

THE MARYLAND ZONING CHECKUP

A PERFORMANCE GUIDE FOR SMALL AND RURAL JURISDICTIONS

Prepared by:

The Maryland Department of Planning

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“Keep your code running in peak performance”

THE MARYLAND ZONING CHECKUP

Purpose

Prepared by Regional Planners in the Local Assistance and Training (LAT) division of the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP), the Maryland Zoning CheckUp (CheckUp) is a performance guide designed to assist planning boards and commissions in rural and other small jurisdictions across the state.

Zoning boards/commissions in these jurisdictions may face staffing or other capacity issues affecting their ability to maintain and standardize complex zoning ordinances/codes and documents.

To address these issues, MDP created the Checkup to provide guidance to reviewers via a series of prompts, questions, answers, and recommendations by which the process may be streamlined and simplified.

THE MARYLAND ZONING CHECKUP

Goal

To ensure official (adopted) local zoning ordinances/codes and maps are complete and consistent with their jurisdictions' comprehensive plans and implementation strategies.

The Maryland Zoning CheckUp:

- ✓ Is a self-evaluation tool for voluntary use in reviewing adopted zoning ordinances/ codes, and maps.
- ✓ Addresses a variety of zoning topics to improve the performance of existing zoning mechanisms.
- ✓ Accounts for periodic plan amendments, updates, local annexations, changes in best practices, and changes in applicable federal or state law.
- ✓ Encourages annual re-evaluation to ensure adopted zoning ordinances, codes, and maps are meticulously maintained and up-to-date.
- ✓ May be used as part of board/commission-run workshops or by professional staff or consultants hired to conduct reviews.
- ✓ Can be tailored to the specific needs of a jurisdiction.

Structure:

The CheckUp functions as a workbook that, through a series of questions, guides users through the review process. It is divided into four primary chapters dealing with the most essential matters a jurisdiction should revisit each year.

The CheckUp is an adaptable and useful tool for any jurisdiction with planning and zoning authority.

Materials:

- ✓ Maryland Zoning CheckUp PowerPoint presentation
- ✓ Maryland Zoning CheckUp Workbook & Guidance document

How to Use:

The CheckUp is voluntary

Jurisdictions may choose to review the topic areas at their own pace and based on local interest.

However, MDP recommends annually reviewing the **Essential Zoning Topics** found in Chapters One through Four. MDP will add new topics in later phases of the CheckUp development process.

Essential Zoning Topics to be reviewed annually:

Chapter / Topic	Zoning Code	Comp Plan*	Frequency
1. Preserving the Official Zoning Map	✓		Annually*
2. Preserving the Official Zoning Code	✓	✓	Annually*
3. Zoning Map Changes	✓		Annually*
4. Ordinance Integration	✓		Annually*

***Important:** Be sure to review for consistency with the jurisdiction’s comprehensive plan.

Prior to Starting:

1. Form a Workgroup

- ✓ A small workgroup or subcommittee, consisting of the local planning and zoning officials and/or planning board members/commissioners, is the most efficient way to facilitate review.
- ✓ The workgroup compiles and evaluates all necessary local planning and zoning documents addressed in the checklist questions.
- ✓ The findings of the workgroup may be shared at a work session with the entire planning board/commission, local elected body, and/or the public.

2. Gather Essential Documents

The following official documents -- adopted, signed, hardcopy versions including all relevant amendments -- are **essential** to complete the reviews covered in each chapter:

- Zoning Map
- Zoning Ordinance/Code
- All effective municipal annexations
- Comprehensive Plan
- County Master Water and Sewerage Plan

Additionally, copies of the Subdivision or Land Development Regulations are optional but highly recommended.

You May Now Proceed to Chapter One of the Maryland Zoning CheckUp!

Please contact your Regional Planner should you have questions
or require assistance.