

Amendment 29 to Council Bill No. 28 -2023

**BY: The Chairperson at the Request
of the County Executive**

**Legislative Day 11
Date: October 2, 2023**

Amendment No. 29

*(This Amendment adds reference to the County's Climate Action and Resiliency Plan,
or the most recently adopted Plan.)*

- 1 In the *HoCo By Design* General Plan, attached to this Act as Exhibit A, amend the following
- 2 pages as indicated in this Amendment:
- 3 • Chapter 3, Ecological Health – page 15
- 4 • Chapter 11, Implementation – page 16
- 5
- 6 Correct all page numbers, numbering, and formatting within this Act to accommodate this
- 7 amendment.



EH-2 Policy Statement

Seek to integrate climate change mitigation and adaptation goals [as specified in the Howard County Climate Action and Resiliency Plan, or the most recently adopted Plan](#), into all county programs and policies.

Implementing Actions

1. Ensure the Howard County Climate Action Plan update continues to maximize opportunities to mitigate and adapt to climate change with clear goals and strategies.
2. Evaluate and enhance opportunities where needed for climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations and Zoning Regulations, such as natural resource protection and the provision of renewable energy.
3. Enhance county design requirements for county infrastructure and public and private buildings, to ensure these structures will be resilient under projected future weather patterns and minimize resource consumption.
4. Review and update county Green Building requirements for opportunities to enhance the sustainability of public and private buildings.
5. Identify and ensure economically-vulnerable communities, businesses, and households have the resources necessary for mitigation and adaptation measures.

PROTECTING SENSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

The County Subdivision and Land Development Regulations and Zoning Regulations contain significant provisions for the protection of sensitive environmental resources when properties are developed. This section discusses regulatory protections for water resources, steep slopes, and rare, threatened and endangered species, as well as three zoning districts specifically designed to protect sensitive resources. Additional protective measures for forests and stormwater management requirements are addressed in later, separate sections.

Water Resources and Steep Slopes

Water resources include rivers, wetlands, floodplains, ponds, lakes, and groundwater. These are vital natural resources that provide drinking water, stormwater management, pollution abatement, floodwater storage, and recreation, as well as important habitat for a wide variety of plant and animal species.

To protect water quality and habitat within streams, the County Subdivision and Land Development Regulations require the following undisturbed streamside buffer areas:

- 75 to 100 feet along perennial streams in residential zoning districts;
- 50 feet along perennial streams in non-residential zoning districts; and
- 50 feet along intermittent streams in all zoning districts.

The regulations also require a 25-foot undisturbed buffer around nontidal wetlands. Additionally, most wetlands in the County are found within the 100-year floodplain, which is protected from disturbance.

County regulations also protect steep slopes of 25% or greater when there is a contiguous area of 20,000 square feet or larger. Disturbing steep slopes can generate excessive erosion and sedimentation that can be difficult to contain even with enhanced sediment and erosion control practices, and once disturbed steep slopes can be difficult to stabilize. This can be especially problematic when these slopes are adjacent to water bodies. When slopes of 15% or greater occur in conjunction with highly erodible soils, these erosion problems are intensified.

To provide the greatest benefit, stream and wetland buffers should be wide enough to allow adequate filtering of overland stormwater runoff, include adjacent steep slopes and highly erodible soils, and be forested. The use of a floodplain buffer can improve resilience to flooding by accounting for future changes in the floodplain due to changing weather patterns (increased rainfall), increased development, or outdated mapping.

County regulations require sediment and erosion control practices comply with the 2011 Maryland Standards and Specifications for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control when development or forestry activities will result in clearing and grading. These practices prevent sediment and other pollutants from leaving a disturbed site and entering nearby water bodies during storm events. The requirements for sediment and erosion control should be reviewed to ensure they are adequate for changing precipitation patterns, especially short-duration, high-intensity storms.

Table 10-1: Implementation Matrix		
Policy and Implementing Actions	Lead Agency	Timeframe (Mid-Term five-year, Long-Term six+ years, Ongoing)
GCF-1 - Provide limited and predictable Planned Service Area expansions.		
1. Planned Service Area expansions should include a development proposal that is consistent with the General Plan.	DPZ	Ongoing
2. Any Planned Service Area expansion shall establish a transition that is compatible with and enhances surrounding communities, and provides an environmental benefit.	DPZ	Ongoing
3. Any Planned Service Area expansion shall meet the criteria above.	DPZ	Ongoing
EH-1 - Continue to support the County's ecological health.		
1. Integrate the goals of protecting and restoring the County's ecological health when updating county programs and policies.	OCS DPZ DPW DRP HCHD	Mid-Term
2. Ensure adequate funding for programs and measures to protect and restore the County's ecological health.	OCS DRP DPW HSCD Elected Officials OOB	Ongoing
3. Create a dedicated funding source, as was done for the Agricultural Land Preservation Program, for environmental programs.	DPZ OCS Elected Officials OOB	Mid-Term
4. Establish a natural resource protection goal for the County and each major watershed to help protect biodiversity and mitigate climate change.	OCS DPZ DRP	Mid-Term

Table 10-1: Implementation Matrix		
Policy and Implementing Actions	Lead Agency	Timeframe (Mid-Term five-year, Long-Term six+ years, Ongoing)
EH-2 - Seek to integrate climate change mitigation and adaptation goals as specified in the Howard County Climate Action and Resiliency Plan, or the most recently adopted Plan, into all county programs and policies.		
1. Ensure the Howard County Climate Action Plan update continues to maximize opportunities to mitigate and adapt to climate change with clear goals and strategies.	OCS	Mid-Term
2. Evaluate and enhance opportunities where needed for climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations and Zoning Regulations, such as natural resource protection and the provision of renewable energy.	DPZ OCS	Ongoing
3. Enhance county design requirements for county infrastructure and public and private buildings, to ensure these structures will be resilient under projected future weather patterns and minimize resource consumption.	DPW DILP OCS DPZ Private Partners	Ongoing
4. Review and update county Green Building requirements for opportunities to enhance the sustainability of public and private buildings.	DILP DPW DPZ OCS Private Partners	Mid-Term
5. Identify and ensure economically-vulnerable communities, businesses, and households have the resources necessary for mitigation and adaptation measures.	DCRS OEM OHRE OCS DPW HCHD HCEDA	Ongoing