

# Harford County, Maryland

## ZONING CODE



Chapter 267 of the Harford County Code, as amended

Effective December 22, 2008  
Amended thru August 16, 2021

*DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING*  
Harford County, Maryland

FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT PROGRAM, Chapter 131

*and*

SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS, Chapter 268

of the Harford County Code, As Amended  
are included at the end of  
The Development Regulations.

**ZONING CODE  
AMENDMENT INFORMATION:**

<u>Bill Number</u>	<u>effective date</u>	<u>Bill Number</u>	<u>effective date</u>
09-01	4/6/09	15-23AA	1/4/16
09-11	6/15/09	15-35AA	2/8/16
09-19AA	8/17/09	15-36AA	2/16/16
09-23AA	10/13/09	15-39AA	2/16/16
09-31AA	1/22/10	16-02AA	5/17/16
09-33AA	1/22/10	16-07	7/5/16
10-03	4/20/10	16-20	8/22/16
10-30	12/13/10	16-28	2/13/17
10-32AA	12/27/10	16-29AA	2/13/17
11-04AA	5/23/11	17-02	4/24/17
11-05AA	5/23/11	17-04	6/5/17
11-03	5/31/11	17-08AA	8/14/17
11-32	12/12/11	17-15AA	12/26/17
11-44	12/19/11	17-18AA	1/16/18
11-62AA	1/13/12	18-04AA	6/18/18
12-07AA	5/14/12	18-33	12/10/18
12-14	5/21/12	18-34	12/10/18
12-44	1/26/13	18-35	12/10/18
12-48AA	2/11/13	18-36	12/10/18
13-4AA	5/6/13	19-04AA	5/13/19
13-17	7/22/13	19-15AA	8/12/19
13-35	1/21/14	19-16AA	8/20/19
13-36	1/21/14	19-29AA	1/2/20
13-50	2/18/14	19-28	1/13/20
13-51	3/18/14	19-30	2/14/20
13-52	3/18/14	20-01	4/20/20
14-01	4/22/14	20-11	8/10/20
14-09	7/11/14	21-01AA	5/10/21
14-26AA	8/25/14	21-03AA	8/6/21
15-17	12/7/15	21-14	8/16/21

**§ 267-30. Buffer Yards.** [Amended by Bill 10-32 as amended; Bill 14-1; and Bill 21-14]**A. General requirements.**

- (1) Buffers are required between districts pursuant to Table 30-1 below. The buffer yard is intended to be landscaped in a manner that provides an effective visual buffering on a year-round basis. The buffer yard is intended to increase the visual appeal within a district and to minimize the impact of noise between districts. The buffer yard is intended to provide for a transition between uses.
- (2) Buffer yards shall consist of existing vegetation, nursery stock or both as well as fences, walls, earthberms or grade changes.
- (3) Structures shall not be permitted to encroach on any buffer yard. Pavement, utility construction, signage and similar hardscape improvements are permitted in the required buffer yard of mixed use centers, the MO Mixed Office District, and Integrated Community Shopping Centers which separates the use from any adjacent road that is not within the project. Pavement, utility construction, signage and similar hardscape improvements are not permitted on any other buffer yard. All public utilities, including water and sewer facilities, shall be allowed to cross a buffer yard subject to approval of the Director of Planning and the Director of Public Works.
- (4) Buffer yards shall be established on agriculturally zoned land when the subject property is converted to residential use, consisting of more than 5 lots, and is adjacent to another agriculturally zoned property that has not been converted to residential use.
- (5) Buffer yards required between property zoned for business, commercial, industrial or mixed office uses and property zoned agricultural or residential shall not be located on the agriculturally or residentially zoned lands.
- (6) Buffer yard requirements may be reduced if a buffer yard exists on an adjoining property, provided the buffer yard is permanently protected in perpetuity under easement or other sufficient legal instrument and meets the minimum buffer yard requirement for this section. The recreational buffer requirement may be reduced or eliminated provided that a trail exists on an adjoining property which is permanently protected in perpetuity under easement or other sufficient legal instrument and meets the minimum recreational buffer requirement for this section.
- (7) Where possible, the Director of Planning shall permit the use of trails within ICSC, PEC and COP developments.
- (8) Buffer yards shall not be required on agriculturally zoned land when the subject property is converted to residential use, consisting of more than 5 lots, and is adjacent to a residentially zoned property.
- (9) Notwithstanding Table 30-1, buffer yards shall not be required between residential lots as defined in this chapter.

- (10) No portion of the buffer yard shall be allowed on privately-owned urban residential district lots.

B. Applicability. Buffer yards are required for:

- (1) The construction or erection of any new nonresidential building or structure for which a building permit is required.
- (2) Any enlargement exceeding 1,000 square feet or 10% of the total floor area, whichever is greater, of the exterior dimensions of an existing nonresidential building for which a building permit is required.

C. Exemptions. This section does not apply to the following situations:

- (1) The reconstruction of an existing building of which 50% or less of the floor area was destroyed or ruined by flooding, fire, windstorm or act of God. This exemption shall apply only where reconstruction of that building will not result in an increase in building size or paving area of the parking facilities to be provided.
- (2) Interior finish work or remodeling within a portion of a building, unless the work results in an increase in land use intensity.
- (3) Any use, building or structure for which only a change of use is requested, and which use does not increase the existing intensity or building square footage, nor requires structural modifications which would increase its volume or scale.
- (4) Contiguous commercial parcels or land areas under common ownership, within 1 development project.

D. Buffer yard landscape and improvement standards.

Table 30-1 Required Buffers Between Districts

	Zoning District	Subject Parcel Zoning District															
		AG	RR	R1	R2	R3	R4	RO	VR	VB	B1	B2	B3	CI	LI	GI	MO
Adjacent parcel buffer requirement	AG	E*	E	E	E	E	E	C	E	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	D
	RR	E**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	B	B	C	C	D	D	D	D
	R1	E**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	B	C	C	D	D	D	D
	R2	E**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	B	C	C	D	D	D	D
	R3	E**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	A	A	A	D	D	D	D
	R4	E**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	A	A	A	D	D	D	D
	RO	C**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	A	A	A	D	D	D	D
	VR	E**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	B	C	C	D	D	E	C
	VB	B	B	B	B	A	A	A	-	-	-	-	A	C	C	C	C
	B1	B	B	B	B	A	A	A	B	-	-	-	-	C	C	C	C
	B2	B	B	B	B	A	A	A	C	A	-	-	-	B	B	B	B
	B3	B	B	B	B	A	A	A	C	B	-	-	-	B	B	B	B
	CI	B	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	C	C	B	B	-	-	-	-
	LI	B	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	C	C	B	B	-	-	-	-
	GI	B	D	D	D	D	D	D	E	C	C	B	B	-	-	-	-
	MO	D	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	-

\* Buffer yard required per §267-30A(4)

\*\* Buffer yard requirements per §267-30A(8)

**§ 267-33. Signs.** [Amended by Bill 13-17; Bill 14-1; Bill 15-35 as amended; Bill 16-28; Bill 17-04; Bill 19-16 as amended; and Bill 21-14]

A. Zoning certificates; fees.

- (1) Zoning certificate requirement. It shall be unlawful for any person to erect, alter or relocate any sign or other advertising structure, as defined in this Part 1, without first obtaining a zoning certificate and making payment of the required fee.
- (2) Application. Application for a zoning certificate for a sign shall be signed by the property owner or authorized agent. The zoning certificate application shall require the name and address of the sign owner or the sign erector, drawings showing the copy design, dimensions, height and location of the sign and such other pertinent information as the Department may require to ensure compliance with the laws of Harford County, Maryland. Whenever an application for a zoning certificate is filed for the erection of a sign on property designated as an Historic Landmark, the application shall be subject to the approvals of the Historic District Commission and the Department.

B. General provisions. Signage shall be constructed in an unobtrusive manner which compliments the architectural elements of quality, style, color and material of the building, and the architectural period of the building(s). The following broad categories of sign types are regulated by this section unless otherwise provided herein:

- (1) Canopy signs. A canopy sign must have its lowest point no closer than 8 feet to the ground.
- (2) Freestanding signs. The maximum area of any freestanding sign shall not exceed 120 square feet. The setback measured to the edge of the sign shall be equal to 1/3 of the required building setback. Unless otherwise provided herein, the maximum height allowed for any freestanding sign is 20 feet measured from the road grade. If the elevation of the property where the sign is to be located is above the road grade, the maximum height of the sign may be increased 1 foot in height for every 1 foot of elevation above the road grade. In no instance shall the height of a freestanding sign exceed 30 feet above the road grade.

Except as otherwise provided for herein, electronic message boards are permitted as freestanding signs in the B1, B2, B3, C1, L1 and G1 zoning districts and are limited to 1 single- or double-sided sign per road frontage. Temporary or portable electronic message Boards are not permitted. Electronic message Boards shall not exceed 60 square feet in size, and shall display only on-premises messages, or time and/or temperature displays. An electronic message Board shall consist only of alphabetic or numeric characters and shall not include any graphic, pictorial or photographic images or videos. The appearance of any animation, motion, flashing, blinking or shimmering is not permitted. A single message, or segment of a message, shall have a display time of at least 2 seconds, including the time needed to move the message onto the sign Board, with all segments of the total message to be displayed within 10 seconds. A display traveling horizontally across the message Board shall move between 16 and 32 light columns per second. Requirements for display times do not apply to time and/or temperature displays.

- (3) Wall signs. Wall signs shall include all flat signs which are placed against a building or other structure and attached to the exterior front, rear or side wall of any building or other structure. Flat wall mounted signs may be located on any

wall of a building and may extend not more than 8 feet above the parapet wall or roofline of the building to which they are attached. However, no window, or part of a window, shall be covered by the sign area or its supporting structure.

- (4) Temporary signs. The maximum number of temporary signs a property may have in any 1 calendar year is 2. Temporary signs may be displayed for periods not exceeding 30 consecutive calendar days and not exceeding 60 calendar days in any 1 year.
- (5) Projecting signs. Projecting signs may not extend over public rights-of-way, or project more than 4 feet from the wall of a building. Projecting signs may not have less than 10 feet clearance, as measured vertically from the ground to the bottom of the sign or supporting structure, and shall not exceed a height of 25 feet, as measured vertically from the ground to the top of the sign or supporting structure. Projecting signs shall have a maximum sign area of 60 square feet.
- (6) Directional signs. Unless otherwise provided herein, the maximum area of any directional sign shall not exceed 6 square feet. Directional signs can be located at the nearest intersection of any major collector or arterial road and set back 10 feet from the property line. Unless otherwise provided herein, the maximum height allowed for any directional sign is 6 feet above the nearest public road grade.
- (7) Billboards.
  - (a) General. Billboards shall be permitted in the General Industrial (GI) district only. New billboards may not be constructed within the Chesapeake Science and Security Corridor or the Edgewood Neighborhood Overlay District (ENOD).
  - (b) Location. Billboards shall be limited to 1 per parcel. Billboards shall not be permitted to be erected within 750 feet of any residence, historic structure or building as defined in §267-4 (Definitions), public square or the entrance to any public park, public, private or parochial school, library, church or similar institution. All such signs shall be set back from the front property line the distance required for a principal building in the zoning district in which located. No billboard shall be permitted to be erected within 100 feet of a road intersection unless the base of the sign is not less than 10 feet above ground level or road surface, whichever is higher. No billboard shall be erected within 660 feet of any highway which is part of the interstate highway system.
  - (c) Height. A billboard shall be no more than 30 feet in height from road grade.
  - (d) Area. The maximum area of any billboard shall not exceed 300 square feet.
  - (e) Illumination. Illumination shall be in accordance with the provisions of this section.
- (8) Permanent residential entrance, and Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) signs. Residential entrance, development project identification and CCRC signs, with letters or advertising area not to exceed a total area of 48 square feet, shall be permitted on the property, provided that it is located not less than 10 feet from the road right-of-way. In addition, the height of the sign or

[3] Roof signs.

[4] Canopy signs.

- (b) Two freestanding signs identifying commercial or industrial activity other than Integrated Community Shopping Centers shall be allowed on each road frontage if the property has a minimum of 40 feet of road frontage. The sign area shall be calculated on the basis of 1 square foot of sign for every foot of property road frontage, and the maximum sign area shall be determined in accordance with the restrictions contained in Subsection B(2) of this section.
- (c) One temporary sign shall be permitted, provided that the sign shall not exceed 32 square feet or 6 feet in height and shall be located not less than 10 feet from the road right-of-way.
- (d) Construction signs. One sign shall be permitted for all construction contractors, 1 for all professionals and firms and 1 for all lending institutions on sites under construction. Each sign shall not exceed 32 square feet in area, and no more than 3 such signs shall be permitted on 1 site. The signs shall be confined to the construction site, construction shed or trailer and shall be removed within 15 days after the beginning of the intended use of the project.
- (e) Permanent institutional signs. One lighted sign setting forth the name of places of worship, service clubs, civic organizations, public or service centers, public institutions, schools or other similar uses shall be permitted. These signs shall be located not less than 20 feet from the road right-of-way, shall not exceed 54 square feet in area and shall not exceed 6 feet in height.
- (f) Permanent residential entrance or Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) signs are permitted pursuant to the provisions of Subsection B(8).
- (g) An overall signage plan and architectural renderings of the signs shall be submitted as part of the Site Plan approval process. Creative modifications to the standard signage package used by large corporations and innovative sign lighting is strongly encouraged.
- (h) For properties in the B1, B2 and B3 districts, a maximum of 2 directional signs may be permitted provided:
  - [1] The sign is located within 1,000 feet of the commercial structure to which it is directing and the property on which the commercial structure is located is also zoned B1, B2 or B3.
  - [2] The sign area does not exceed 20 square feet.
  - [3] The sign height does not exceed 10 feet above the nearest public road grade.
  - [4] If the business for which the sign was erected is no longer operating, the sign shall be removed promptly.

- (7) MO Mixed Office district. In addition to the requirements set forth in this section, signs in the MO district must comply with the following standards:
- (a) Signs erected on and attached to commercial, industrial or institutional buildings. The total area of all signs erected on and attached to commercial, industrial or institutional buildings shall not exceed 1 square foot per each linear foot of building width, measured along the front wall or entrance wall of a building. If a building is located on a lot having frontage on 2 streets, then the sign area for each side shall be calculated separately. The following types of signs shall be permitted:
    - [1] Wall signs.
    - [2] Projecting signs.
    - [3] Roof signs.
    - [4] Canopy signs.
  - (b) Signs shall be considered an integral part of the design and shall incorporate the architectural elements and materials utilized. In all instances, consideration shall be taken to ensure each sign does not restrict sight distance for motor vehicle operators.
  - (c) An overall signage plan and architectural renderings of the signs shall be submitted as part of the Site Plan approval process. Creative modifications to the standard signage package used by large corporations and innovative sign lighting is strongly encouraged.
  - (d) Freestanding identification signs shall be limited to 1 sign for each road frontage. The maximum size of any sign shall not exceed 120 square feet. The maximum height of the signs shall not exceed 20 feet, and signs must be set back a minimum of 10 feet from the road right-of-way.
  - (e) Directional information signs shall be adequately provided and design coordinated.
  - (f) Permanent institutional signs. One lighted sign setting forth the name of places of worship, service clubs, civic organizations, public or service centers, public institutions, schools or other similar uses shall be permitted. These signs shall be located not less than 20 feet from the road right-of-way, shall not exceed 54 square feet in area and shall not exceed 6 feet in height.
  - (g) Construction signs. One sign shall be permitted for all construction contractors, 1 for all professionals and firms and 1 for all lending institutions on sites under construction. Each sign shall not exceed 16 square feet in area, and no more than 3 such signs shall be permitted on 1 site. The signs shall be confined to the construction site, construction shed or trailer and shall be removed within 15 days after the beginning of the intended use of the project.