



# HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING

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## TECHNICAL STAFF REPORT

*Planning Board Meeting of October 10, 2024*

**Case No./Petitioner: ZRA-210 – Tradepoint Atlantic, LLC**

Request: To amend the Corridor Employment (CE) zone under Section 127.2.B to add 'Warehousing, within a flex space' as a permitted use.

### I. BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF EXISTING ZONING REGULATIONS

The Corridor Employment (CE) zone was initially established in the 2004 Comprehensive Zoning Plan (CZP). The CE District has been exclusively applied to properties along the Rt. 1 Corridor and is intended to encourage the development and redevelopment of employment land. Development in the CE District should provide for new office, flex, and light industrial uses, while reducing the spread of strip commercial development and encouraging consolidation of fragmented parcels. Subsequent to the 2004 CZP, there have been no amendments to this district.

### II. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

This section contains a summary of the Petitioner's proposed amendment. The Petitioner's proposed amendment text is attached as Exhibit A.

The Petitioner is proposing to amend the CE Zoning District to:

- Add 'Warehousing, within a flex space' as the 45th permitted use for the district.

The petitioner states that the rationale for the proposed amendment include the following:

- Providing greater flexibility in permitted uses to attract companies,
- Supporting the County's goals to increase the number of middle-income jobs in the warehousing sector, and
- Ensuring the long-term viability of the County's industrial economy.

#### Sec. 127.2.B.

This section contains the uses permitted as a matter of right in the **CE zoning district**. The Petitioner proposes to add "Warehousing, within a flex space" to the list of uses permitted as a matter of right.

### III. EVALUATION OF PROPOSAL

This section contains the Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) technical evaluation of ZRA-210 in accordance with Section 16.208.(d) of the Howard County Code.

**1. The compatibility, including potential adverse impacts and consequences, of the proposed Zoning Regulation Amendment with the existing and potential uses of the surrounding areas and within the same zoning district.**

This amendment would add “Warehousing, within a flex space” to the list of uses permitted in the CE District as a matter of right. This change is not anticipated to have impacts to existing and potential uses except there is the potential for increased truck traffic. Flex space refers to building design and layout, with all principal activities of the various uses shall be conducted wholly within an enclosed building. Flex space buildings have rear loading. Therefore, the amendment would not be anticipated to have a design impact to the front façade of buildings.

**2. The properties to which the Zoning Regulation Amendment could apply and, if feasible, a map of the impacted properties.**

The Petitioner has an ownership/interest in 9299 Washington Boulevard, depicted by the map shown in Attachment A. The proposed Zoning Regulation Amendment could potentially impact approximately 317 properties, totaling nearly 900 acres along the Rt. 1 Corridor. Of these, almost 90 are located in approved Activity Centers. (See map Attachment B).

**3. Conflicts in the Howard County Zoning Regulations as a result of the Zoning Regulation Amendment.**

There are no obvious conflicts within the Zoning Regulations. Any future development/redevelopment of this new use in the CE District will be subject to the Route 1 Manual which provides guidance for CE-CLI development.

**4. The compatibility of the proposed Zoning Regulation Amendment with the Policies and objectives, specifically including the environmental policies and objectives, of the Howard County General Plan.**

The proposed ZRA 210 would amend the Corridor Employment (CE) zone under Section 127.2.B to add 'Warehousing, within a flex space' as a permitted use. The CE Zoning District is intended to encourage office, flex, and light industrial development and redevelopment near Route 1 while improving the appearance of the Route 1 streetscape, enhancing traffic safety, and better accommodating public transit and pedestrian travel.

General Plan Evaluation

HoCo By Design (The General Plan) Economic Prosperity chapter is supportive of continuing to grow manufacturing and warehousing jobs within the County.

**Policy Statement EP-7** (page EP-44) states that the County should “employ adaptive and innovative strategies to meet emerging economic shifts.” **Implementing Action 1** for EP-7 calls for adapting zoning regulations to “provide greater flexibility under broader use categories and respond to changing industries and technologies.” **Implementing Action 2** for EP-7

identifies the “manufacturing, warehouse, distribution and logistics industries” as desired sectors for job growth with the intent of addressing last-mile distribution demands.

**Policy Statement EP-2** (page EP-33) states that the County should aim to “Retain and expand the use of industrial land to support employment opportunities that pay a living wage.” **Implementing Action 1** recommends that the County “consider protective measures to ensure an adequate long-term supply of industrial land” as part of zoning updates.

#### Route 1 Corridor Plan

**Policy Statement RTE 1-1** (page 26) states that the County should “Support, retain, and grow the Route 1 Corridor’s employment base.” This policy contains multiple Implementing Actions which includes promoting “development of new light industrial and flex spaces along Route 1 through guidelines, zoning updates, and county incentives. Establish a clear definition of flex spaces in the updated Zoning Regulations and identify optimal locations for them in the Corridor.”

**Policy Statement RTE 1-3** (page 38) supports actions to “Foster revitalization in the Route 1 Corridor” includes an Implementing Action to “Implement zoning changes to achieve the vision of the Corridor” including allowing for “more flexibility.”

Additionally, **Policy Statement RTE 1-17** (page 68) says that the County should “Catalyze the redevelopment of activity centers in the Route 1 Corridor and ensure they allow a mix of uses”. To do this, Implementing Action seven states “Evaluate and revise the Corridor Activity Center (CAC), Corridor Employment (CE), and Continuing Light Industrial (CLI) Overlay Zoning Districts to ensure the zones are appropriately located within activity centers and the districts allow for a mix of uses that support the vision of each character area.”

#### Conclusion

Overall, DPZ finds that amending the Corridor Employment (CE) zone under Section 127.2.B to add 'Warehousing, within a flex space' as a permitted use may be consistent with the Policy Statements and Implementing Actions in the General Plan. However, the Route 1 Corridor Plan also cautions that “For the minimal number of heavy industrial and warehousing uses within the activity centers, HoCo By Design recommends that these businesses be relocated to more appropriate, heavy, single-use, industrial zoning districts, such as M-1 and M-2” (page 30).

Therefore, it may be appropriate to consider additional language be incorporated into the regulatory standards to ensure that any future warehouse within a flex space inside Activity Centers be light or small-scale and compatible with the surrounding properties.

#### Environmental Policies and Objectives

The proposed ZRA 210 is not in conflict with the environmental policies and objectives in HoCo By Design, the County’s General Plan. The proposed ZRA 210 would not change any

development requirements for sensitive resource protection, stormwater management or forest conservation.

DocuSigned by:

*Lynda Eisenberg*

10/1/2024

Lynda D. Eisenberg, AICP, Director

Date

## **Exhibit A**

### **Petitioner's Proposed Text**

(CAPITALS indicate text to be added; text in [[brackets]] indicates text to be deleted.)

Section 127.2.B. Uses Permitted as a Matter Of Right.

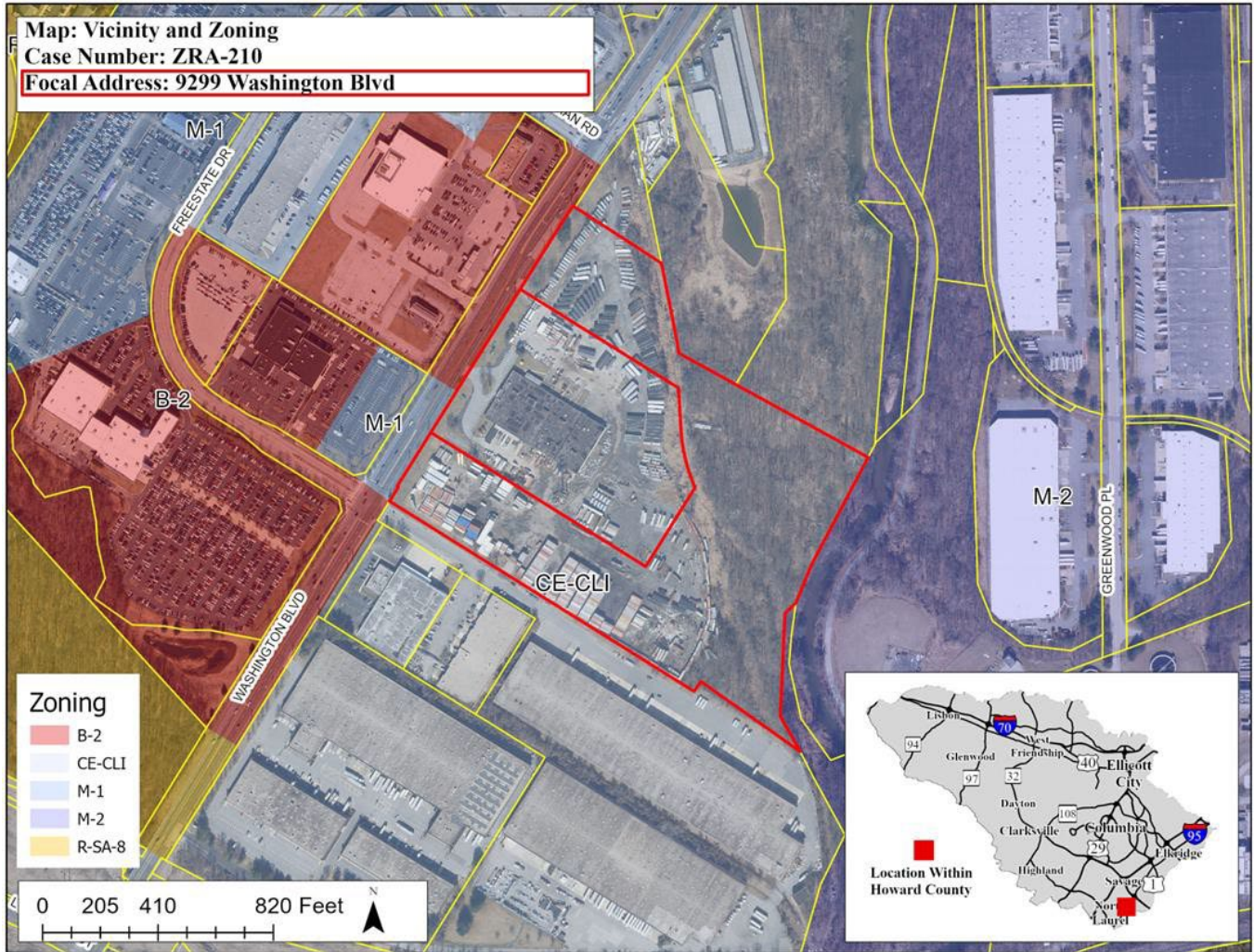
45. WAREHOUSING, WITHIN A FLEX SPACE.

### **How the Text Would Appear Normally If Adopted**

Section 127.2.B. Uses Permitted as a Matter Of Right.

45. Warehousing, within a Flex Space.

### Attachment A



### Attachment B

