

The Office of Planning and Zoning (OPZ) Summary of Planning Advisory Board (PAB) Oral and Written Testimony

Region 7 PAB Draft Plan and PAB Draft Comprehensive Zoning Map

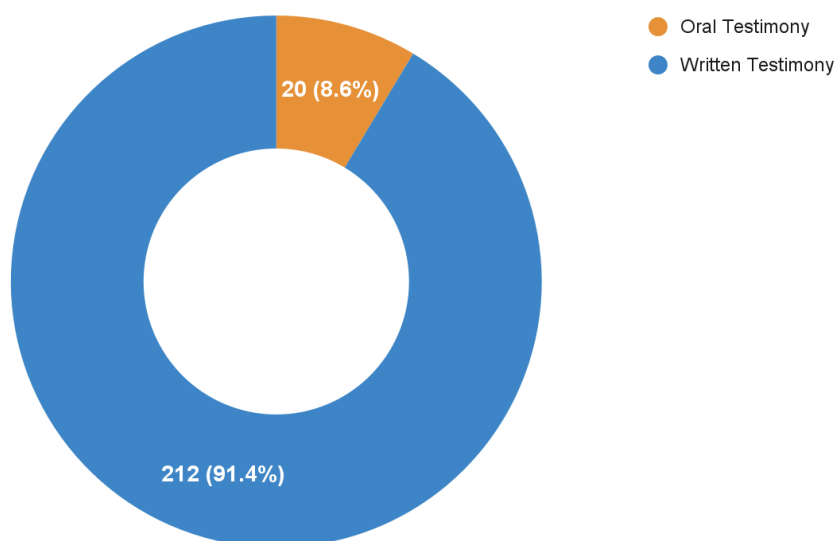
1. Overview

The Planning Advisory Board (PAB) met on October 19, 2023 for a presentation from the Anne Arundel County Office of Planning and Zoning (OPZ) on the PAB draft of the Region 7 Plan (Plan) and Comprehensive Zoning Map. The following are links to the [PAB Draft of the Region 7 Plan](#), [PAB draft of the Comprehensive Zoning Map](#), and [Recommended Comprehensive Zoning Change Table](#) which provide references to specific recommended zoning changes.

Comments received are reviewed by OPZ as well as the PAB for consideration in developing the final draft Plan and comprehensive zoning recommendations. While all comments are reviewed and considered, not all comments will result in a recommended change.

Method of Engagement

A public testimony period was held at the Planning Advisory Board meeting on October 19th, from 6:00pm to 9:00pm. A recording of the meeting including the public testimony period is available [here](#). The PAB also accepted written testimony from October 19 to October 26, 2023. All comments received are compiled and available for review [here](#). The PAB received 232 public comments on the Draft PAB Region 7 Plan and Comprehensive Zoning Map. Of the 232 public comments, 20 were given orally at the PAB hearing on October 19 and 212 were emailed to the PAB.



Summary of Region 7 Comments

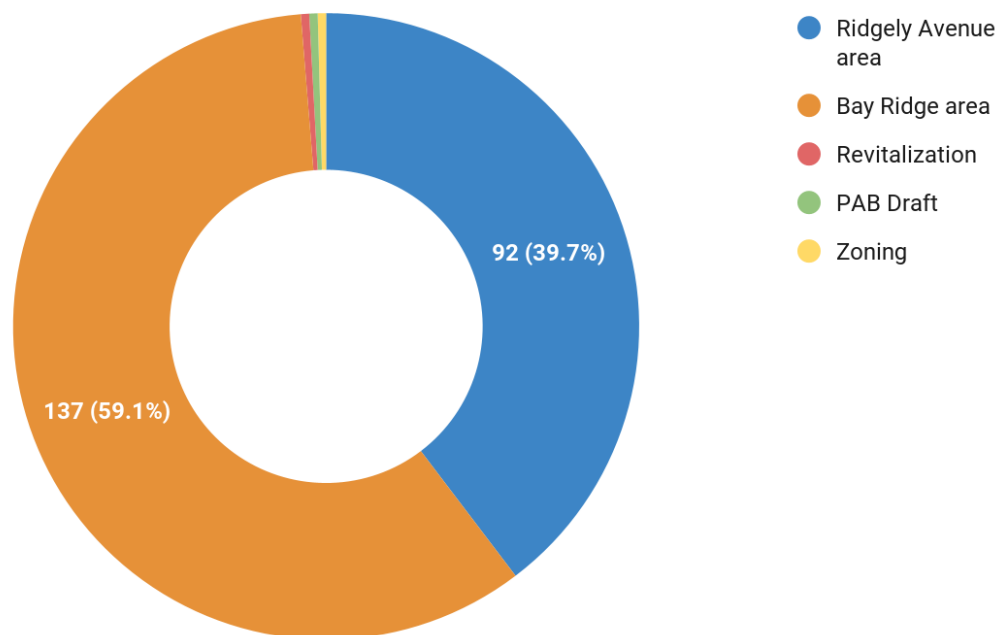
10/19/2023 to 10/26/2023

2. Summary of comments

The comments are organized by five main topics, each of which can be divided into a range of subtopics.

Primary Topics

- a. **Ridgely Avenue Area** includes all comments related to the Ridgely Avenue area comprehensive zoning applications, the proposed Village Center Overlay/Sector Plan, and comments related to outreach in this area.
- b. **Bay Ridge Area** includes all comments related to the Bay Ridge comprehensive zoning applications.
- c. **Revitalization** includes all comments related to revitalization and redevelopment.
- d. **PAB Draft** includes all comments related to the PAB Draft Region 7 Plan.
- e. **Zoning** includes all other comments related to comprehensive zoning applications and staff-recommended comprehensive zoning changes.



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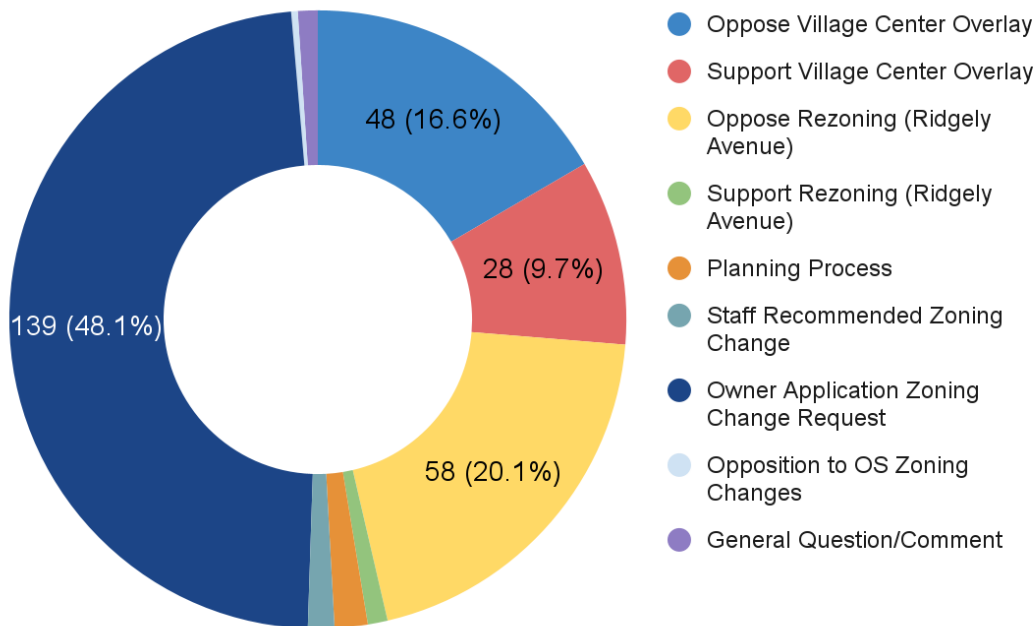
Sub-Topic Breakdowns and Summaries

Within each of the main topics, trends emerged and comments were divided into subtopics. Oftentimes each public comment could address multiple subtopics. The breakdown of each subtopic can be found below.

- a. **Oppose Village Center Overlay** includes all comments that were opposed to the proposed Ridgely Avenue Village Center Overlay/Sector Plan.
- b. **Support Village Center Overlay** includes all comments that were supportive of the proposed Ridgely Avenue Village Center Overlay/Sector Plan.
- c. **Oppose Rezoning (Ridgely Avenue)** includes all comments that were opposed to owner applications for rezoning in the Ridgely Avenue area.
- d. **Support Rezoning (Ridgely Avenue)** includes all comments that were supportive of owner applications for rezoning in the Ridgely Avenue area.
- e. **Planning Process** includes comments related to the planning process and outreach that was conducted for the Region Plan.
- f. **Staff Recommended Zoning Change** includes comments related to the Office of Planning and Zoning (OPZ) staff initiated zoning change recommendations.
- g. **Owner Application Zoning Change Request** includes comments related to owner applications for rezoning.
- h. **Opposition to OS Zoning Changes** includes comments related to opposing zoning changes to OS based on conservation easement status.
- i. **General Question/Comment** includes all other general comments.

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Oppose Village Center Overlay

There were 48 comments that expressed opposition to the Ridgely Avenue Village Center Overlay in the Weems Creek community (DPOA-R7-GRA-101). Nearly all commenters who opposed the Village Center Overlay also noted their opposition to rezoning in the Ridgely Avenue area. Many felt that the Village Center Overlay would promote unwanted development in the area and commenters expressed they would prefer to see no changes to zoning. Some community members suggested that there is no precedent for how a Sector Plan would be implemented and felt that the process needed to be more thoroughly outlined for the public to understand.

Support Village Center Overlay

There were 28 comments that expressed support for the Ridgely Avenue Village Center Overlay in the Weems Creek community (DPOA-R7-GRA-101). Many cited the need for additional protections and positive parameters that should be set to preserve the existing character of the neighborhood. Several noted concerns about the adopted zoning and code regulations that already allow for unwanted development. Many felt that the Village Center Overlay/Sector Plan would serve as an effective planning tool that would enable more community input to help guide future development in the area.

Oppose Rezoning (Ridgely Avenue)

The PAB received 58 comments that were opposed to owner applications for rezoning in the Ridgely Avenue area (CZ-R7-GRA-001 thru CZ-R7-GRA-009). The comments supported OPZ's

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recommendation to retain the existing zoning for the applications. Many commenters expressed that the zoning changes being requested only reflect the wishes of a handful of property owners and developers instead of the wishes of the Weems Creek Community. Most commenters felt that upzoning from the existing zoning of SB and R2 to C2 would have adverse impacts on the environment, traffic, and quality of life, and would not provide additional benefit to the community. Others noted issues such as a lack of public water and sewer to serve new commercial development.

Support Rezoning (Ridgely Avenue)

The PAB received three comments that were supportive of owner applications for rezoning in the Ridgely Avenue area (CZ-R7-GRA-001 thru CZ-R7-GRA-009). The comments were opposed to OPZ's recommendation to retain the existing zoning. The commenters noted that there are opportunities for revitalization in the area that require a certain amount of scale and assembly to warrant redevelopment. Such redevelopment could improve dilapidated buildings, upgrade inadequate bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and address the lack of water and sewer infrastructure in the area. The commenters were generally supportive of the Village Center Overlay as a backup for continued community discussion if the zoning requests to C2 are not granted.

Planning Process

There were five comments that discussed the planning process for the Region 7 Plan, specifically within the Ridgely Avenue/Weems Creek community. Two commenters who live east of U.S. Route 50 expressed their disappointment that they were not notified of the community meeting held on February 6, 2023 for the Ridgely Avenue area. Several commenters felt that there was not enough communication from OPZ or the Region 7 Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) with the community. Others mentioned that they were looking forward to staying engaged in the planning process if a Sector Plan is initiated.

Staff Recommended Zoning Changes

The PAB received four comments related to staff initiated recommendations for comprehensive zoning changes. The zoning change CZ-R7-GRA-102 received two comments, one in support of OPZ's recommendation to maintain the existing split zoning of R2 and C2 on the Weems Creek Medical Center property, and one who opposed the recommendation and requested that the property be zoned entirely C2. Another commenter wrote to support OPZ's recommendation to maintain the adopted zoning of C2 for 621 Ridgely Avenue. Another comment was received in support of staff changes that were made for several properties along Generals Highway and Housley Road.

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Owner Application Zoning Change Request

The PAB received 139 comments related to owner applications for zoning requests. All but two comments (137 comments) supported OPZ's recommendations for applications CZ-R7-BAY-001 through CZ-R7-BAY-005 in the Bay Ridge community. One commenter suggested that the Planned Land Use for the "Big Woods" property should be retained as Conservation to align with its existing use. The additional two comments were in regards to CZ-R7-GRA-102 and CZ-R7-GRA-1115 which represent zoning recommendations to the Weems Creek Medical Center (split zoning of R2/C2) and the Ridgely Oaks Professional Center (C2). The two comments received both advocated for R2 zoning for the Weems Creek Medical Center and the Ridgely Oaks Professional Center.

Opposition to OS Zoning Changes

One comment was received from the Scenic Rivers Land Trust advocating that conservation easements should not be used as the primary reason for rezoning a property to Open Space, especially when it is against the wishes of the landowner. The commenter requested that the Scenic Rivers Land Trust held easement properties not be rezoned to Open Space if the landowner is not supportive in order to ensure zoning does not restrict the property more than the conservation easement already does.

General Question/Comment

The PAB received three general comments on the draft Plan and comprehensive zoning applications. One commenter spoke about the need for revitalization of commercial properties along Bay Ridge Road. The commenter pointed to a need for better coordination between the City and County to rezone the properties so that redevelopment is more likely to occur. A second commenter made suggestions for the Draft Plan to include additional detail regarding the Planned Land Use Map and Development Policy Area Map and asked that the community description for Annapolis Neck include more detail about the area being located within the Peninsula Development Policy Area. Lastly, the SAC Chair for Region 7 provided comment on the SAC's endorsement of the draft Plan and comprehensive zoning recommendations. The Chair noted that the SAC concurred with all of OPZ's comprehensive zoning recommendations with the exception of two recommendations, one of which the SAC did not reach consensus on.