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PLANNING AND ZONING

The Foundation for Real Estate





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WHO WE ARE

Joe Wilson is the Broker for Coastal Life Realty in Ocean City. Along with a wealth of experience in the Private Sector, he's a dedicated public servant, chairing the Ocean City Planning and Zoning Commission and is one year in his term with the Maryland Real Estate Commission.

Carol Proctor is an agent with Berkshire Hathaway here in Worcester County Maryland. A resident of Ocean City, she was elected to the Ocean City Council nearly four years ago.

Pam Buckley is the Owner of Buckley Property Services in Ocean City Maryland offering full service appraisals to commercial and residential property. She not only understands planning and zoning because of her day job, but also as the former chair of the Ocean City Planning and Zoning Commission



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AGENDA

What is Planning and Zoning

What is a Comprehensive Plan, what comprises it, and how does it get made

What is zoning and how is it used as a tool to maintain a community's plan and standards

Why is Planning and Zoning important for REALTORS to know

KEY WORDS & PHRASES

The Code - this is the document that houses the laws that govern a jurisdiction.

Public Hearing - the period of time during government meetings where members of the public can voice their opinions.

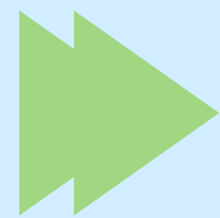
Land Use - Purpose of modification of land to serve specific functions.

Land use & real property article - the section of the code where Planning and Zoning mostly operates.

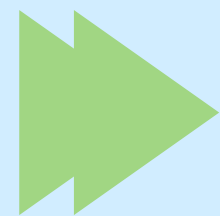
Conditional Use - land use for a specific zoning district / classification.

Variance - An exception to conditional use, granted by administration or Planning and Zoning.

KEY CONCEPTS

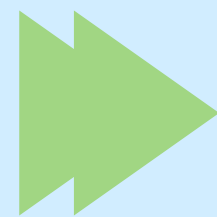


Comprehensive Planning: A long-term strategic document that establishes a community's vision for future growth and development. It guides decisions on land use, transportation, housing, and public services over 10 years.



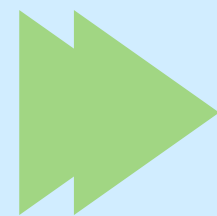
Zoning Regulations: Legal tools that implement the comprehensive plan by dividing land into districts with specific rules. Zoning controls what can be built, building heights, setbacks, and permitted uses in each area.

THINGS TO KNOW



Planning and Zoning can have several names, but most localities has it.

Planning and Zoning is not autominous, they work at the behest of elected leaders and the jurisdictions code.



It is their job to view legislation and appeals through the lense of the code.

Their jurisdiction lies within land use, growth and development, design standards and more.



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WHAT IS PLANNING

A town or city’s “plan” is developed over the course of many months, with feedback from city staff, leadership, elected officials, and most importantly, the residents.

Planning is a community effort, this is how residents want their city to look.

Planning is done in ten-year cycles, under the process known as “Comprehensive Planning”.

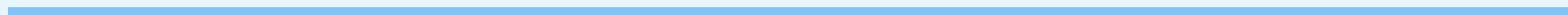


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COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ELEMENTS

1. Quality of Life and Sustainability
2. Public Participation
3. Growth Areas
4. Community Design
5. Infrastructure
6. Transportation

7. Housing
8. Economic Development
9. Environment Protection
10. Resource Conservation
11. Stewardship
12. Implementation



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ELEMENTS (NON-CHARTER & MUNICIPALITIES)

1. Statement of Goals, Objectives, Principals, Policies, and Standards

2. Transportation

3. Mineral Resources (if applicable)

4. Water Resources

5. Sensitive Areas

6. Land Use

7. Community Facilities

8. Areas of Critical State Concern (Counties)

9. Municipal Growth Area (Municipalities)

10. Recommendation for Land Development Regulations to Implement the Plan



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HERE'S AN EXAMPLE

[Ocean City Maryland -
Comprehensive Plan \(2025\)](#)

You can see the Principals, the Goals, the Strategies, the Data, and more

[All comprehensive plans are available to view here](#)



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WHY IT'S IMPORTANT FOR REALTORS

The Comprehensive Plan give insight into the direction of the communities you live and work in.

Incoming projects like new residential development, new housing types, economic development, infrastructure projects are all included in the plan.

Comprehensive Plans help you better prepare as a professional and as a resident for the next ten years.

As a real estate professional, your input is important for certain elements of the Plan.



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ZONING CLASSIFICATIONS

Residential & Commercial Zones: Residential zones (R-1, R-2, R-3) regulate housing density from single-family homes to multi-unit apartments. Commercial zones (C-1, C-2) designate areas for retail, offices, and business services, with varying intensity levels based on traffic and building size requirements.

Industrial & Mixed-Use Zones: Industrial zones (I-1, I-2) accommodate manufacturing, warehousing, and heavy industry with specific environmental controls. Mixed-Use zones combine residential and commercial uses, promoting walkable communities with ground-floor retail and upper-level housing.

Agricultural Zones: Designated for commercial agricultural, feeding, or food processing. These exist rurally and along coastlines.



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THE CODE

Lets take a look at a code to see how it looks.

[Town of Ocean City code.](#)

This is the code of Ocean City Maryland, a document very familiar to Joe, carol, and Pam.

Within it is Ocean City's Charter, the document creating Ocean City as a Municipality, and all its ordinances since.

We'll look right at Section 110, which is the section of the code relating to the Town's zoning.

Other Jurisdictions looks similar, but aren't exactly a 1-1 comparison.

[Worcester County](#)

[Wicomico County](#)

[Somerset Code](#)



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WHERE DOES P&Z SIT IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

Step 1: The governing body is faced with an issue.

Step 2: This issue exists within land-use.

Step 3: The governing body tasks their Planning and Zoning Commission to work on the issue. Commission members have a regular meeting to review draft legislation prepared by staff. They permit members of the public to comment on the proposal.

Step 4: The Commission hears what the public says, and either revises or votes to approve said proposal.

Step 5: The governing body reviews all the work done by the Commission, the minutes, the public comment, zoning maps, existing code, anything relevant to the issue and on the public record.

Step 6: The governing body holds their own regular meetings to either work on the proposal, or approve it.

Step 7: Once approved, it becomes law and is required and enforceable after the vesting period ends.

Step 8: Now that the law is in place, appeals, changes, or other relevant issues are the responsibility of P&Z.



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WHERE DOES P&Z SIT IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

Curious about State Legislation regarding Planning and Zoning?

Maryland General Assembly classifies all legislation into “subjects”

[Here's an example of how to find Planning and Zoning related bills.](#)



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STEPS TO APPROVAL

Submit your completed zoning application along with all required documentation, including site plans, environmental assessments, and fee payments to the Planning Department for initial review.

Your application enters a public review period where community members and stakeholders can examine the proposal, attend hearings, and submit comments or concerns for consideration.

The Zoning Board reviews all submitted materials and public feedback before making a final decision to approve, deny, or request modifications to your zoning application.

WHERE YOU MAY WORK WITH P&Z

Looking for a variance? An outbuilding? Changes to existing properties is a common element of planning and zoning work.

Looking for a zoning classification change? It is not uncommon for property to be bought, with the intended use to be different than what the code allows. Planning and Zoning will hear your case on why your property should be reclassified.

New laws are often heard before Planning and Zoning. A city wants to permit at-home daycares in the city's single family zone; that legislation will likely appear before Planning and Zoning before the Mayor and Council take it up.



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WHY IT MATTERS



Protects Property Values: Thoughtful zoning regulations maintain neighborhood character and prevent incompatible developments that could diminish your investment and community appeal.

Ensures Compatible Land Uses: Strategic planning separates residential, commercial, and industrial zones to create harmonious communities where families and businesses can thrive together.



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WHY IT MATTERS



You yourself may request a change for your personal property.

It will often times answer any questions - curious as to why a county may not have mixed-use dwellings, or why a townhouse sits between two condos? It is likely that the zoning code makes it so.

Understanding future development and growth is essential to understanding the communities you live and work in.



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QUESTIONS?



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THANK YOU

Contact your local planning department for more information

