

Laurel For the Patuxent

Community involvement in the Development Process

Introduction

Glass Houses

State of Affairs

Elections matter

Notice: Promoting Public engagement

Specific suggestions

State of Affairs

- The City of Laurel is the only municipality in Prince George's County that has its own Zoning and Subdivision authority.
- *Prince George's County v. Mayor and City Council of Laurel*, 277 A.2d 262, 262 Md. 171 (1971). Laurel has exclusive zoning jurisdiction and is exempt from the Maryland-Washington Regional District.
- This authority includes land newly annexed into the City of Laurel.
- It is typical for the City to annex land that is zoned low density by the County with the promise of changing the zoning to a higher density zone.
- Regional cooperation? Exchange of development applications for review and comment.

Elections matter

Generally

Expending money and effort on the front end reduces the time and money needed on the back end. Get involved early.

Evaluate your current elected officials (at all levels). [Maryland League of Conservation Voters](#). [People's Voice affiliate](#).

Publicly funded campaigns

Exists in Howard, Montgomery and Baltimore City. Coming to the County for the [2026 election](#). [CB-76-2023](#) to make some revisions is up for a vote.

Ethics law - Md. Code, State Gov't § 15-829 et seq.

Prohibits campaign contributions from the development industry.

Only applies to the Prince George's County Council.

Does not apply to the City of Laurel.

Basic Provisions regarding Public Notice in the City of Laurel Land Development Code

- There is no correct process - jurisdictions have various options to choose from.
- Laurel has a fairly typical notice process.

ARTICLE I - ZONING

DIVISION 1. - IN GENERAL

Sec. 20-1.13. - Notification of surrounding property owners.

DIVISION 3. - CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

Sec. 20-4.5. - Hearings on proposed plans, regulations, etc.

DIVISION 4. - BOARD OF APPEALS

Sec. 20-5.4. - Public hearings—When required; notice generally.

Sec. 20-5.5. - Same—Additional notice by advertisement.

ARTICLE II - SUBDIVISIONS

DIVISION 1. - IN GENERAL

Sec. 20-29.4. - Residential subdivisions; special requirements for resubdivision.

City Website: [Pending & Recent Zoning Applications](#)

ARTICLE I - ZONING

DIVISION 1. - IN GENERAL

Sec. 20-1.13. - Notification of surrounding property owners.

- (a) Any applicant requesting any action by the City or any Board or Commission in the City under the Zoning Regulations or Subdivision Regulations, including rezoning requests, sectional map amendment, special exception, variance, and annexations **shall be required to notify all surrounding property owners of such request. Such property owners shall include the owner(s) of all contiguous properties including across any streets.**
- (b) Such notification shall be by certified mail/return receipt requested.
- (c) Such notification shall include the property involved in the request: what is being requested (i.e., rezoning to what zone: special exception for what purpose, etc.) the person requesting and the address and telephone number of the City Department responsible for processing such request.
- (d) The return receipts and/or evidence of attempt(s) to notify shall be provided to the appropriate City Department before any hearing will be scheduled.
- (e) The City may by policy adopt further requirements to assist in this notification.

ARTICLE I - ZONING

DIVISION 3. - CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

Sec. 20-4.5. - Hearings on proposed plans, regulations, etc.

- (a) The Planning Commission and the City Council shall hold public hearings on all plans, regulations and other proposals for which such hearings are required under the Land Use Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland. In connection with such hearings the Mayor and City Council or the Planning Commission, as the case may be, **shall give public notice of at least fifteen (15) days by publication in a newspaper in general circulation published within the City or a newspaper of record designated by the Prince George's County Council.** Every such notice shall include the time and place of the hearing, a description, or summary of the proposals to be considered at the hearing, and the place where a copy of such proposals may be obtained. At all such hearings interested persons shall be afforded an opportunity to submit data, views, or regulations, with respect to the proposals under consideration.

(Ord. No. 1987, 10-25-2021)

ARTICLE I - ZONING

DIVISION 4. - BOARD OF APPEALS

Sec. 20-5.4. - Public hearings—When required; notice generally.

(a) Written notice of cases filed.

- (1) Upon filing and prior to any hearing of any appeal, petition for special exception, request for a variance, or any other matter within the Board's purview, the Board shall forward a complete copy thereof, including accompanying data, to the Planning Commission and shall forward notice thereof, in the form specified below, to the owners, as specified by the applicant at the time of filing, of all properties contiguous to the property with which the case is concerned, and of all properties opposite said property measured at right angle to the intervening street or streets, and the president or other designated representative, shown by the records of the Board or the Commission, of the [local citizens association or associations within whose territory the subject property lies](#). The Board may, in its discretion, send notice of such filings to other interested parties, organizations, or agencies.

ARTICLE I - ZONING

DIVISION 4. - BOARD OF APPEALS

Sec. 20-5.4. - Public hearings—When required; notice generally.

- (2) Such notices shall contain the name of the appellant, applicant or petitioner, the name of the owner of record, the case number, the telephone number, office address and business hours of the Board, and, if then known, the date, time and place fixed for the hearing. **Such notice shall state with particularity the nature of the special exception, variance, administrative appeal, or other relief requested.** Such notice shall also:
- a. State that a copy of applicant's complete submission, including exhibits and testimony summaries, is available for inspection at the Department of Economic and Community Development.
 - b. Inform the recipient of the requirements for prehearing statements for groups or organizations desiring to appear in opposition.
 - c. Advise the recipient as to how he may obtain a complete copy of this article and of the fact that the petition has been referred to the Planning Commission for review and recommendation where required.
- (3) If a hearing for which notice has been given is postponed, those designated to receive notice shall be given at least five (5) days' written notice of the rescheduled hearing.

(Ord. No. 1991, 1-10-2022)

ARTICLE I - ZONING

DIVISION 4. - BOARD OF APPEALS

Sec. 20-5.5. - Same—Additional notice by advertisement.

The Board may require additional notice of hearing by advertisement in a newspaper of general circulation in the City. Such advertisement shall appear not less than five (5) days prior to the date of public hearing and shall contain the same information as is required in written notices, the cost of such advertising to be paid by the applicant.

ARTICLE II - SUBDIVISIONS

DIVISION 1. - IN GENERAL

Sec. 20-29.4. - Residential subdivisions; special requirements for resubdivision.

- (a) Every plat for the resubdivision of any lot, tract, or other parcel of land that is a part of an existing subdivision previously recorded in a plat book in the Land Records of Prince George's County in which the property is located shall be subject to the requirements of this section, in addition to the other requirements of these regulations.
- (b) Lots covered by a resubdivision plat shall be of substantially the same character as to suitability for residential use, area, street frontage, and alignment, and restrictions as other land within the existing subdivision and similarly situated lots in the locality.
- (c) In appropriate cases, the Commission may, prior to action upon a plan for resubdivision, **require that the property in question be conspicuously posted with a sign** setting forth such information as the Commission may deem necessary for the benefit of adjacent property owners.
- (d) Upon motion of the Planning Commission or upon petition of any [citizens' organization](#) or neighboring property owners, the Commission shall, prior to acting **upon the preliminary plan for any such resubdivision, hold a hearing thereon at such time and place and on such notice as the Commission may designate**. All interested parties shall be entitled to appear at any such hearing.

County Community Engagement Provisions

Prior zoning ordinance

Sec. 27-125.01. Informational mailing; civic association registration.

(a) Informational mailings with applications.

At least thirty (30) days before the Commission accepts an application, the applicant shall send by first class mail an informational mailing to:

- all adjoining property owners, including owners whose properties lie directly across a street, alley, or stream
- to the Prince George's Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Prince George's Business Roundtable in certain types of cases
- every person of record in a previous case within ten (10) years of filing
- every municipality located within one (1) mile of the applicant's property
- all civic associations registered with the Commission for the area which includes the property

The informational mailing must contain required pertinent information and the following:

- how to obtain more information about the application after it is filed
- a statement to recipients that the applicant will meet, to explain the application
- an explanation of the procedures and the necessity for becoming a person-or-record
- that person or entity entitled to an informational mailing may request a copy of the site plan

The applicant shall file an affidavit of mailing stating the names and addresses of all persons sent the informational mailing.

Sec. 27-125.01. Informational mailing; civic association registration.

(c) Civic association registration.

- Every registered civic association is entitled to informational mailings for all applications within the association's defined geographical area. Provide specified information.
- An association may not represent an area extending beyond two adjoining Council Districts.
- A watershed protection group that is registered as a Section 501(c)(3) environmental organization may designate an area consisting of the watershed whose protection is the purpose of the organization.
- Registration to be updated annually.

(CB-15-1998; CB-12-2003; CB-1-2004; CB-42-2004; CB-54-2008; CB-2-2010; CB-29-2014; CB-59-2014)

Sec. 27-125.03. Public Hearing Signs.

(a) Posting, in general.

- Very detailed requirements concerning sign content and placement.
- If the placement of any sign on the subject property is not visible to motorists from adjoining streets, additional signs may be required at the discretion of the hearing body.

Sec. 27-125.04. Notice.

(a) Notice of Acceptance.

- Within ten (10) days after the end of each month, the Planning Board shall provide a list of all applications filed during that month, arranged according to Councilmanic District. The list shall be published on the Planning Board website.
- Any person may request, in writing, a copy of the report sent by first class mail.
- One copy of the list shall be mailed on a subscription basis without charge to every municipality as well as a homeowners, neighborhood, civic, or similar association.

(b) Notice of Hearing.

- The Planning Board, Zoning Hearing Examiner and District Council shall mail written notice of the date, time, and place of the public hearing on any application, as provided in other parts of this Subtitle, to all persons of record at least thirty (30) days prior to the hearing
- Five business days after a written notice is mailed to persons of record, the Planning Board shall identify the general location of the property on a County map located on the Planning Board's website. The map shall include a link to detailed information concerning the scheduled hearing and the application.

(CB-1-2004; CB-9-2008; CB-97-2015; CB-94-2017)

New Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations

Many of the “new” rules are based on the rules in the Prior Ordinance, with the most notable exception of the Pre-Application Neighborhood Meeting.

27-3402. Pre-Application Neighborhood Meeting

Basically supplements the prior law Pre-Application mailing. Intended:

- to inform neighbors about a proposed development application
- to provide the applicant an opportunity to hear comments and concerns about the development proposal in order to resolve conflicts and outstanding issues
- to provide an opportunity for informal communication between applicants, neighbors and other residents affected by development proposals.
- Participation is for informational purposes only.

Any resultant participation and/or written summary of same shall not be part of the administrative record for any development application that may be filed and accepted.

27-3402. Pre-Application Neighborhood Meeting

Notification - Informational Mailing

The applicant shall mail notice of the meeting at least 30 days before the meeting to:

- All persons to whom mailed notice of a public hearing on the application is required by Section 27-3407, Scheduling of Hearings and Public Notice;
- Every municipality located within one mile of the subject property
- All registered civic associations
- All adjacent landowners

Posted Notification

The applicant shall also post notification of the pre-application neighborhood meeting on the land subject to the application at least 30 days before the date fixed for the meeting.

Written Summary of Meeting

- The applicant shall prepare a written summary of the meeting including a list of invitees and meeting, copies of the materials distributed or made available for review during the meeting, and any other information the applicant deems appropriate.
- CB-61-2022 - The applicant shall email a copy of the written summary to all attendees.

27-3402. Pre-Application Neighborhood Meeting

Civic Association or Resident Registration

Very similar to 27-125.01 of Prior Ordinance.

New Rule for individuals (CB-060-2022): MNCPPC shall establish and maintain an **email registry** so that any County resident may receive the same informational mailings as a civic association.

27-3407. Scheduling of Hearings and Public Notice

(b) Public Notice

(1) Generally

Notification shall be provided for all required public hearings on applications in accordance with Table 27-3407(b): Required Public Notice, all other provisions of this Section, and the Maryland Land Use Article.

(2) Contents * * * *

(3) Registration to Receive Notice * * * *

(4) Mailed Notice * * * *

(5) Notice by Legal Advertisement * * * *

(6) Posted Notice * * * *

Councilman DeWalt,

Currently we only directly notify the contiguous property owners to the applications. I see no reason why we can't establish a sign up list for residents to add their email addresses to get notifications of the projects similar to the way they sign up for the ECD monthly newsletter. We currently have the meetings listed on the city calendar and the project materials on our pending projects page on the ECD webpage. We can put together that email list and send links to both of those pages along with the projects going before City Council, Planning Commission, and the Board of Appeals that particular month. I will consult with IT to get the logistics needed to set this up.

Councilman DeWalt,

Per your request I have included links to the Planning Commission and Board of Appeals sections of the Unified Land Development Code (ULDC). I have also included a link to the Land Use Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland specifically the Planning Commission section as is referenced in the ULDC. Lastly, I provided a link to our zoning applications page which breaks down each type of application along with which entity makes final approvals i.e. City Council, Planning Commission, or Board of Appeals:

Planning Commission Duties:

https://library.municode.com/md/laurel/codes/unified_land_development_code?nodeId=CH20LADESU_ARTIZO_DIV3CIPLCO

Board of Appeals Duties:

https://library.municode.com/md/laurel/codes/unified_land_development_code?nodeId=CH20LADESU_ARTIZO_DIV4BOAP

Zoning Applications: <https://www.cityoflaurel.org/e.cd/planning/zoning-applications>

The Land Use Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, Planning Commission Section:

<https://casetext.com/statute/code-of-maryland/article-land-use/division-i-single-jurisdiction-planning-and-zoning/title-2-planning-commission>

Local Forest Conservation Laws need to be updated

HB 723/SB 526: “Natural Resources Forest Preservation and Retention” was signed into law on May 8, 2023.

New Areas of Priority Forest

- Intermittent streams with 50 foot buffer
- Perennial streams with 100 foot buffer
- Forest Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS) habitat
- Forested Tier II and III high quality watersheds
- Forested water resource protection zones (reservoir lands)
- Forests in urban areas (will be delineated in DNR’s manual)
- Urban wildlife habitat (to be defined by DNR)

Written Findings - New written findings required for clearing of priority forest:

Judicial Review - A person can petition for judicial review of an approved TCP no later than 30 days after approval of the TCP

MNCPPC has a work group revising County law.

Is the City engaged in a similar process?

Additional Civic Engagement Bills

CB-054-2023 - requiring a **summary of testimony in opposition** and in support of proposed development applications, as expressed through oral or written testimony submitted during consideration of development applications.

CB-055-2023 - requiring a **summary of testimony in opposition** and in support of proposed subdivision applications, as expressed through oral or written testimony submitted during a public hearing, to be included within the administrative record.

CB-003-2023 - amending the decision standards for approval of detailed site plan and special exception applications to include **master plan consistency** as a required standard for site plan approval.

Summary

Elections, Elections, Elections - Get Involved.

Consider Public Financing of Elections

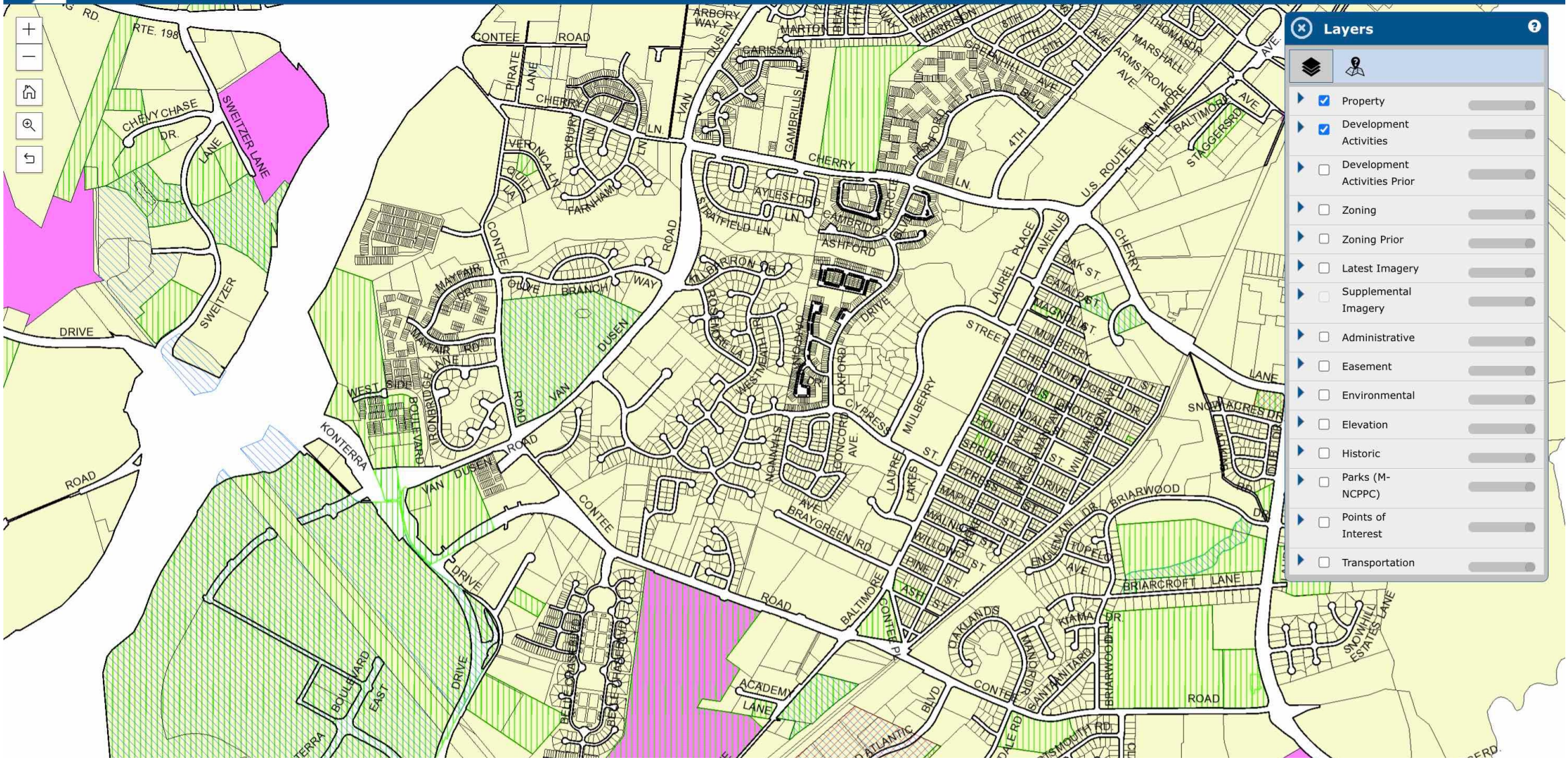
Consider asking State Delegation to extend prohibition on developer campaign contributions to City officials

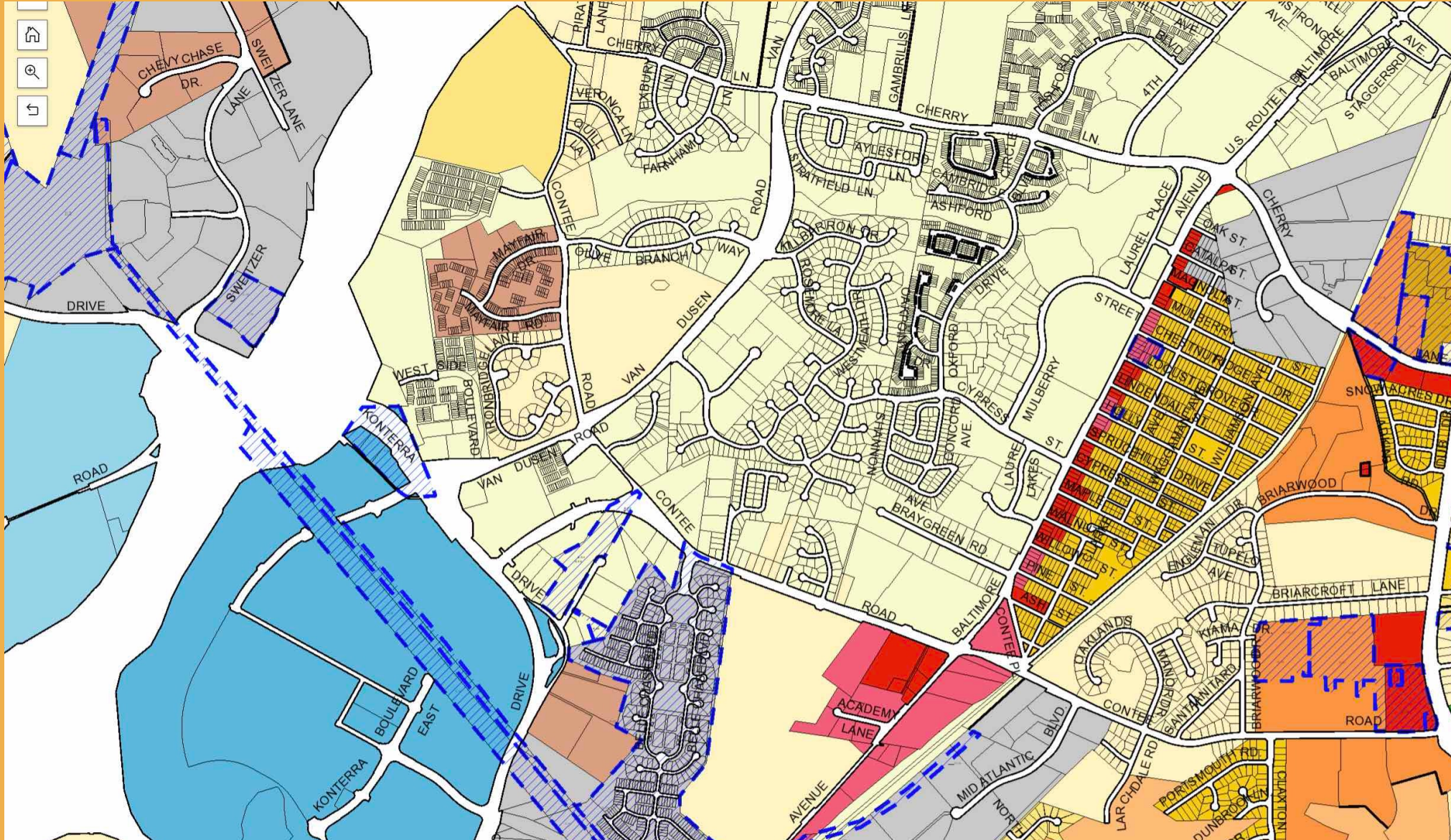
Civic Association v. Homeowners Association: Does Laurel need a “Civic Association” to focus on land use matters? Should L4P become that Association?

Notice of Development Activities

- Civic Association/HOA Registry?
- Pre-Application Mailings to Registry and adjoining property owners?
- Pre-Application community meetings?
- Monthly email distribution of Development applications?
- Email Registry for Pre-Application mailings or Community meetings?

City version of PGATLAS.COM or collaborate with MNCPPC?





- Property
- Development Activities
- Development Activities Prior
- Zoning
- Zoning Prior
- Latest Imagery
- Supplemental Imagery
- Administrative
- Easement
- Environmental
- Elevation
- Historic
- Parks (M-NCPPC)
- Points of Interest
- Transportation