

The Calvert County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) made four changes to the county zoning ordinance in 2015.

The county zoning ordinance contains all zoning regulations for zoning districts outside town centers. The zoning ordinance also contains the land use charts for the county's seven town centers: Dunkirk, Owings, Huntingtown, Prince Frederick, St. Leonard, Lusby and Solomons. Each town center has its own Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance. When a change is made to any of the Master Plans or zoning ordinances, it is referred to as a text amendment.

Below is a recap of the four text amendments approved in 2015.

**Text Amendment 14-03 Forest conservation regulations:** This text amendment updated the county's forest conservation regulations to be consistent with changes in state law. In general, the changes increased the mitigation requirements outside town centers, in industrial zones and in villages such as Chesapeake Ranch Estates and White Sands.

What is new? When forest conservation plans encompass recognized priority forest retention areas that include steep slopes, large trees and wetlands, an administrative variance may now be required. Land owners and developers are exempt from the forest conservation requirements for the following activities: construction on existing pavement, maintaining a storm water management facility or conducting a stream restoration project underway on the property. These text amendment changes make it less restrictive to develop property in the town centers.

**Text Amendment 15-01: Administrative variances:** An administrative variance is an internal review and approval process done by the Department of Community Planning and Building staff for granting a change to a certain zoning rule. In 15-01, the BOCC approved variances for commercial property that include a reduction of setbacks, a decrease in required parking spaces or an increase in sign height.

**Text Amendment 15-02: Transferable Development Rights:** Transferable Development Rights (TDRs) are how the county defines the sale of a right to

develop a certain area of property from one owner to another property owner. TDRs are created from agricultural preservation districts (or developments that could occur on any of the county's farms). TDRs were established to preserve land in the rural areas of Calvert County and direct growth toward its town centers where roads, water and sewer systems can better support more intense use. Rural property owners can sell their TDRs for use in the town centers under certain conditions.

This text amendment changes several TDR requirements. Prior to this text amendment, a property owner was required to buy/own five TDRs to build one residential dwelling unit, or residence (any size), above one residence per acre. Now, a property owner must abide by the following:

- To build a single-family detached unit on a lot greater than 10,000 square feet still requires five TDRs.
- To build a single-family detached unit on a lot less than 10,000 square feet requires three TDRs (and will typically require water and sewer availability).
- To build an attached residence requires two TDRs.
- To build a multi-family residence (apartments) requires one TDR per unit.

Text Amendment 15-02 also reduced setbacks on properties in Prince Frederick from adjacent parcels. (A setback is how close you can build a building or structure to the property line) The change reduced the setback from 30 feet to 20 feet, giving property owners more room to build.

There was also a zoning requirement that the back yard of any townhouses located in Prince Frederick Town Center had to be at least equal in size to the footprint of the house. That requirement was deleted in 15-02.

Calvert County has about 12,000 TDRs available for sale. Currently (*January 2016*), the market has set the price for each TDR to between \$3,000 and \$4,000.

**Text Amendment 15-04: Industrial Center Zoning:**

There are approximately 321 parcels or a little more than 2,300 acres that are zoned light industrial in Calvert County. Text Amendment 15-04 now allows three indoor recreation uses to occur in industrially zoned areas. The three new uses are indoor commercial recreation (indoor sports activities), fitness centers and performing arts (dance, voice, theater or music).

If you have questions about these changes, please call Community Planning & Building Deputy Director Mary Beth Cook at 410-535-1600, ext. 2334.