
1 **ARTICLE 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS**

2 **CHAPTER 10 TITLE, PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATION**

3 Sections:

- 4 10.1 Title.
- 5 10.2 Authority.
- 6 10.3 Purpose.
- 7 10.4 Organization of the Zoning Ordinance.
- 8 10.5 Official Zoning Map.
- 9 10.6 Applicability.
- 10 10.7. Minimum Standards.

11 **10.1. Title.**

12 This document shall be known as the “St. Mary’s County Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance” and may also
13 be referred to as “the Zoning Ordinance”, or “this Ordinance”.

14 **10.2. Authority.**

15 Pursuant to Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland, and other statutory provisions cited in other
16 Articles of this Ordinance, the Board of County Commissioners of St. Mary’s County (hereinafter, “County
17 Commissioners”) has adopted this Zoning Ordinance.

18 **10.3. Purpose.**

19 The purposes of this Zoning Ordinance are to protect and promote the public health, safety and general
20 welfare; to implement the St. Mary’s County Comprehensive Plan; and to accomplish the County’s pursuit
21 of the vision in the Plan:

22 “Preserve and enhance the quality of life by recognizing and protecting the unique character of St.
23 Mary’s County as a rural Chesapeake Bay peninsula. Foster economic growth and create an
24 atmosphere of excellence by focusing and managing growth to create vibrant, attractive
25 communities; by protecting the rural character and economy of the countryside; by nurturing the
26 shoreline and adjacent waters; and by preserving and capitalizing on the other natural resources and
27 historical quality of the County.”

28 **10.4. Organization of the Zoning Ordinance.**

29 This Ordinance consists of nine (9) articles. Without superseding the specific regulations set forth in each
30 article, the general structure and content of the articles are as follows:

- 31 1. **Article 1: General Provisions.** The overall organization and applicability of the regulations are
32 included in this article. General rules are provided for interpretation of zoning boundaries, uses of
33 vacant land, public nuisance, conflicts with other laws and regulations, relation to deed restrictions
34 and prior regulations, construction of language, and severability.
- 35 2. **Article 2: Administration.** This article outlines detailed procedures for the administration of this
36 Ordinance, including responsibilities of decision-making bodies, common procedures that apply to
37 all development applications, notice and public hearing procedures, and requirements for (a)
38 administrative decisions; (b) appeals of administrative decisions; (c) variances; (d) conditional
39 uses; (e) site plan review; (f) transfer of development rights (“TDRs”); (g) vested rights and
40 authority to continue nonconforming projects; and (h) amendments to the Ordinance text and
41 Zoning Map, including amendments for planned unit developments (“PUDs”), (i) Development
42 Rights and Responsibilities Agreements (“DRARAs”).
- 43 3. **Article 3: Zoning Districts.** This article establishes Base Districts (ruraland residential,
44 commercial and mixed use, industrial and office, and commercial marine) and Special Districts
45 (overlay districts and floating zones) and states their purposes. It also establishes specific Zoning
46 Districts and their specific purposes, and specifies basic development standards for the Zoning
47 Districts.

- 1 4. **Article 4: Special Districts and Overlay Districts.** This article includes specific purpose
2 statements for the Critical Area, historic landmarks and districts, and air installation compatible
3 use zones overlay districts and for the planned unit development floating zone. The article also
4 establishes development standards and use regulations for the overlay districts and floating zones.
- 5 5. **Article 5: Use Regulations.** This article establishes use classifications, accessory uses, temporary
6 uses, and use regulations and standards for each zoning district. The article also establishes
7 provisions for nonconforming uses, structures and signs and “right-to-farm” provisions of this
8 Ordinance.
- 9 6. **Article 6: Development Standards and Approvals.** This article establishes standards for site
10 design, site plan review, and development design and layout including access, landscaping and
11 buffering, off-street parking and loading, and signs.
- 12 7. **Article 7: Site Development and Resource Protection Standards.** This article includes provisions
13 for adequate public facilities and standards and criteria for resource identification and protection.
14 It also establishes Critical Area standards for managing forested and agricultural lands, forest
15 conservation standards, and floodplain regulations of this Ordinance.
- 16 8. **Article 8: Enforcement.** This article provides for the prosecution of violations of this Ordinance.
- 17 9. **Article 9: Definitions and rules of Measurement.** This article includes a comprehensive list of
18 terms and their meanings as used in this Ordinance. It also provides rules of measure.

19 **10.5. Official Zoning Map.**

20 The location and boundaries of the zoning districts established by this Ordinance are indicated on the
21 Official Zoning Map, which is incorporated herein by reference. The Official Zoning Map, together with a
22 record of all amendments, are located and may be viewed at the Department of Land Use and Growth
23 Management. The Official Zoning Map shall constitute the official record of the zoning districts in the
24 unincorporated lands of St. Mary's County. A copy of the Official Zoning Map currently in effect shall
25 also be kept on file in the office of the St. Mary's County Clerk of the Circuit Court.

26 **10.6. Applicability.**

27 The provisions of this Ordinance shall apply to the development and use of all land within the
28 unincorporated areas of St. Mary's County unless expressly and specifically exempted or provided
29 otherwise in this Ordinance. No development may be undertaken without prior authorization, or exemption
30 from regulation, by this Ordinance. All regulated development shall comply with the standards, criteria,
31 and procedures of this Ordinance and any other applicable statute, law or regulation.

32 **10.7. Minimum Standards.**

33 Unless otherwise provided herein, the provisions of this Ordinance are minimum standards necessary to
34 accomplish the purposes of this Ordinance, and nothing herein is intended, nor shall it be construed to,
35 prevent any development or land use in St. Mary's County from exceeding the minimums.

1 **CHAPTER 11 RULES**

2 Sections:

- 3 11.1 Purpose.
- 4 11.2 General Rules.
- 5 11.3 Rules for Interpretation of the Boundaries on the Official Zoning Map.
- 6 11.4 Rules for Construction of Language.
- 7 11.5 Severability.

8 **11.1. Purpose.**

9 The purpose of this chapter is to establish general rules for the application of this Zoning Ordinance. The meaning
10 and construction of words and phrases defined in this chapter apply throughout this Ordinance. Definitions of
11 general terms and rules for measurement are presented in Article 9, Definitions and Rules of Measurement.

12 **11.2. General Rules.**

- 13 1. ***Applicability to Roads, Streets and Rights-of-Way.*** A road, street, utility easement, or other right-of-way is
14 considered to be in the same zoning district as the abutting land. Where land on one side of a public road,
15 street, utility easement, or other right-of-way is classified in a different zoning district from land on the
16 other side, the centerline of the road, street, utility easement, or other right-of-way is the zoning district
17 boundary unless otherwise depicted on the Official Zoning Map.
- 18 2. ***Compliance Required.*** No person, firm or entity may use, occupy, or develop land or structures, or any part
19 thereof, or authorize or permit the use, occupancy, or development of land or structures under the control of
20 such person, except in accord with all applicable provisions of this Ordinance.
- 21 3. ***Lot of Record.*** Every building hereafter erected, reconstructed, converted, moved, or structurally altered
22 shall be located on a lot of record, with the exception of residential additions and accessory structures.
23 There may be more than one principal building or use on a lot of record provided, however, that each such
24 principal use shall be assessed density of residential use or intensity (measured as floor area ratio or F.A.R.)
25 of non-residential use.
- 26 4. ***Uses of Vacant Land.***
 - 27 a. Where a lot is to be occupied for a permitted use without buildings, the yards required for such lot
28 shall be provided and maintained unless otherwise stipulated in this Ordinance, except that side
29 yards shall not be required on lots used for accessory purposes without buildings or structures or
30 on lots used for public recreation areas.
 - 31 b. Accessory type uses on vacant lots may be permitted as principal structures subject to the
32 provisions of this ordinance and the zoning district in which the property is located.
- 33 5. ***Conflict with Other Laws and Regulations.*** Where a conflict occurs between this Ordinance and a state
34 statute or another county ordinance or regulation, the more restrictive provision shall control.
- 35 6. ***Relation to Deed Restrictions and Other Private Agreements.*** This Ordinance does not abrogate or annul a
36 private easement, covenant, agreement, deed restriction, recorded plat or other restrictive covenant. If,
37 however, this Ordinance imposes a greater restriction than that imposed by such easement, covenant,
38 agreement, recorded plat, deed restriction, or other restrictive covenant, this Ordinance shall control. In no
39 circumstances, however, shall the County have any obligation to enforce a restrictive covenant, easement,
40 or equitable servitude, not required as a condition of approval for any development activity or land use.
- 41 7. ***Relation to Prior Regulations.*** This Ordinance does not validate or legalize a land use or structure
42 established, constructed, developed or maintained in violation of a prior ordinance, county resolutions or
43 ordinances, easements, covenants, agreements, plots, deed restrictions or other restrictive covenants
44 running in favor of the County in effect prior to the effective date of this Ordinance.

45 **11.3. Rules for Interpretation of the Boundaries on the Official Zoning Map.**

46 Where uncertainty exists regarding the boundary of a zoning district on a zoning map, the following rules shall
47 apply:

- 1 1. A zoning district boundary shown as approximately following a property line shall be construed to follow
2 that property line.
- 3 2. On unsubdivided land, or where a zoning district boundary divides a lot, the location of the zoning district
4 boundary shall be determined by using the scale appearing on the Official Zoning Maps, unless the zoning
5 district boundary location is indicated by dimensions printed on the zoning map. In case of conflict
6 between printed and scaled dimensions, the printed dimension shall control.
- 7 3. A zoning district boundary shown as approximately following the right-of-way line of a highway, alley or
8 railroad or a stream, river, irrigation ditch or other identifiable boundary line shall be construed to follow
9 such right-of-way line or physical feature.
- 10 4. A zoning district boundary shown as lying within, but not contiguous to, a right-of-way line of a public
11 road, street, alley, railroad, or other identifiable boundary line shall be construed to follow the centerline of
12 the right-of-way or boundary line.
- 13 5. If uncertainty remains as to the location of a zoning district boundary or other feature shown on a zoning
14 map, the location shall be finally and conclusively determined by the Director of the St. Mary's County
15 Department of Land Use and Growth Management, whose decision shall be subject to appeal to the Board
16 of Appeals.
- 17 6. Where a property is split by a zoning boundary including special districts, the rules of the zone shall apply
18 to that portion of the land located in each district.

19 **11.4. Rules for Construction of Language.**

20 The following rules shall apply to the construction of language in this Ordinance:

- 21 1. The specific controls the general.
- 22 2. Unless the context clearly indicates the contrary, the following conjunctions shall be interpreted as follows:
 - 23 a. "And" indicates that all connected words or provisions apply;
 - 24 b. "Or" indicates that the connected words or provisions may apply singly or in any combination;
25 and
 - 26 c. "Either or" indicates that the connected words or provisions apply singly but not in combination.
- 27 3. In case of conflict between the text and a diagram, the text controls.
- 28 4. References to departments, commissions, boards, and other offices or instrumentalities are to those of St.
29 Mary's County, unless otherwise indicated.
- 30 5. A reference to days is to calendar days unless otherwise indicated in this Ordinance or specified by state
31 law. If a deadline falls on a weekend or County holiday, the time for performing an act is extended to the
32 next working day. A working day is any day that is not a Saturday, Sunday or official County holiday.
- 33 6. In computing a period of days, the day of the act or event from which the designated period of days begins
34 to run is excluded, and the last day of the period is included, unless the last day is not a working day. If the
35 last day is not a working day, the period runs until the end of the next day which is a working day. In
36 computing a period of less than seven days, Saturdays, Sundays and County holidays are excluded.
- 37 7. Use of "shall," "will" or "must" is mandatory; "should" is directive, but not binding, and "may" is
38 permissive.
- 39 8. Use of "including," "includes," "such as," "additional," or "supplemental" is illustrative and not intended
40 as an exhaustive listing, unless the context clearly indicates the contrary.
- 41 9. Section and subsection headings contained in this Ordinance are for convenience only and do not govern,
42 limit, modify or in any manner affect the scope, meaning or intent of any provision of this Ordinance.
- 43 10. Words used in the present tense include the future, words masculine in gender shall include the feminine
44 gender and words used in the singular include the plural, and the plural, the singular, unless the context
45 clearly indicates to the contrary.

1 **11.5. Severability.**

2 If any provision, section, subsection, sentence, paragraph, clause or phase or portion of this Ordinance is adjudged
3 unconstitutional or invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this Ordinance shall not be
4 affected. If any application of this Ordinance to a particular structure, land or water is adjudged unconstitutional or
5 invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, such judgment shall not be applicable to any said structure, land or
6 water not specifically included in said judgment.