. The Planning Commission, City staff, and the planning team wrote a Vision Statement that captured the community's input from the Visioning Workshops:

"The City of Aberdeen is a destination to work, live, learn, and play with an actively engaged community, diverse neighborhoods, thriving businesses, economic opportunities, transportation options, and a sustainable future."

After eighteen months of work on the Plan update, a Resolution was adopted by the Planning Commission for the 2022 Comprehensive Plan and recommended the City Council also adopt the Plan. The City Council adopted Ordinance No. 23-O-04 for the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan in April 2023.

2023 Comprehensive Rezoning Process

The Department of Planning and Community Development initiated the comprehensive rezoning process in May 2023 and provided a Public Notice announcing that applications for rezoning would be accepted from May 15, 2023 – June 14, 2023. Additionally, over 5,000 letters were mailed to property owners advising them of the adoption of the 2022 Comprehensive Plan and the 2023 Comprehensive Rezoning Process.

The Planning Commission held a Public Hearing on August 16, 2023, to review 23 rezoning applications and listen to comments from each of the Applicants. The Planning Commission held a second Public Hearing on December 13, 2023, to review other areas of the City being considered for rezoning. A total of 447 properties were considered for rezoning.

Planning Commission Development Reviews

The Commission conducted regular reviews of subdivision plats, site plans, and annexation requests. The Commission and staff reviewed these requests and ensured compliance with the Aberdeen Development Code, Comprehensive Plan, Growth Management Ordinance, and Subdivision Regulations. The following development activity was reviewed, and actions noted: (Refer to the Map on Page 8 for the 2023 Development Activity)

1. Review and recommend for approval the Preliminary Site Plan for the Dugout, miniature golf course at Stadium Towne Center located off MD 22/Churchville Road.
2. Review and recommend for approval the Preliminary Site Plan for the Residences at Festival Park located off Franklin and Parke Streets.
3. Review and recommend the 2nd Revised Final Subdivision Plat for Carsin's Run, Lot 1 located off Gilbert Road and Long Drive.
4. Review and recommend the Preliminary Site Plan for George D. Lisby Elementary School improvements located off Edmund Street.
5. Review and recommend the Revised Final Plat for the Residences at Festival Square located off Franklin and Parke Streets.
6. Review and recommend for approval the Preliminary Site Plan for Middleton Holdings, Lot 3 for a WashX carwash and a retail building located off Middleton Lane.
7. Review and recommend for approval the Preliminary Site Plan for the Market Street monopole located within the CSX right-of-way.
8. Review and recommend for approval the Preliminary Site Plan for All Roads maintenance expansion located off South Philadelphia Boulevard.

ADEQUATE PUBLIC FACILITIES ORDINANCE (APFO)

New residential and non-residential development projects are subject to Chapter 302, Growth Management, in the Code of the City of Aberdeen. The Growth Management requirements are applicable to school capacity, sewerage, water, and roads. All development projects have been reviewed and approved in accordance with Chapter 302, Growth Management.

OTHER PLANNING STAFF WORK EFFORTS

- The City was awarded \$4.0 million in the Fiscal Year 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act as a Congressional Community Funding Project (“Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Funds”) for the Aberdeen Transit Oriented Development – Station Square Project for Phase I. Phase I of the TOD Station Square Project includes a NEPA Analysis with a Phase II Environmental Study, Geotechnical Report to assess subsurface conditions, water table, and undertake soil borings, and 30% Preliminary Architectural and Engineering Design Services to include cost estimating for the project. The FTA Funds will complete the first phase of funding for an estimated \$55 million project that removes existing physical barriers, which have created accessibility challenges and increase connectivity at the Aberdeen Train Station (“the Station”). The proposed Station Square improvements will meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility and increase public safety and mobility to the Aberdeen MARC/Amtrak Train Station, a multi-modal hub for Harford County. The Department of Planning and Community Development is working with the Maryland Department of Transportation/Maryland Transit Administration to administer the federal funding grant.
- Three new parks and recreation areas were constructed and opened in 2023: Rock Glenn Park, a 22-acre site with two multi-purpose fields, walking trail, pickle ball court and basketball court, and playground; North Deen Park, a 11-acre site with a new state-of-the-art skate facility and in-line skating rink; Grasmere Pocket Park, repurposed turnaround that created a small park with benches, sidewalks, and landscaping.

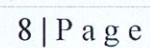
NEW BUILDING PERMIT ACTIVITIES IN 2023

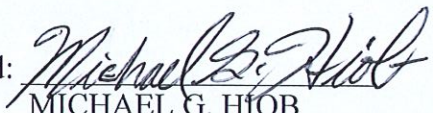
All building permits were issued within the City, which is a designated Priority Funding Area.
New Building Permits Issued in 2023:

Type of Construction	Number Issued	Total Estimated Construction Costs
Residential – Single Family Dwellings	45	\$10,661,396
Multi-Family Residential	13	\$34,880,000
Commercial (new construction and alterations)	16	\$13,713,500
Totals	74	\$59,254,896

Table 1: New Building Permit Activities

The Development Activities Map is located on Page 8 and highlights all approved preliminary site plans, final subdivision plats, and annexation areas that occurred in 2023.



Approved: 
MICHAEL G. HIÖB
Chairman, Aberdeen Planning Commission