

1 **DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING, * BEFORE THE**
 2 **PETITIONER * PLANNING BOARD OF**
 3 **ZRA-224 COTTAGE CLUSTER ARAH * HOWARD COUNTY, MARYLAND**

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7 **MOTION: Recommend approval of ZRA-224.**

8 **ACTION: *Approved with Amendments; Vote 3-0.***

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10 **RECOMMENDATION**

11 On April 9, 2026, the Planning Board of Howard County, Maryland, considered the petition of the
 12 Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ), the Petitioner, for several amendments throughout the Zoning Code
 13 to permit Cottage Cluster Age-Restricted Adult Housing (ARAH) developments allowing for an increased
 14 amount of affordable missing middle housing options and to align them with the broader goals of Howard
 15 County’s General Plan, HoCo By Design, and the County’s Housing Opportunities Master Plan. DPZ’s Petition
 16 included:

- 17 • Add a definition of Cottage Clusters under Section 103.0.
- 18 • Amend the definition of Optional Design Project under Section 103.0.
- 19 • Add Cottage Cluster ARAH as a use permitted as a matter of right within the PGCC district under
 20 Section 126.0.
- 21 • Create a new subsection (128.0.R) within the Supplemental Regulations (Sec. 128.0) to add
 22 provisions outlining the Optional Design Project process for Cottage Cluster ARAH.
- 23 • Amend the off-street parking requirements for Age-Restricted Adult Housing to include Cottage
 24 Clusters within the Apartments and Multi-plex use section.

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 26 The Planning Board considered the petition and the Department of Planning and Zoning’s (DPZ)
 27 Technical Staff Report (TSR).

28
 29 **TESTIMONY**

30 Mr. Justin Tyler, DPZ staff member, presented the proposed Zoning Regulation Amendment (ZRA) on
 31 behalf of the Department of Planning and Zoning. He stated that the purpose of the ZRA is to permit Cottage
 32 Cluster Age-Restricted Adult Housing developments to allow for an increased amount of affordable missing
 33 middle housing options and to align them with the broader goals of Howard County’s General Plan, HoCo By

1 Design, and the County's Housing Opportunities Master Plan. Mr. Tyler went through each text amendment
2 and explained what the current regulations allow, what is proposed, what code sections are impacted (as
3 summarized above), as well as the ZRA criteria. Mr. Tyler also spoke about the Department's public outreach
4 webinar and provided some considerations DPZ had for the ZRA based on public comments, such as a reduction
5 of the 50-foot setbacks from a project perimeter to 25 feet, reducing the landscape requirements, and clarifying
6 the Optional Design Project process.

7 Following DPZ's presentation of the proposed amendment, Mr. James Cecil, Planning Board Chair,
8 asked the Planning Board if they had questions for DPZ. Mr. William Tilburg, Planning Board member,
9 inquired about the process of developing this text proposal and mentioned that Portland had a similar
10 development style. Ms. Lynda Eisenberg, AICP, Planning and Zoning Director, explained that these regulations
11 were centered around best practice and explained what our neighboring jurisdictions were doing. Mr. Tilburg
12 asked about the 20-foot structure height limitation. Ms. Eisenberg explained that the Planning Board could
13 allow a structure to go over the height limit. Mr. Tilburg also asked if there had been any previous public
14 engagement. Ms. Eisenberg outlined a previously held public engagement webinar in which the DPZ received
15 and addressed questions from the public and that the proposal received positive feedback from the attendees.
16 Mr. Mason Godsey, Planning Board Vice-Chair, asked staff about the allowance of ARAH Cottage Clusters
17 within the PGCC district. Ms. Eisenberg explained that the use was added to the list of uses permitted as a
18 matter of right but would be subject to criteria within a new subsection of the Supplemental Regulations. Mr.
19 Cecil expressed that he was comfortable with a reduction in the perimeter setbacks because it would allow for
20 a more applicable buffer and that the Board had discretion during the Optional Design Project (ODP) process
21 to modify the requirements. Ms. Eisenberg explained how the Board would evaluate the ODP once DPZ
22 reviewed the plans and performed their own evaluation. She further explained that the Site Development Plan
23 (SDP) process would be completed through the ODP process in which the Board would still be able to evaluate
24 any proposal and provide any possible recommendations. Ms. Eisenberg went on to further outline the proposed
25 density requirements and how they were similar to the existing general ARAH Conditional Use criteria. Mr.
26 Cecil agreed that the proposed density meets the intent of the Regulations. Mr. Cecil concurred with the MIHU
27 requirements if amenities were constructed and inquired about the permissible amenities. Ms. Eisenberg
28 outlined that courtyards, walking paths, community gardens and a community shed would be permitted. She
29 further asserted that the intent was to restrict the amount of outdoor recreation space to keep housing costs more
30 affordable. Mr. Tilburg asked about how an accessory structure would be permitted. Ms. Eisenberg explained
31 that any accessory structure would be only for communal use. Mr. Godsey stated that the Board could handle
32 adjustments for accessory structures during the ODP process and could allow for more flexibility and creativity
33 of the development. Mr. Tilburg asked if the Zoning Regulations defined "outdoor recreation facilities". Mr.
34 Cecil inquired if similar language exists in other places of the Regulations. Ms. Eisenberg stated that outdoor

1 recreation facilities are not defined. Mr. Cecil further stated that the Board has the discretion on deciding what
2 is constructed amenity space. Ms. Eisenberg also stated that the proposal included a 3,500 square-foot cap on
3 constructed amenity space. Mr. Tilburg inquired about the 20-foot max height limitations and Mr. Cecil stated
4 he was comfortable with the height limitations. Ms. Eisenberg stated that the height could be adjusted through
5 a variance to potentially exceed 20 feet. Mr. Cecil further asked about the parking requirements. Ms. Eisenberg
6 stated that the parking requirements are similar to the existing 1.3 spaces per dwelling unit required for other
7 ARAH uses, and that the proposal will add Cottage Clusters to the same section. Mr. Godsey asked about the
8 ownership set up for the developments. Ms. Eisenberg stated that the proposed ZRA would require the
9 establishment of a condominium association or homeowners association, and how this would allow for
10 flexibility without lot lines. Ms. Eisenberg discussed some layout examples outlined in the presentation and
11 from DPZ analysis.

12 During the hearing, several members of the public testified about the proposed amendments:

13 Mr. Sam Alomer testified in support of the ZRA and suggested a reduction to the perimeter setbacks to
14 25 feet which would allow for more affordability with the layout of units. He also discussed the building height
15 and recommended a higher amount, asserting that it would allow the developer to construct a 2nd floor to provide
16 more internal livable space. He further expressed his concern with the additional landscaping buffer and
17 indicated that they should be reduced. Ms. Eisenberg stated that the setbacks could be reduced to 25-30 feet and
18 could limit the amount of variances to this criterion. Mr. Cecil indicated his concern with exceeding the 20-foot
19 height limitation. Mr. Godsey also agreed that the max height should remain at 20 feet.

20 Mr. Joel Hurewitz testified that outdoor recreation areas do not make a community affordable. He also
21 stated that the proposed ZRA does not specify if more than one (1) courtyard would be permitted within the
22 Cottage Cluster developments. He inquired about the possibilities of merging an existing homeowner's
23 association with the newly established association as part of the ZRA criterion.

24 BOARD DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

25 Mr. Cecil clarified the size of the outdoor recreational areas. Ms. Eisenberg stated that each Cottage
26 Cluster development would be under their own associations and that it would be up to the associations if they
27 wanted to join an existing one. She further explained that the 500 square foot minimum limit for amenity spaces
28 would be for structures, like clubhouses. Ms. Eisenberg concluded that the number of courtyards would be
29 evaluated and determined by the Design Advisory Panel (DAP) and Planning Board. Mr. Tilburg asked if the
30 MIHU requirement would be imposed if the development used adjacent community recreation facilities. Ms.
31 Eisenberg stated that only the new Cottage Cluster development would be subject to the MIHU requirements.
32 Mr. Cecil asked for clarification on if multiple courtyards would be permissible. Ms. Eisenberg explained that
33 multiple courtyards would be permitted through the ODP process. Mr. Tilburg inquired if a pre-submission
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1 meeting would be required. Ms. Eisenberg explained that the ODP plan would be submitted as a Site
2 Development Plan (SDP) or Environmental Concept Plan (ECP), which would require a pre-submission
3 meeting with DPZ.

4 Mr. Godsey motioned to recommend approval of ZRA-218 with amendments. Mr. Tilburg seconded
5 the motion. The motion passed 3-0.

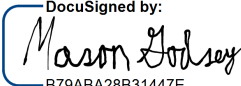
6 The amendments are:

- 7 1. To reduce the 50-foot setbacks from the project perimeter to 25 feet.
- 8 2. To reduce the landscaping requirements for proposed developments determined through the ODP
9 process, DAP review and Planning Board recommendations.
- 10 3. To amend the ODP purpose and intent statement that the ODP process would be submitted as an
11 SDP and that the applicant shall schedule a pre-submission meeting with DPZ to ensure that the
12 proposal meets the intent and purpose of the legislation, and that DAP and the Planning Board
13 would provide guidance to submitted proposals.

14 For the foregoing reasons, the Planning Board of Howard County, Maryland, on this 16th day of April
15 2026, recommends that ZRA-224, as described above, be APPROVED WITH AMENDMENTS.

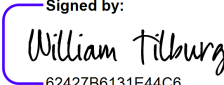
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17 HOWARD COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

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James Cecil, Chair

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Mason Godsey, Vice-chair

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26 _____
Barbara Mosier (Absent)

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Lynn Moore (Absent)

30 Signed by:
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William Tilburg

33 ATTEST:
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DocuSigned by:

Lynda Eisenberg

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Lynda Eisenberg, AICP, Executive Secretary

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