



PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND OUTCOMES
REPORT TO GOVERNOR WES MOORE

Maryland Coordinated Permitting Review Council
Priority Infrastructure and Place-based Projects
July 1, 2026

Executive Order



01.01.2024.39, Section D—The purpose of the Permitting Review Council is to facilitate interagency coordination and efficient processing of approvals required to advance priority infrastructure and place-based projects within the State to bolster transparency, ensure predictability, and foster interagency coordination to grow Maryland’s economy while safeguarding the health and safety of residents.

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EXECUTIVE INTRODUCTION

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

July 1, 2026

Governor Moore,

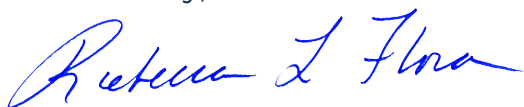
On behalf of the Maryland Coordinated Permitting Review Council (Council) this report is presented to you as our “Preliminary Findings Report” as per [Executive Order 01.01.2024.39](#), “Strengthening Maryland’s Business Climate to Bolster Economic Competitiveness,” signed December 19, 2024. It has been an honor to serve as the chair of the Council in support of this critical topic impacting Maryland’s future.

The Council structure and process allowed us to dig deep to uncover the complex challenges of state permitting systems for place-based and infrastructure projects. The challenges include inconsistent and inefficient internal processes, burdensome and confusing regulations, a range of technology usage that lacks interagency connectivity, and, no holistic, centralized accountability to users and the public.

There has also been good progress within some agencies such as Maryland Department of Environment and Maryland Historical Trust, that have implemented technological upgrades and systems. Maryland Department of Commerce, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, and Maryland Department of Agriculture have taken a concierge approach to helping some users but with limited scalability within our current system. Our six Pilot Project teams have also been grateful for the support of the process that led to several permitting situations being resolved.

Despite the noteworthy progress, the approach is currently a series of disconnected patches without a whole system, long-term vision with prioritized actions to move Maryland forward. It is evident that immediate, bold, and focused action must be taken to not just catch up but to lead on permitting if we are to become economically competitive and create opportunities for all. We look forward to discussing the details with you on any of the topics contained in this report.

Sincerely,



Rebecca L. Flora, AICP
Secretary, Maryland Department of Planning
Chair, Maryland Coordinated Permitting Review Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Governor Moore signed Executive Order 01.01.2024.39, Strengthening Maryland's Business Climate to Bolster Economic Competitiveness, on December 19, 2024, recognizing that state government plays a vital role in attracting, retaining, and growing businesses and workforce opportunities throughout Maryland. To advance this goal, Section D of the Executive Order established the Maryland Coordinated Permitting Review Council (Council) within the Maryland Department of Planning and charged it with improving interagency coordination and the efficient processing of approvals required for priority infrastructure and place-based projects. The Executive Order directs the Council to promote transparency, predictability, and accountability while safeguarding public health, safety, and environmental protections.

To fulfill this mandate, the Council was tasked with establishing eligibility criteria for covered projects, coordinating interagency permit reviews through a Permitting Working Group, developing coordinated project plans and review schedules, facilitating information sharing among agencies, and creating both an internal intake system and public-facing dashboard to improve transparency and accountability.

The Council's first year focused on **four core areas of implementation in compliance with the executive order.**

- **Permitting Council formation and administration**
- **Pilot project selection and support**
- **Dashboard development and transparent project tracking**
- **Development of findings and recommendations**

The Council's work was grounded in the principle that Maryland's permitting system must function as a coordinated network rather than a series of independent agency actions. To support this objective, the Council established a cross-agency Permitting Working Group composed of permitting, review, and economic development agencies. Project-specific teams were created for each pilot project to facilitate communication, develop coordinated project plans, identify permitting dependencies, and address issues early in the review process.

During its pilot year, the Council applied these coordination tools to six priority infrastructure and place-based projects across Maryland. Through regular meetings, coordinated planning, and schedule tracking, the Council gained insight into permitting challenges, dependencies, process improvements, and delivery barriers. The pilot demonstrated that early coordination, shared timelines, and increased visibility improve predictability while maintaining agency authority and review standards.

The Council also advanced the Executive Order's technology and transparency objectives by developing a permitting dashboard prototype. Partnering with participating agencies, the Council explored methods to aggregate permitting data into a centralized view that improves transparency, accountability, and communication. This effort established a foundation for future statewide permitting modernization initiatives to accelerate approvals.

This report summarizes the Council's pilot year, documenting lessons learned from project coordination, evaluating permitting benchmarks, and offering recommendations to improve Maryland's permitting system. These findings inform a more coordinated, transparent, and predictable process that strengthens economic competitiveness while upholding environmental, health, and safety standards.



GOVERNOR MOORE SIGNED EXECUTIVE ORDER



The primary challenge is not the efficiency of the permitting process, but the complexity across statutory, COMAR, and preference-based layers.

User Experience Roundtable Participant

TOP BARRIERS TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN MARYLAND

While the work of the Maryland Coordinated Permitting Review Council focused on modernizing and streamlining state permitting processes, the pilot process revealed that permitting is only one component of a broader ecosystem influencing Maryland's economic competitiveness. Feedback from pilot projects, agency partners, and stakeholders highlighted several structural and market driven barriers that continue to impact the state's ability to attract and advance development. These barriers often operate in parallel with, and sometimes independently of, permitting timelines, and must be addressed holistically to fully realize the state's economic development goals.

Infrastructure Capacity: Sewer and Water Constraints

A consistent challenge identified across multiple projects is the availability and capacity of sewer and water infrastructure. In many jurisdictions, aging systems, limited treatment capacity, or lack of planned infrastructure expansion restrict the feasibility of new development. Even when state permitting processes are coordinated and efficient, projects can be delayed or scaled down due to insufficient utility capacity or the need for costly infrastructure upgrades. These constraints are particularly acute in rapidly growing or environmentally sensitive areas, where regulatory requirements further limit expansion. As a result, infrastructure readiness remains a critical gating factor for economic growth.

Housing Supply and Development Feasibility

Maryland's constrained housing stock continues to present a significant barrier to economic competitiveness. Limited availability of developable land, combined with rising construction costs and local development restrictions, has made it increasingly difficult to deliver housing at the scale and affordability required to support workforce growth. Pilot project feedback indicated that even when permitting pathways are clarified, local requirements such as density limitations, parking standards, and design constraints can render projects financially infeasible. This dynamic not only impacts residential development but also limits the state's ability to attract and retain employers who depend on a stable and accessible workforce housing supply.



The State creates a regulation, the county adds their interpretation, and then municipalities layer on additional requirements.

User Experience Roundtable Participant

Labor Market Constraints

The availability of a skilled and reliable labor force emerged as a key constraint. Developers and project sponsors noted challenges in securing both construction labor and long-term workforce talent needed to support new facilities and operations. Labor shortages can extend project timelines, increase costs, and reduce the overall attractiveness of Maryland as a destination for business investment. These challenges are compounded in regions where housing affordability and accessibility issues further limit workforce availability, reinforcing the interdependence between labor supply and housing development.

Local Policy and Political Dynamics

Local jurisdictional processes and political considerations were frequently cited as barriers that can introduce uncertainty and delay beyond state level coordination efforts. Zoning approvals, community opposition, local legislative actions, and shifting policy priorities can significantly influence project outcomes. In some cases, local requirements or political dynamics were identified as creating additional layers of review or unpredictability that are not addressed through state permitting improvements alone. This underscores the importance of continued engagement with local governments and the need for greater alignment between state economic development priorities and local land use policies.



Market and Site Constraints

Beyond regulatory and policy considerations, site specific and market conditions also present barriers to development. Environmental constraints, site assembly challenges, and the cost of remediation or infrastructure improvements can limit project viability. Infill development, which is often prioritized for smart growth objectives, frequently faces higher costs and complexity compared to greenfield development. These factors can discourage investment or require additional public support to advance projects that align with broader State goals.

Implications for Economic Competitiveness

The findings from the pilot year demonstrate that while modernizing permitting systems through improved coordination, transparency, and accountability can significantly reduce uncertainty and improve project delivery, it is not a standalone solution. The state's ability to compete for and retain investment is also shaped by infrastructure readiness, housing availability, workforce capacity, and alignment between state and local policies.

Addressing these barriers will require a coordinated, cross sector approach that extends beyond permitting reform. Strategic investments in infrastructure, policies that enable housing production, workforce development initiatives, and stronger state local alignment will be essential to complement the progress made through the Permitting Council's work. Together, these efforts can position Maryland to more effectively attract investment, support sustainable growth, and enhance long term economic competitiveness.



Overlapping authority among state, local, and federal entities introduces redundancy, delays, and confusion in the review process

User Experience Roundtable Participant



PROCESS & GOVERNANCE

The Maryland Coordinated Permitting Review Council (Council) includes twelve state agencies and four local jurisdiction representatives engaged in project permitting and review-related activities. Under Governor Moore's Executive Order 01.01.2024.39, the Council held fourteen open meetings over eighteen months. Meeting agendas and reports were posted on the Council website, and quarterly progress reports were provided to Governor Moore and made publicly available.

MDP Secretary Rebecca Flora, served as Chair of the Council, which was administered by MDP. Council participation remained strong, with an average attendance rate of 90–100 percent. Presentations from agencies, local jurisdictions, and project representatives provided insight into permitting experiences across Maryland.

The Council selected six pilot projects based on approved criteria designed to reflect a diverse range of place-based and infrastructure projects. The pilot projects were supported by Council Working Group members and MDP project liaisons, allowing project teams to identify permitting issues, improve coordination, and test approaches across different project types, scales, and locations. Although the pilot portfolio was small, it provided meaningful insight into permitting challenges and user experience. These findings were supplemented by a user experience roundtable with 15 development professionals.

The pilot projects also informed development of a prototype project dashboard to centralize permit information into a transparent tracking site. The extensive manual effort required to gather data from agencies and project teams underscored the need for improved data coordination and system integration.



Bringing relevant agencies to the table and holding regular meetings worked well for informing everyone of progress and forecasting upcoming questions.

Pilot Project Owner



USER EXPERIENCE ROUNDTABLE



PHASE 1 AT BAINBRIDGE SITE VISIT



“There’s no one to call anymore... staffing is low everywhere, and it is hard to get a hold of a person.”

User Experience Roundtable
Participant

In addition to the Executive Order mandate, MDP conducted limited research to benchmark Maryland against other states and better understand local permitting practices. This work included state benchmarking, a local permitting survey, and outreach to urban and rural jurisdictions of varying sizes. Together, the Council process, pilot projects, user roundtable, and supplemental research informed the recommendations provided in this report.

A critical distinction is the difference between permitting agencies and reviewing agencies.

Permitting agencies, including Maryland Department of Environment and Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration, hold statutory authority to issue final approvals.

Reviewing agencies, including Department of Natural Resources, Maryland Historical Trust, Maryland Department of Environment Critical Area Commission, and Office of the State Fire Marshal, provide technical expertise, identify concerns, and offer recommendations. Their role is classified as review and consultive rather than permitting because they provide technical comments to the permitting agency but do not issue the final permit.

Understanding this distinction is important for data accuracy, process clarity, and system design. While interagency coordination occurs, agencies continue to operate through separate systems and workflows. This reinforces the need for clearer tracking, improved data sharing, and more consistent visibility across permitting and review activities.

Tables 1 & 2 summarize the primary permitting agencies involved in the pilot projects, including their systems for development permit intake, review, tracking, and issuance. The table highlights continued progress toward automated workflows, online customer interfaces, and improved reporting capabilities.

Table 1 Permitting Agencies and Capacities

AGENCY	REVIEW SYSTEM	CURRENT CAPABILITIES
MDE	Environmental Service Center (ESC), custom in-house system	Provides applicant-facing updates, internal review workflows, performance logging, online applications, and online fee payment. As of January 14, 2026, customers can apply and pay online for 42 of MDE's 115 permit types, with additional permit types planned for 2026. MDE also uses tracking dashboards and monthly progress reviews to measure output against December 2025 baseline metrics.
MDOT SHA	Digital portal for Traffic Impact Study (TIS) submissions; Access Permits dashboard	Supports TIS submission, access permit tracking, plan review, and final concurrence tracking. Developers can monitor overall progress through assigned IDs on a public-facing tracking website, while an internal dashboard tracks review timelines and efficiency. Public tracking does not show reviewer status by discipline.

Table 2 Reviewing Agency Systems and Tracking Capabilities

AGENCY	REVIEW SYSTEM	CURRENT CAPABILITIES
MHT	Uses a custom Electronic Section 106 Documentation Submittal System, built in 2023, to review state-assisted actions under 36 CFR Part 800 and ensure consistency for projects requiring federal and state coordination.	Uses a reporting system similar to other State Historic Preservation Offices.
DNR	Provides natural resource impact and regulatory feedback, primarily for wetland and waterway reviews. DNR provides review comments and guidance but does not issue permits for these activities.	Uses internal tracking tools to ensure comments are provided by agency deadlines.
CAC	Uses Salesforce as a submission portal and case management system for applicants.	Applicants receive email confirmation of submission; however, there is no public-facing status tracking.
OFSM	Coordinates with local jurisdictions on submitted projects and enforcement actions. OFSM does not officially issue permits for new construction projects.	Currently developing a statewide reporting system using Excel. Future plans include a public-facing portal and field-based electronic inspections.

FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL PERMITTING RESEARCH AND BENCHMARKING

To inform the Council's recommendations, MDP conducted limited research on federal, state, and local permitting models, including FAST-41, Virginia Permit Transparency (VPT), Pennsylvania's Permit Fast Track Program, and a 2026 survey of Maryland counties and municipalities. The research focused on strategies to improve efficiency, predictability, accountability, transparency, technology modernization, and interagency coordination within Maryland's permitting system.

Federal Permitting Research

FAST-41: Federal Permitting Improvement Framework

FAST-41, established under Title 41 of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, created the Federal Permitting Improvement Steering Council (FPISC) to coordinate and streamline federal environmental reviews and related authorizations for major infrastructure projects involving multiple federal agencies. FPISC includes representatives from 13 federal agencies, the Council on Environmental Quality, and the Office of Management and Budget.

FAST-41 uses a coordinated project management approach for large-scale infrastructure projects. Participation is voluntary and limited to projects that meet eligibility criteria across designated industry sectors. Participating projects receive structured interagency coordination, defined review schedules, and enhanced oversight to reduce delays and improve accountability.

A key feature is the Federal Permitting Dashboard, a public-facing platform that tracks project milestones, review schedules, permitting agencies, and project status. The dashboard provides applicants, agencies, and the public with a transparent view of project progress and agency responsibilities.



LOCH RAVEN OVERLOOK SITE VISIT



Goal posts change drastically over the course of a development.

User Experience Roundtable Participant

Lessons for Maryland

FAST-41 offers useful models for Maryland's permitting modernization efforts, particularly in the areas of interagency coordination, project management, transparency, and accountability.

Key lessons include:

- Coordinated Project Plans can establish shared schedules across participating agencies.
- Defined milestones create clearer expectations for review timelines and agency responsibilities.
- Public dashboards improve transparency and predictability for applicants and stakeholders.
- Centralized coordination can reduce delays across multiple reviewing entities.
- Agency accountability measures help maintain momentum and identify bottlenecks.

FAST-41 is narrower than Maryland's permitting modernization vision because it focuses primarily on federal environmental reviews for major infrastructure projects. Maryland has an opportunity to adapt FAST-41's coordination tools across a broader permitting ecosystem, including environmental permits, transportation approvals, utility reviews, local development approvals, and other regulatory requirements that collectively influence project timelines.

State Permitting Research

Virginia Permit Transparency (VPT)

Virginia's Permit Transparency (VPT) platform provides applicants and the public with a centralized, real-time view of permit, license, and certification reviews across multiple state agencies. The system offers an "Amazon-style" tracking experience that displays project status, review milestones, timelines, and the agency or applicant responsible for the next action.

By making permit progress visible to applicants, agencies, and the public, VPT improves accountability, helps identify the source of delays, and creates greater predictability throughout the review process. Virginia reports that approximately 70 percent of permitting issues are resolved through increased visibility and transparency alone.

Key Metrics

- Initial launch: Less than five months
- Managed by: Virginia Office of Regulatory Management (ORM)
- Department of Environmental Quality pilot reduced permit processing times by up to 70%
- Additional participating agencies improved processing times by 10–20%
- Average regulatory review timelines decreased from approximately 80 days to fewer than 10 days.

Lessons for Maryland

- Public permit tracking improves transparency and accountability.
- Visibility into project status helps identify and resolve delays.
- Statewide coordination can improve permitting performance across agencies.
- Broad implementation may provide greater public benefit than project-specific programs.

Pennsylvania Permit Fast Track

Pennsylvania's Permit Fast Track Program provides centralized coordination for high-impact economic development and infrastructure projects that require review by multiple state agencies. Managed by the Governor's Office of Transformation and Opportunity (OTO), the program coordinates project reviews, resolves interagency issues, and provides executive-level oversight to help projects move through the permitting process more efficiently.

The program uses a public dashboard with Gantt-style schedules to track permit milestones, project status, and agency responsibilities. A notable feature is Pennsylvania's "Payback" program, which refunds permit fees when agencies fail to meet established review timelines, creating accountability for permit performance and customer service.

Key Metrics

- Funding: \$16.9 million across two budget cycles
- Development timeline: Approximately 22 months
- Managed by: Office of Transformation and Opportunity (OTO)
- Large-scale project permitting timelines reduced by approximately 50%

Lessons for Maryland

- Centralized coordination can reduce interagency conflicts and project delays.
- Executive-level oversight helps maintain momentum on priority projects.
- Performance incentives can improve accountability and customer service.
- Public project tracking increases transparency and predictability.
- While effective for priority projects, Maryland may benefit from applying similar principles more broadly across its permitting system.

Agencies are often perceived as being "entrenched in regulatory requirements" rather than responsive to user needs.



PHASE 1 AT BAINBRIDGE SITE VISIT

Key Findings from State Benchmarks

The review of Virginia and Pennsylvania highlights several recurring themes that are applicable to Maryland's modernization efforts including:

- Transparency improves accountability and public trust
- Clear identification of responsible reviewers helps distinguish the causes of permitting delays
- Centralized coordination functions can reduce interagency conflicts and improve communication
- Public-facing dashboards create greater predictability for applicants
- Comprehensive systems that encompass all permits may provide broader public benefits than priority project only expedited programs
- Performance metrics and timeline tracking create stronger incentives for timely permit reviews

Local Permitting Research

Local permitting is frequently identified as a barrier to efficient project delivery and permitting implementation. To better understand the on-the-ground realities of local permitting systems, variations in jurisdictional capacity, and emerging best practices, MDP conducted preliminary research. Together, these efforts provided insight into technology adoption, transparency, operational challenges, and the relationship between local permitting and state regulatory reviews.



Some agencies were already meeting regularly with developers, and this approach has proven effective in streamlining processes and improving coordination.

Maryland Local Permitting Survey

Building upon a previous study completed in 2000, MDP conducted a statewide survey of local permitting operations in 2026 to better understand permitting technology, reporting practices, digital capabilities, and barriers affecting permit processing. Responses were collected from all 23 counties and Baltimore City, representing a diverse range of jurisdictions and permitting environments.

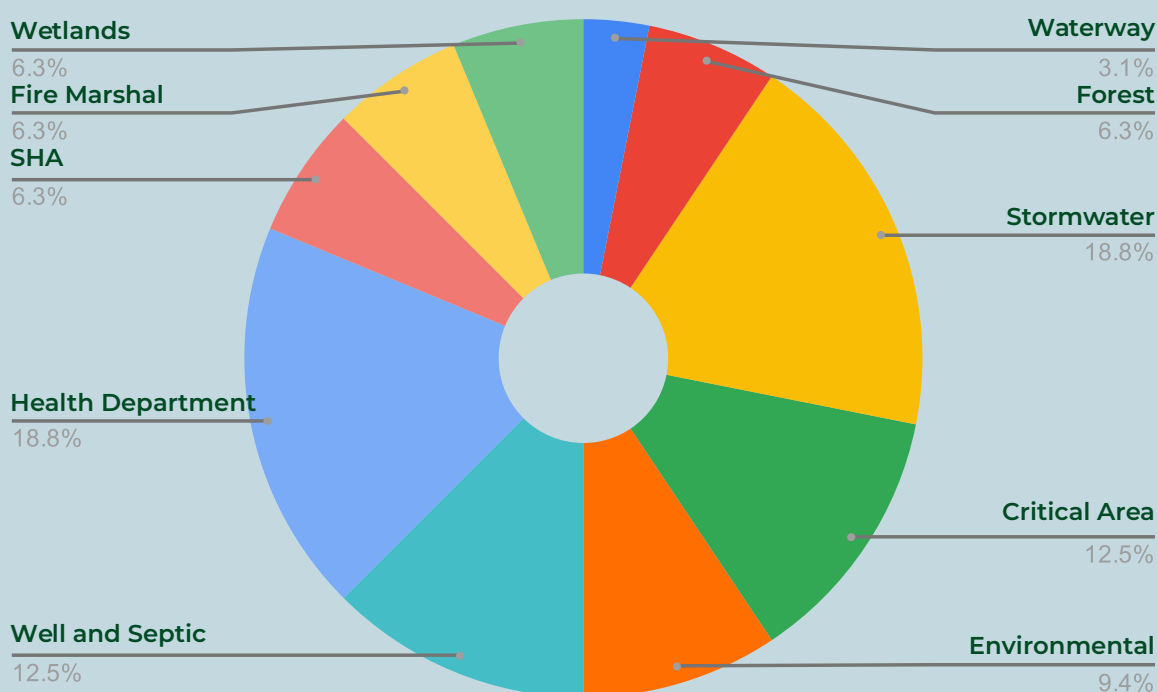
Technology and Software Adoption

The survey found that local governments have made significant progress in adopting digital permitting tools.

Key findings include:

- All responding counties reported using permit software systems.
- Approximately 95 percent of respondents use commercial permitting platforms, including Accela, Tyler Technologies, CentralSquare, OpenGov, Infor, and CityWorks.
- Jurisdictions are increasingly shifting from spreadsheets and locally developed databases to cloud-based enterprise permitting systems.
- Integrated platforms are improving digital workflows, online payment capabilities, and permit tracking.
- Smaller jurisdictions continue to face modernization barriers due to limited resources, software licensing costs, and vendor consolidation.

Figure 1: Distribution of Regulatory Hurdles in the 2026 Local Permit Software Survey



The figure indicates the top permitting friction points identified by local jurisdictions.

Data Transparency and Reporting

Most counties collect permit activity data, but online access remains uneven.

- All but two responding counties collect and publish permit activity data in some form.
- Only 11 counties publish permit data online.

These findings indicate an opportunity to improve transparency and standardize reporting practices across local governments.

State-Level Barriers Affecting Local Permitting

Local jurisdictions identified several recurring challenges associated with state-level permitting requirements.

- Environmental health regulations
- Storm water management requirements
- Septic approvals
- Environmental resource protection regulations
- Coordination with MDE, MDOT State Highway Administration, the State Fire Marshal, and other state entities
- Seasonal testing requirements
- Sequential review processes involving multiple agencies

Respondents emphasized that many permitting delays occur outside local control due to external approvals and interagency dependencies. These findings reinforce the need for clearer review timelines, stronger interagency coordination, and greater visibility into permit dependencies across levels of government.



PIMLICO REDEVELOPMENT SITE VISIT



No way to get a full picture of project status.

User Experience Roundtable
Participant



PIMLICO REDEVELOPMENT SITE VISIT

Stakeholders emphasized the need for updated guidance and clearer regulatory pathways for value-added agriculture and emerging projects. These unique initiatives often fall outside existing frameworks, creating uncertainty and delays for applicants and reviewers.

To supplement the survey, the Council invited several jurisdictions, including Baltimore City, the Town of Thurmont, Montgomery County, Howard County, Frederick County, and Wicomico County to meet and present on local permitting operations. These discussions provided additional insight into local review processes, recent customer service improvements, common barriers, and the influence of state agency reviews on local permitting timelines.

Conclusion

Federal, state, and local research demonstrates that **permitting modernization is most effective when transparency, accountability, technology integration, and structured interagency coordination** work together. Benchmark programs highlight the value of public dashboards, coordinated project plans, centralized issue resolution, and clearly defined agency responsibilities, while Maryland's local survey results show continued challenges related to fragmented systems, uneven technological capacity, and coordination with state regulatory agencies.

These findings support the Council's recommendations to streamline processes modernize permitting technology, strengthen interagency coordination, and create a more predictable, transparent, and user-centered permitting experience for applicants across Maryland.



Baltimore County Government has implemented a priority review program that establishes agreed-upon review timelines, demonstrating a model for improving predictability and efficiency.

KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

A year-long discovery process conducted by MDP in association with the Permitting Council uncovered multiple findings regarding user experiences with the state's permitting systems. The **FINDINGS** summarized below were grouped into eight categories and include specific examples further below based on a synthesis of input collected from pilot project users of the systems, user roundtable, and state and local agency participants.

- 1. Communications:** Maryland permitting systems are independently operated and lack a customer-focused, business friendly approach to intake and review on a whole project basis.
- 2. Review Methods:** Inconsistency in the interpretation and implementation of reviews within agencies and delegated authorities creates user confusion and frustration.
- 3. Statute and Regulations:** There is no comprehensive understanding of all the statutory and regulatory permitting requirements imposed on infrastructure and place-based type projects and the resulting impacts.
- 4. Market Innovation and Transformation:** Prescriptive, one size fits all approaches to regulating development, hinders the attraction of fast changing new markets and application of best practices.
- 5. Permitting Technical Systems:** Maryland's existing permitting application and review systems are fragmented with varying degrees of capacity that operate independently.
- 6. Project Permitting Transparency:** There is no system for project teams or the public to track an individual project progress across all state permits.
- 7. State Permitting Oversight:** There is no state entity that has a comprehensive view and oversight authority to ensure quality control and accountability of all state permitting for development projects.
- 8. Agency Coordination:** There is no centralized method for interagency/ intra-agency coordination and cooperation beyond that occurring through project specific advocacy and informal networks.

RECOMMENDATIONS for modernizing Maryland's permitting systems address each finding area and integrate lessons learned from other states and localities. The recommendations for infrastructure and place-based project types are organized into four **ACTION** areas: **Process, Regulatory, Technology, Accountability.**

PROCESS

Process findings are those that could be addressed with internal policy and operational actions that do not require regulatory or other approvals beyond internal agency directives and modification of systems. Recommendations will require a high degree of inter-agency cooperation and may require added staffing and/or consultant capacity. Findings in this category were synthesized into two primary topics — **Communications and Review Methods.**

FINDING: Communications

Maryland permitting systems are independently operated and lack a customer-focused, business friendly approach to intake and review on a whole project basis.

- Emails are often preferred, especially by users who value written records for tracking, over phone calls or meetings, though this can sometimes prolong and complicate feedback loops.
- A siloed view of the project by topic area is a barrier to the creation of integrated solutions.
- Lack of equitable, publicly disclosed information on the full range of permits and systems impedes the success of small- or first-time projects.
- MDE leads monthly interagency meetings that bring state and federal agencies together to jointly review complex wetlands and waterways projects, enabling coordinated feedback, direct engagement with applicants, and improved permitting efficiency



SBY MARKET CENTER SITE VISIT



Coordination between the DoIT and agencies such as the MDE is ongoing but not yet fully integrated into a comprehensive oversight framework.



QUANTUM FREDERICK SITE VISIT

FINDING: Review Methods

Inconsistency in the interpretation and implementation of reviews within agencies and delegated authorities creates user confusion and frustration

- There is a lack of visibility in review processes, with limited transparency, minimal interim communication, and no clear commitment to required review time frames.
- Incomplete and multiple, additive reviews create a continual moving target and uncertainty.
- A linear approach to reviews requires one full approval before the next can proceed which lengthens review time frames and uncertainty.
- Guidance documents are an important tool when multiple review entities and people are engaged. There were several concerns raised about the quality of these tools.
- Documents are at times outdated or don't exist for new and fast-changing markets and user types.
- There is a lack of adequate detail to provide clear and consistent directives to state and/or local implementation reviewers.
- Agency review staff are often in short supply, conduct varying reviews, and may vary across districts and have conflicting goals across divisions within one agency.



Pilot project teams reported receiving conflicting guidance across divisions within the same agency

RECOMMENDATIONS: PROCESS

- » **P1 Formalize and continue the Interagency Permitting Workgroup**, responsible for convening and facilitating cross-agency coordination meetings, supporting project-specific permitting teams, tracking performance metrics, identifying systemic permitting challenges, and regularly reporting findings and recommendations to participating agencies and executive leadership.
- » **P2 Develop standardized communication materials** that clearly map permit requirements, dependencies, timelines, and key contacts, and identify opportunities for concurrent reviews.
- » **P3 Assess and enhance the consistency of reviewer training programs** across agencies to promote uniform interpretation of state laws, regulations, and policies, and establish clear review protocols that improve predictability and consistency in permitting outcomes.
- » **P4 Establish required review timelines** based on a standardized project understanding that is mutually agreed upon by state agencies and the applicant, using a consistent template to align scope, milestones, and review schedules.
- » **P5 Establish a third-party review program** by pre-qualifying and contracting Maryland-based professionals to create a vetted, on-call surge pool that can be deployed to address workload spikes and capacity gaps.
- » **P6 Standardized internal guidance policies** with regular review and across state agencies.
- » **P7 Implement an annual user experience engagements**, in partnership with key organizations, to gather feedback from users of state permitting systems and support ongoing modernization efforts.
- » **P8 Modernize online payment systems**



BURNT HILL FARM SITE VISIT

REGULATIONS

Maryland has created a regulatory environment that has become overly burdensome and confusing, contributing to reduced GDP and loss of economic opportunity. While singular regulations may appear to benefit Marylanders, the one-size fits all and single-issue regulatory approach does not take into consideration the great variations in infrastructure, natural resources, and market demand across the state. The additive approach of more regulations and layers does not consider or measure the level by which the system has become overburdened. Additionally, the level of inconsistency across the 157 municipal jurisdictions and 24 counties with zoning and permitting capacity creates an ever changing maze that many developers find intolerable and unaffordable taking their business to other states. Ultimately, the regulatory barriers to development are complex, intertwined and not easily assessed for duplicative, outdated, burdensome or the level of impact permitting has imposed on place-based and infrastructure projects that stimulate economic growth. Findings in this area are grouped into two topic areas - existing statute and regulatory requirements, and prescriptive approaches that inhibit market innovation and transformation.



Value-add agriculture and agritourism projects fall outside traditional permitting frameworks, creating barriers to implementation.



MDP STAFF MEETING WITH
HOUSE SPEAKER PEÑA-MELNYK



Existing regulatory frameworks lack the flexibility to accommodate emerging industries and evolving project types, resulting in misalignment and inefficiencies in the permitting process.

FINDING: Statute and Regulations

There is no comprehensive understanding of all the statutory and regulatory permitting requirements imposed on infrastructure and place-based type projects and the resulting impacts.

- Smaller scale and new developers often feel confused and overwhelmed by the number of state regulations and how they could apply to their projects.
- While a catalog of permits the State issues exists, available information on how they may overlap with one another is not available and cooperation between state agencies on projects of shared interest needs improvement.

FINDING: Market Innovation and Transformation

Prescriptive, one size fits all approaches to regulating development, hinders the attraction of fast changing new markets and application of best practices.

- Value-add products are not factored in current health regulations and modern farm needs and processes.
- Data centers are a rapidly occurring significant land use with fast evolving technologies and requirements that require state-wide targeting and coordination.
- Code barriers stagnate innovation and implementation of best practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS: REGULATORY

- » **R1** Conduct a comprehensive review of code and inventory existing permitting requirements for place-based and infrastructure projects.

- » **R2** Provide expedited permitting within Maryland's targeted investment areas.

- » **R3** Expand and enhance interagency agreements including the Comptroller.

- » **R4** Modernize and consolidate low-utilization permit types, particularly those receiving limited annual application volume, to reduce administrative complexity, improve efficiency, and streamline permitting processes, with a focus on supporting place-based and priority infrastructure projects.





TECHNOLOGY

Maryland state permitting systems have begun to leverage technology as is the case with the recent development of MDE's permitting systems overhaul. However, large permitting systems are fragmented with varying types and levels of technical capacity across agencies with paper submittal still occurring at the low end of the range. Some local jurisdictions and neighboring states have outpaced Maryland in the implementation of automated, coordinated and connected permitting systems that create a positive user experience, improve internal efficiency and create public transparency.

FINDING: Project Permitting Transparency

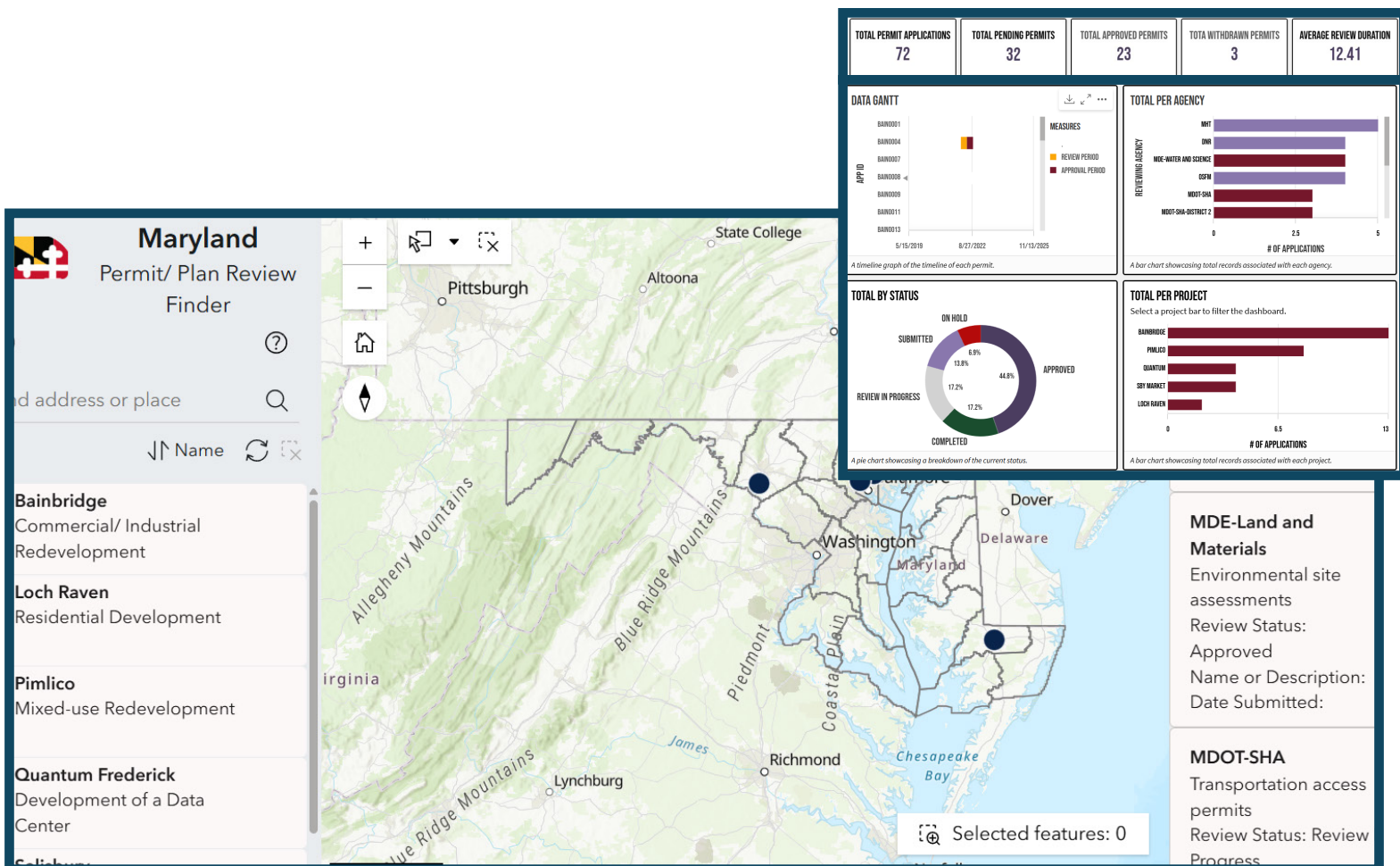
There is no system for project teams or the public to track an individual project progress across all state permits.

- Applicants lack a single-entry point to understand requirements or initiate the permitting process.
- Systems cannot link contractors, permits, and projects together preventing a holistic view for the applicant.
- Applicants and their contractors cannot easily determine where their project stands in the permitting process due to the lack of a standardized and transparent activity log amongst all agencies administering permits/reviews.
- Small- and first-time project developers struggle to understand where to start and how to determine the required permits and contacts for their project.
- Local jurisdictions and the public have no online means of determining project status, permits required and relationship to local approvals.

Fragmented and disconnected permitting systems limit coordination, reduce efficiency, and prevent a unified view of project progress across agencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS: TECHNOLOGY

- » **T1** **Require all state permitting systems to integrate** with a one-stop digital storefront by adopting standardized Project IDs and event codes, enabling consistent application intake, real-time tracking, and improved communication for both agencies and applicants.
- » **T2** **Leverage an AI chatbot** to help inform users about how to best navigate permitting in MD and provide a roadmap for the applicant on what permits they may need for their project.
- » **T3** **Enhance the digital one-stop portal** by centralizing user identity, implementing a universal progress tracking dashboard, and replacing inefficient legacy paper systems.
- » **T4** **Create a coordinated on-line payment system.**



DASHBOARD PROTOTYPE IDENTIFYING ALL STATE PERMITS FOR PILOT PROJECTS.



PIMLICO REDEVELOPMENT SITE VISIT



Lack of centralized oversight and staffing constraints contribute to delays, inconsistent performance, and gaps in accountability across the permitting process.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Transparency and a whole project view along with required review timeframes and communications are needed to create a system of accountability to the customer and Marylanders. Accountability must be achieved at multiple levels of government, and the responsibility is shared by all participants in the development process. The current single view by permit system has created a situation where no one has the full view with overall accountability for the user experience. Recent addition of ombudspeople within agencies is an approach taken in response to the urgency; however, this cannot be adequately scaled to ensure that all projects, no matter the size, location or type, are equitably considered and processed once they enter the state permitting landscape.

FINDING: State Permitting Oversight

There is no state entity that has a comprehensive view and oversight authority to ensure quality control and accountability of all state permitting for development projects.

- Agencies operate at different levels of effectiveness, creating inconsistency in the system.
- Permitting processes are often compliance-focused rather than user-focused, making navigation difficult and hindering creative solutions.
- There is no central place or system for ensuring project accountability to the project owner.
- New initiatives are not well coordinated for prioritization of staff and resources.



SBY MARKET CENTER SITE VISIT



The absence of cross-agency unique identifiers serves as a technical barrier, preventing the implementation of a centralized “single pane of glass” for statewide permit monitoring.

FINDING: Agency Coordination

There is no centralized method for interagency/intra-agency coordination and cooperation beyond that occurring through project specific advocacy and informal networks.

- Permitting and Review agencies often review multiple types of projects and permits that are often not in communications internally or across agencies.
- Data sharing amongst agencies is difficult and sometime impossible to undertake.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Accountability

- » **A1 Delegate the Government Efficiency Commission** to serve as the accountability entity for enforcing system-wide permitting compliance.
- » **A2 Explore “permit payback”** or deadline enforcement models.
- » **A3 Formalize coordination networks** and communication channels within a State-wide permitting platform.

As supplemental research outside the scope of the Executive Order, MDP also developed a set of local recommendations based on findings gathered through outreach to local jurisdictions. The recommendations below are intended to support continued improvements in permitting processes and inform future work in this area.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Local

- » **L1 Explore integration of local permitting systems** with the one-stop digital portal by adopting standardized Applicant and Project IDs to improve tracking, coordination, and communication across jurisdictions.
- » **L2 Identify inconsistencies in local regulatory frameworks** that may limit emerging industries.
- » **L3 Provide specialized training for permit reviewers** to strengthen consistency and build capacity to evaluate new and evolving market sectors.
- » **L4 Establish performance measures** for areas of state delegated authority



The application of older regulatory frameworks to emerging project types continues to impact permitting efficiency, particularly in rapidly evolving markets.

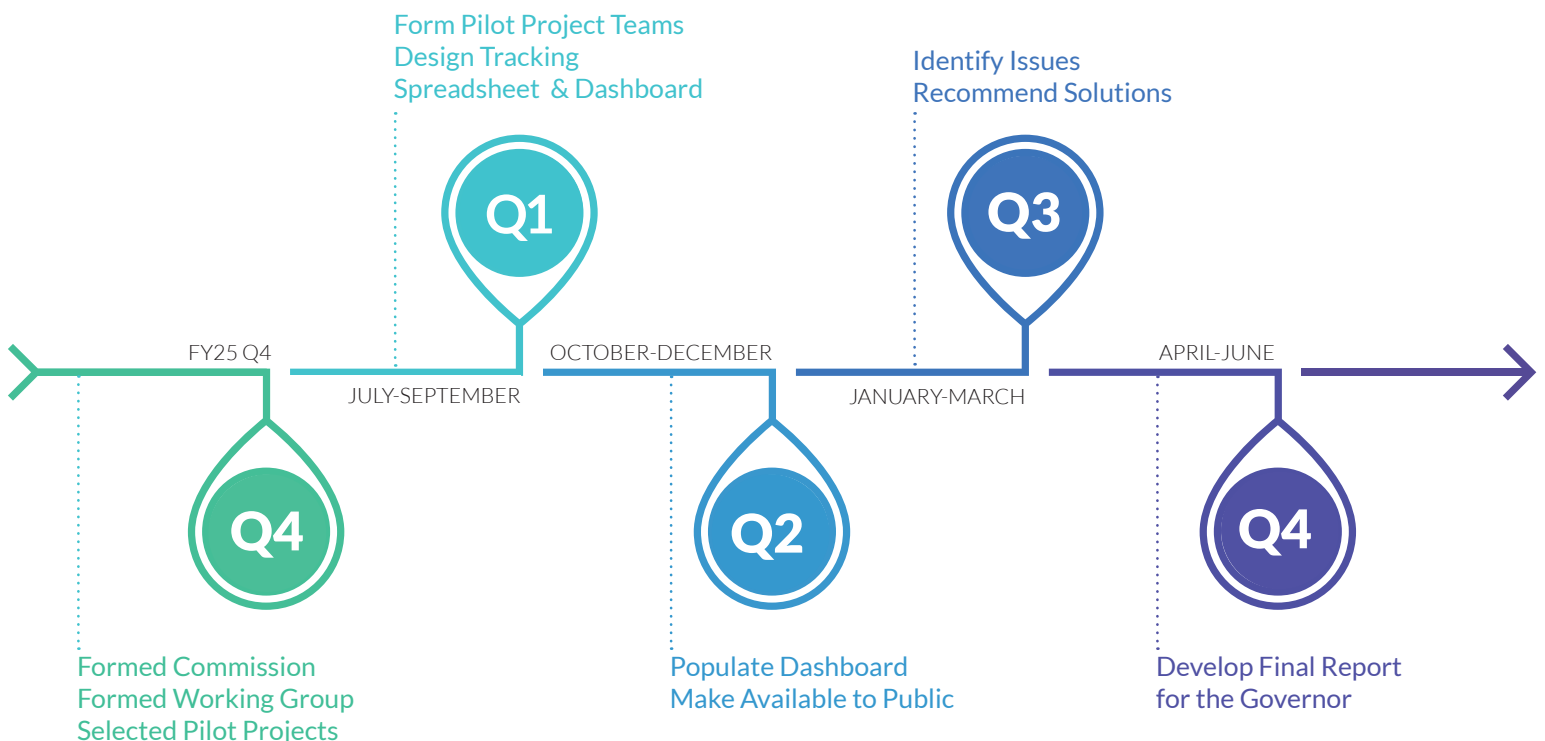
User Experience Roundtable Participant



PILOT PROJECTS

Maryland Coordinated Permitting Review Council evaluated coordinated permitting approaches across a diverse portfolio of six high-impact projects representing different sectors, geographies, and permitting challenges. Throughout the pilot year, the project teams conducted project meetings, coordinated with project owners and permitting agencies, and completed site visits to better understand project-specific needs and barriers. These engagements provided valuable insights into permitting challenges, interagency coordination opportunities, and process improvements, directly informing the recommendations presented in this report.

To complement the pilot project work and supplemental research, MDP convened a User Experience Roundtable with developers, consultants, attorneys, engineers, environmental professionals, and other stakeholders who regularly navigate Maryland's permitting systems. The roundtable was designed to gather real-world perspectives on the permitting process, identify common challenges and successful practices, and validate themes emerging from the Council's pilot projects and research efforts. Participants shared firsthand experiences related to permitting timelines, interagency coordination, communication, transparency, and predictability across state agencies. The insights gathered provided valuable user-centered feedback that helped strengthen the Council's findings and informed the recommendations presented in this report.



Phase I at Bainbridge MRP Industrial

Cecil County

Large-scale commercial/industrial redevelopment of a former naval training center, including four lots (Phase I; Lots A, B, C, and D) to be occupied by various tenants. The history of the former Bainbridge Naval Training Center site spans from the late 1800s to today. Past uses include a preparatory school (the Tome School) and U.S. naval training station.

The completed project will create jobs and economic growth, including at least 750 full-time equivalent positions and more than 300 construction jobs.



Burnt Hill Farm

Owner/Developer Andrew Baker

Montgomery County

Open in August 2025, Burnt Hill Farm models regenerative agriculture and environmental stewardship, producing sustainable and healthy food for their community.

Future plans include putting in a septic system, creating a commercial chef's kitchen, expanding commercial and agricultural operations.



Loch Raven Overlook Pax Development

Baltimore County

Located near the Loch Raven Reservoir, this proposed 122-unit residential development will feature both market-rate and affordable housing. The project consists of two separate buildings, one financed with 4% LIHTC and the other with 9% LIHTC which has already received PUD approval.



Pimlico Redevelopment Maryland Stadium Authority- Developer, MEDCO – Owner/Operator

Baltimore City

The Pimlico Redevelopment is a transformative, mixed-use revitalization of the historic Pimlico Racetrack, aiming to create a year-round destination. The project will feature new venue bandstands and event spaces, horse barns, office space, and dormitories for the horse jockeys.



Quantum Frederick Catellus Development Corporation

Frederick County

Development of a data center on a 2,100-acre campus with previous industrial and agricultural uses. The project will be part of a 46-mile fiber optic network to Leesburg, Virginia. Two data center companies are actively constructing facilities at the site. Remaining areas of the site include active agricultural land, which the developer is working to rezone for data center use, and a historic building.



SBY Market Center Green Street Housing

Wicomico County

Located in the heart of historic downtown Salisbury, the SBY Market Center project will bring new vitality to the area through the creation of a ground-floor marketplace, 50 affordable apartment units, and a ground-level co-working and community space to support small businesses and entrepreneurs.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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