



City of Annapolis
Planning Commission
Department of Planning and Zoning
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August 17, 2025

Ordinance O-30-25: Business Revitalization Zoning District Regulations

Findings & Recommendation

Factual Background

The proposed legislation is focused on making a change to a key height and bulk standard for the BR zoning district which encompasses a small set of properties near the intersection of Clay Street and West Washington Street in the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood. The district was established in 2005 in an effort to revitalize an area which had experienced substantial disinvestment. With a stated purpose “to encourage the reestablishment of community oriented businesses owned and operated by members of the surrounding residential community”, the district was designed to provide greater flexibility to proposed development at a key gateway to the historic Old Fourth Ward. However, the current provisions of the BR zoning have yielded few of the intended results.

Currently the height limit for the zoning district is three stories or 35 feet but the floor area ratio (FAR) is capped at 2.0. The FAR effectively limits the ability for a proposed building to reach its allowed height if that building utilizes the lot coverage that is allowed by Code. To correct this, the amendment proposes to raise the FAR to 2.5. The proposed legislation also adds a new design standard to the BR zoning district to further ensure that future development positively meshes with the existing architecture of the neighborhood.

Planning Commission Hearings

The Planning Commission held a public hearing on July 10, 2025. Chief of Comprehensive Planning, Eric Leshinsky gave a short introduction to the legislation as outlined in the staff report.

During the public hearing, a single party, Tara Stout, provided testimony. Ms. Stout who has worked with property owners in the area, indicated that she was in favor of the legislation,

but the proposed changes would likely continue to have little effect on revitalization because it does not provide enough flexibility in what could be built in the zone as compared to surrounding zones that are more permissive. Specific issues raised were the lack of additional height for mechanical equipment and minimum unit size.

Planning Commission Findings

The Commission discussed the proposed changes with Mr. Leshinsky. After this discussion and listening to the provided testimony the Commission agrees the change in FAR from 2.0 to 2.5 would allow the maximum height to be achieved as outlined in the staff report. However, this legislation does not substantially change the economic incentives for redevelopment and is thus not likely to have a meaningful effect on revitalization of the zone.

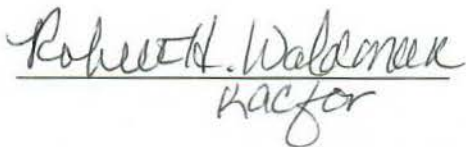
Decision and Conditions or Recommendation

The Commission voted 5-0 to recommend this legislation. Moreover, rather than continuing to alter this zone in this piecewise fashion, the Commission strongly recommends the BR zone be wholesale updated with all due haste so that significant revitalization of the area can be accomplished as envisioned in the Comprehensive Plan. This could be done by changing the requirements and bulk standards to be similar to other mixed use zones that were put in place after the BR zone, notably the MX zone, which has resulted in significant investment in other parts of the city. Furthermore, switching the BR zoning to MX zoning would not only substantially incentivize redevelopment but also help satisfy the goal of reducing the number of zones in the city.

Approved on this ____17th____ day of ____July____, 2025:

The Commissioners eligible to vote have authorized the Chair to sign for them.

The Chair authorizes the Clerk to enter his signature.


Robert H. Waldman
Chairman

Robert H. Waldman, Chairman