



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF INSPECTIONS, LICENSES AND PERMITS

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Date: September 10, 2021

To: Lonnie Robbins, Chief Administrative Officer
Department of County Administration

From: Robert Frances, P.E., Director
Department of Inspections, Licenses, & Permits

Subject: Testimony Regarding Adoption of 2021 Building Codes, 2021 International Plumbing Code, and 2021 Property Maintenance Code for Rental Housing

The Department of Inspections, Licenses, & Permits has proposed legislation to adopt the 2021 version of the Howard County Building Code. The intent of this legislation is to update the model codes used as the basis of the Howard County Building Code to the most recent editions. This will keep Howard County up to date with the latest codes and standards that are being used in the construction industry. All the codes being proposed can be viewed online with links provided on the Howard County website.

This adoption will include the 2021 editions of the following model codes; International Building Code, International Residential Code, International Plumbing Code, International Energy Conservation Code, International Mechanical Code, and the International Property Maintenance Code scoped to apply to rental properties. The amendments as proposed enable us to stay current with the most up to date construction codes and allow us to maintain our current construction practices.

The most significant amendments and changes to the current codes are:

- 1) Requiring Accessible sized parking spaces for each type of electrical vehicle charging station being provided on site. This does not require these spaces to be reserved for accessible parking, just sized so everyone, including those with accessibility issues, can use the charging station to safely charge their vehicle.
- 2) Puzzle rooms, also known as escape rooms, will require a “push-to-exit” button within each room to allow occupants to safely egress in an emergency.
- 3) We are modifying a change we made in the 2018 code regarding roof live loads. This will make the requirements, and our intent for their application, more clear for the users and designers. However, the minimum roof live loads are not being reduced.
- 4) In the Energy Code we have modified the R-Value for attic ceiling insulation to maintain the current value. There is no evidenced-based documentation that in the Howard County climate zone there is any

energy savings by going from an R-49 to an R-60 insulation layer in the attic. This modification is also being proposed in State code.

- 5) A new construction classification has been added to the code for Mass Timber Construction which allows tall structures to be built out of wood material that meets the appropriate definitions.
- 6) Open parking garages will now require sprinkler protection.

Fiscal Impact

There is no fiscal impact with this legislation. This is an update to the current codes and no additional staff or fee changes are needed.

If you have any questions, I can be reached at extension x3946.

Cc: Don Mock, P.E., Chief of Plan Review
Jennifer Sager, County Administration