

CITY OF ABERDEEN PLANNING COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2024



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, 2024, through December 31, 2024, and adopted by the Aberdeen Planning Commission.

PLANNING COMMISSION

Mark Schlottman, Chairman (served as Chairman thru June 12, 2024)
Michael Hiob, Vice Chairman (served as Chairman from July 10, 2024 – September 2024
term expired)
Dominique Gillis (term expired April 2024)
Beth Boyson (appointed March 2024 and nominated as Chairman November 2024)
William Brown (appointed September 2024)
Samuel Posten
Terri Preston (served as Vice Chairman – July 10, 2024 – November 2024)
DeAunte Printup
Darin Wassum (appointed March 2024 and nominated as Vice Chairman November
2024)

BOARD OF APPEALS

Amy Landbeck, Chairman
Janine Antoshak (appointed April 2024)
Robert Armstrong, III
Peggy Dymond (resigned May 2024)
Cassandra Geary, Alternate (appointed July 2024)
Robert Hartman (appointed July 2024)
Amy Lindecamp

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

Holly Bennett
Gary Getz, AIA, NCARB
Merrill Messick, AIA
David O'Steen

DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Phyllis Grover

SENIOR PLANNER

Stefani Spector

PLANNING ASSISTANT

Kristine Cromwell

MAIN STREET COORDINATOR

Vickie Horne

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INTRODUCTION

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in July 2024 the City of Aberdeen has an estimated population of 18,451 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, Greyhound, 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.

The Planning Commission is a seven-member recommending body appointed by the Mayor and City Council for the City of Aberdeen. 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:

- A. The Planning Commission shall have such powers and duties as set forth in the Land Use Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland and as adopted in the Code of the City of Aberdeen, Chapter 235 Development Code, § 235-10.
- B. Adopt rules of procedure for the conduct of its business.
- C. Make and approve a Comprehensive Plan prepared in accordance with the Land Use Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland and recommend the plan to the City Council.
 1. The Planning Commission shall make a preliminary report or a draft version of the Comprehensive Plan and hold at least one public hearing. The public hearing will be published in a local newspaper and on the City's website – www.aberdeenmd.gov.
 2. The Planning Commission shall consult public officials and agencies; civic, educational, professional, and other organizations; and citizens with relation to protecting or executing the Comprehensive Plan.
 3. The Planning Commission shall prepare, adopt, and file a final report on the Comprehensive Plan with the Mayor and Council in accordance with the Land Use Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland.
 4. The Planning Commission shall recommend changes or amendments to the Aberdeen Comprehensive Plan.
 5. The Planning Commission shall promote the public interest in and understanding of the Comprehensive Plan.
- D. Review, comment, and approve a recommendation to the City Council for all preliminary site plans or preliminary and final subdivision plats. The approval of

a preliminary site plan or preliminary subdivision plat will be valid for two years from the date of the City Council approval, after which the preliminary site plan or preliminary subdivision plat must be resubmitted for review and approval.

- E. Recommend the boundaries of the various zoning districts and appropriate regulations to be enforced therein.
- F. Recommend text amendments to the Aberdeen Development Code.
- G. Recommend rezonings and annexations.
- H. Recommend changes or amendments to the Aberdeen Subdivision Regulations.
- I. Recommend acquisition and development of lands for City open space or recreation purposes.
- J. Recommend changes in land use or development arising from local, state, or federal programs or policies.
- K. Make other recommendations to the City Council on items of interest or concern.
- L. Submit an Annual Report to the City Council and the Maryland Department of Planning.
- M. Review as needed, or a minimum of every six years, the Development Code and Zoning Map to determine whether it is advisable to amend the regulations or the Map, or both, to conform to the objectives of the adopted Comprehensive Plan more closely, to take advantage of new techniques, to correct deficiencies, or for other appropriate reasons.
- N. Make recommendations based on sound planning principles.
- O. Maintain a summary of all meetings and recommendations.
- P. Impose conditions on its approval of developments, including but not limited to configuration of streets, sidewalks, location of public improvements, reservation of open space and recreational uses.
- Q. Recommend programs for public structures, improvements, and land acquisitions and for their financing.
- R. Enter upon any land to perform official examinations and surveys.
- S. Have such powers to enable it to fulfill its functions, promote planning or execute the purposes of the Land Use Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland.

The Planning Commission's Annual Report highlights the major planning, zoning, and development activities that occurred during the 2024 calendar year. The Planning Commission and the Department of Planning and Community Development initiated the Comprehensive Rezoning Process in May 2023 after the adoption of the 2022 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 reviewed other areas of the City that were recommended for rezoning in the Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission held a public hearing on December 13, 2023, and provided their recommendations on the properties to be rezoned to the City Council. The City Council adopted Ordinance No. 24-O-14 on August 12, 2024, and 132 properties were rezoned.

After completion of the Comprehensive Rezoning, the Planning Commission and the Department of Planning and Community Development began reviewing the Development Code for revisions.

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, review of traffic impact studies, work on a

City-initiated annexation, preparing draft amendments to the Development Code, managing the federal grants for the Aberdeen Transit Oriented Development Station Square project, assisting with land acquisitions, and applying for State grants for revitalization of downtown pedestrian improvements, and enhancing existing City owned parks.

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 four 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 Mayor and 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. Ms. Beth Boyson is Chairman of the Planning Commission. Mr. Darin Wassum 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 and supporting documents are posted on the City's website and all meetings are open to the public.

The powers and duties of the Planning 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 Comprehensive Plan Review

The Planning Commission and Department of Planning and Community Development reviewed Chapter 11 Implementation and discussed initiatives and status of the recommendations from the consulting firm, Wallace Montgomery. The Planning Commission made a formal recommendation to the Mayor and City Council to utilize City-owned land for an outdoor recreation area off Beards Hill Road. Consistent with the goal of Chapter 11 Community Facilities to establish plans and programs for City parks, recreation, and open space management. The strategy to achieve this goal is to develop a parks and recreation program to support the Aberdeen community which may include budget allocations, prioritization and establishing a Department of Parks and Recreation. The conceptual plan for the City-owned 34 acres is a recreational area to include multi-purpose fields, portable restrooms, walking trail and footbridge with associated parking areas.

2023 Comprehensive Rezoning Process

Continuing with the recommendations provided in the adopted 2022 Comprehensive Plan, the Department of Planning and Community Development initiated the comprehensive rezoning process in May 2023. A Public Notice announcing that applications for rezoning would be accepted from May 15, 2023 – June 14, 2023, was published for four consecutive weeks. 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 to include the Transit Oriented Development area, downtown, U.S. Route 40, and the industrially zoned areas. Their recommendations were forwarded to the City Council for consideration. The City Council adopted Ordinance No. 24-O-14 on August 12, 2024, and 132 properties were rezoned.

Rules and Regulations

The Planning Commission discussed and approved changes to their Rules and Regulations. The Rules and Regulations are now posted on the City of Aberdeen's website.

Review of the Code of the City of Aberdeen

1. The Planning Commission reviewed Chapter 235 Development Code, Article V Special Developments and Regulations pertaining to townhouses and the minimum square footage requirements for garages. After discussion on the size requirement for garages and the current market demand for smaller garages, they recommended the minimum size of garages be deleted from this section of the Code. The City Council adopted Ordinance No. 24-O-08 amending Section 235-31.1 on June 3, 2024. The following language applies to townhouse construction: "Front or rear garages that are an integral part of the townhouse construction shall be permitted."

2. The Planning Commission reviewed Chapter 302 Growth Management Articles II and III Adequacy Standards for Residential and Nonresidential Developments and recommended changes to the City Council. Based on their recommendations, the City should select the traffic consultant to perform the Traffic Impact Analysis, and the Developer shall pay in advance all costs before the City procures services with a traffic consultant. The City Council adopted Ordinance No. 24-O-09 amending Chapter 302 Growth Management Articles II and III on May 20, 2024.
3. The City Council initiated a review of Chapter 235 Development Code, Section 1 Title: scope and Section 7 Definitions. The Planning Commission reviewed these specific sections and made their recommendations on the proposed changes to definitions. New definitions were added to address MD House Bill 538 Housing Expansion and Affordability Act of 2024 for new housing types and for consistency with the Table of Use Regulations. The City Council adopted Ordinance No. 24-O-20 on November 25, 2024, amending Sections 1 and 7.
4. The City Council initiated a review of Chapter 235 Development Code, Appendix A Table of Use Regulations. The Planning Commission reviewed the existing Table of Uses and added uses that were recently defined in this section. The Planning Commission made their recommendations, and the City Council adopted Ordinance No. 24-O-23 on December 9, 2024, amending Appendix A Table of Use Regulations.

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:

1. Review and recommend approval for the Preliminary Site Plan for the Hickory Ridge Technology Park, Lot 4 located off U.S. Route 40. The zoning on the parcel is M-1 Light Industrial and the proposed development includes a 110,250 square foot warehouse/logistics building with associated parking.
2. Review and discussed the Preliminary Site Plan for the Reserve at Greenside located off Gilbert Road. The zoning on the four parcels is Integrated Business District and R-1 Low Density Residential District. The proposed development includes a mix of detached single-family dwellings, attached single family villas and townhomes, and apartment style condominiums for a total of 1,223 residential units. Additional information was requested from the Department of Public Works on capacity for the public utilities and services to the proposed development.
3. Review and recommend approval for the Preliminary Site Plan for 502 Pulaski Highway located off U.S. Route 40. The zoning on the parcel is B-3 Highway Commercial District and the proposed development of a 3,300 square foot two-story auto-sales building with associated parking.
4. Review and recommend approval for the Preliminary Site Plan for the Goddard School of Aberdeen located off Long Drive and Adamson Way. The zoning on the parcels is Integrated Business District. The proposed development includes the construction of an early education learning center 12,600 square feet with associated parking and outdoor turf play areas.
5. Review and recommend approval for the Preliminary Site Plan and Consolidation for Aberdeen Xchange, Lots 2 and 3 located off MD 7 and Newton Road. The zoning on the

parcel is B-3 Highway Commercial District and the proposed development includes one 23,000 square foot building with multiple lease spaces.

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.

The Planning Commission and Department of Planning and Community Development discussed adequacy standards for school capacities in the Aberdeen public schools. The Harford County Annual Growth Report is reviewed prior to any residential development exceeding five lots or fine units being recommended for approval as required by Chapter 302 Growth Management. In the event a public school exceeds 115% at the time of preliminary site plan approval or within a five-year projection, the project will have to be placed on a waiting list.

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 (TOD) – Station Square Project for Phase I. Phase I of the TOD Station Square Project includes a NEPA Analysis and environmental studies, geotechnical reports 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 TOD 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.
- In March 2024, the City was awarded a \$800,000 planning grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Grant Program. The funding will be used for engineering and design plans, an environmental feasibility study, and establishing right-of-way needs for the Aberdeen TOD - Station Square Project for Phase II.
- In June 2024, the City was awarded a \$800,000 planning grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE). The funding will be used for engineering and design plans, an environmental feasibility study, and establishing right-of-way needs for the Aberdeen TOD - Station Square Project for Phase II. The Maryland Department of Transportation Mass Transit Administration is assisting the City with managing the three federally funded grant awards.
- The City is supporting Amtrak on their \$50.0 million ADA improvement project at the Aberdeen Train Station. Amtrak is coordinating with the City and the Maryland Department of Transportation on their project. The project is 100% funded and the

project is 95% designed. The Aberdeen TOD Station Square Project would complement the Amtrak ADA improvement project. Their planned improvements include:

- Provide two new 12' wide, 1050' long, 48" above top of rail (ATR) level boarding platforms
- Provide new pedestrian overpass with elevators and stairs to provide accessible connectivity between platforms
- Provide accessible routes from the public right of way to the station, parking, and platforms
- Provide accessible parking spaces and access aisles on both sides of the tracks
- Provide new signage along platform
- Provide Passenger Information Display System (PIDS) on the platforms
- Provide new lighting for the new platforms
- Provide accessible entrance at track side, side entrance, accessible ramp from station waiting area to platform.

NEW BUILDING PERMIT ACTIVITIES IN 2024

All building permits were issued within the City, which is a designated Priority Funding Area. New Building Permits Issued in 2024:

Table I – New Building Permit Activities

Type of Construction	Number Issued	Total Estimated Construction Values
Residential – Single Family Dwellings Detached	98	\$25,208,200
Residential – Single Family Dwellings Attached (townhouses/villas)	154	\$25,670,000
Multi-Family Residential/Apartments	7	\$13,765,000
Commercial (new construction)	3	\$2,112,032
Commercial (tenant fit-outs, occupancy, and alterations)	30	\$34,126,293
Industrial (additions)	2	\$523,000
Totals	294	\$101,404,525

Note: The information provided does not include additions, alterations, solar panels, signs, accessory uses, demolitions, or temporary uses unless otherwise noted above.



Date Approved: 6-11-2025
Beth Boyson, Chairman
Aberdeen Planning Commission