


FROM	NAME & TITLE	CHRIS RYER, DIRECTOR	CITY of BALTIMORE  <b>MEMO</b>	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING 8 <sup>TH</sup> FLOOR, 417 EAST FAYETTE STREET		
	SUBJECT	CITY COUNCIL BILL #25-0054 / ZONING – W-2 OVERLAY DISTRICT – AMENDMENT		

TO

The Honorable President and  
Members of the City Council  
City Hall, Room 400  
100 North Holliday Street

DATE: May 19, 2025

At its regular meeting of May 15, 2025, the Planning Commission considered City Council Bill #25-0054, for the purpose of amending the view corridor requirements in the W-2 Overlay District; and amending “Table 12 903(4). Middle Branch Waterfront Area” to include revised view corridors.

In its consideration of this Bill, the Planning Commission reviewed the attached staff report, which recommended approval of City Council Bill #25-0054 and adopted the following resolution, with eight members being present (six in favor):

RESOLVED, That the Planning Commission concurs with the recommendation of its departmental staff, adopts the findings outlined in the staff report, with consideration for testimony and facts presented in the meeting, and recommends that City Council Bill #25-0054 be **approved** by the City Council.

If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Eric Tiso, Division Chief, Land Use and Urban Design Division at 410-396-8358.

CR/ewt

attachment

cc: Ms. Nina Themelis, Mayor’s Office  
The Honorable John Bullock, Council Rep. to Planning Commission  
Ms. Rebecca Witt, BMZA  
Mr. Geoffrey Veale, Zoning Administration  
Ms. Stephanie Murdock, DHCD  
Ms. Hilary Ruley, Law Dept.  
Mr. Francis Burnszynski, PABC  
Mr. Luciano Diaz, DOT  
Ms. Nancy Mead, Council Services



Brandon M. Scott  
Mayor

## PLANNING COMMISSION

*Jon Laria, Chair; Eric Stephenson, Vice Chair*

### STAFF REPORT



Chris Ryer  
Director

**May 15, 2025**

**REQUEST:** City Council Bill #25-0054/ Zoning – W-2 Overlay District – Amendment: Council Bill 25-0054 proposes an amendment to the Baltimore City Zoning Code (Article 32) to revise the view corridor requirements in the W-2 Overlay Subdistrict, specifically within the Middle Branch Waterfront Area. The amendments adjust spacing and width standards for required public view corridors to enhance flexibility in site planning while preserving public access and visual connectivity to the waterfront.

**Key Amendments:**

- Replaces the singular spacing and width requirement (300 feet apart and 15 feet wide) with a tiered option:
  - **Option A:** Corridors no more than 300 feet apart, **minimum 15 feet wide.**
  - **Option B:** Corridors up to 600 feet apart, **minimum 60 feet wide.**
- Corresponding updates to Table 12-903(4) – Middle Branch Waterfront Area, to reflect revised corridor locations.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Adopt findings and Approve

**STAFF:** Austin C. Davis

**PETITIONER:** Councilmember Porter

**OWNER:** Westport Capital Development, LLC

### **SITE/GENERAL AREA**

Site Conditions: The subject area is located within the Middle Branch waterfront and is subject to the W-2 Overlay District. The site includes parcels associated with the One Westport redevelopment project. Much of the land is currently vacant or underutilized, with redevelopment proposed for mixed-use residential, open space, and commercial uses.

General Area: The area is characterized by large-scale redevelopment parcels adjacent to the Middle Branch of the Patapsco River, in proximity to the Westport Light Rail Station. The surrounding land includes industrial remnants, transit infrastructure, and emerging mixed-use projects guided by recent area master plans.

### **HISTORY**

- **2005:** Westport-Mount Winans-Lakeland Communities Master Plan adopted.
- **2007:** Middle Branch Master Plan adopted.
- **2007:** PUD #139 Westport Waterfront recommended for approval.
- **2012:** Middle Branch Transportation Master Plan adopted.

- **2015:** South Baltimore Gateway Master Plan adopted.
- **2020-2021:** One Westport Master Plan concept reviewed by UDARP.
- **2021 (Dec 2):** Final Subdivision / Concept Development Plan approved for all parcels.
- **2023:** Reimagine Middle Branch Plan adopted.

## CONFORMITY TO PLANS

The 2024 Comprehensive Master Plan for the City of Baltimore was enacted by Ordinance #24-426, dated December 2, 2024. The subject property is designated in the Transit-Oriented Development group in the General Land Use Plan. This proposed development conforms to that designation.

This site is also located within the adopted Westport Mount Winans Lakeland Master Plan, which designates the One Westport area for Waterfront Mixed-Use Development. The plan supports mixed-income housing, public park space, and improved access to the waterfront. The proposed zoning text amendment supports implementation of that plan by allowing more flexible but equally effective public view corridors to the water.

## ZONING CODE REQUIREMENTS

Below are the approval standards under §5-508(b) of Article 32 – *Zoning* for proposed zoning map amendments:

(b) *Map amendments.*

(1) *Required findings.*

As required by the State Land Use Article, the City Council may approve the legislative authorization based on a finding that there was either:

- (i) a substantial change in the character of the neighborhood where the property is located; or
- (ii) a mistake in the existing zoning classification.

(2) *Required findings of fact.*

In making the determination required by subsection (b)(1) of this section, the City Council must also make findings of fact that address:

- (i) population changes;
- (ii) the availability of public facilities;
- (iii) present and future transportation patterns;
- (iv) compatibility with existing and proposed development for the area;
- (v) the recommendations of the City agencies and officials; and
- (vi) the proposed amendment's consistency with the City's Comprehensive Master Plan.

(3) *Additional standards – General*

Additional standards that must be considered for map amendments are:

- (i) existing uses of property within the general area of the property in question;
- (ii) the zoning classification of other property within the general area of the property in question;
- (iii) the suitability of the property in question for the uses permitted under its existing zoning classification; and
- (iv) the trend of development, if any, in the general area of the property in question, including changes, if any, that have taken place since the property in question was placed in its present zoning classification.

## ANALYSIS

This zoning text amendment provides targeted flexibility in the W-2 Overlay's view corridor requirements, enabling better alignment with master-planned development conditions along the Middle Branch waterfront.

### Required Findings:

Per §5-508(b)(1) of Article 32 – *Zoning*, and as required by the State Land Use Article, the City Council may approve the legislative authorization based on a finding that there was either: (i) a substantial change in the character of the neighborhood where the property is located; or (ii) a mistake in the existing zoning classification. In this case, the proposal addresses evolving urban design and planning goals associated with the One Westport redevelopment and reflects a functional response to site constraints such as easements and waterfront conditions.

### Maryland Land Use Code – Requirements for Rezoning:

The Land Use Article of the Maryland Code requires the Planning Commission and the Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals (BMZA) to study the proposed changes in relation to: 1. The plan; 2. The needs of Baltimore City; and 3. The needs of the particular neighborhood in the vicinity of the proposed changes (*cf.* MD Code, Land Use § 10-305 (2024)). In reviewing this request, the staff finds that:

1. **The Plan:** The proposed amendment aligns with the Comprehensive Master Plan and Westport Master Plan by promoting effective waterfront access, urban design quality, and transit-oriented development.
2. **The needs of Baltimore City:** Baltimore needs flexible development tools to achieve high-quality, equitable waterfront redevelopment that leverages transit, parks, and underutilized land.
3. **The needs of the particular neighborhood:** Westport and surrounding communities benefit from enhanced access to the waterfront and amenities delivered through public-private redevelopment partnerships. The amendment enables design outcomes that balance access and usability.

Similarly, the Land Use article, also adopted by Article 32 – *Zoning* §5-508(b)(2), requires the City Council to make findings of fact (MD Code, Land Use § 10-304 (2024)). The findings of fact include:

1. **Population changes:** Anticipated increase in residential population through the Westport redevelopment supports need for refined urban design standards.
2. **Availability of public facilities:** The amendment does not alter demands on public facilities but enables a more efficient public space network.

3. **Present and future transportation patterns:** The site is proximate to the Westport Light Rail Station and bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure; flexible corridor spacing accommodates better transit integration.
4. **Compatibility with existing and proposed development:** The change is tailored to the One Westport plan and conforms with nearby mixed-use and open space objectives.
5. **The recommendations of the Planning Commission and the Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals (BMZA);** For the above reasons, the Planning Department will recommend APPROVAL of the rezoning request to the Planning Commission. The BMZA has not yet commented on this bill.

There are additional standards under Article 32 – *Zoning* §5-508(b)(3) that must be considered for map amendments. These include:

- (i) **existing uses of property within the general area of the property in question;** area is currently characterized by vacant land and early-stage redevelopment.
- (ii) **the zoning classification of other property within the general area of the property in question;** Surrounding zoning includes TOD-4 and W-2 Overlay Districts designed for high-density, mixed-use redevelopment
- (iii) **the suitability of the property in question for the uses permitted under its existing zoning classification;** existing zoning supports redevelopment; the amendment allows improved site-specific flexibility.
- (iv) **the trend of development, if any, in the general area of the property in question, including changes, if any, that have taken place since the property in question was placed in its present zoning classification.** The One Westport site has undergone subdivision and UDAAP approvals, however will need to be revisited as a result of the master plan changes.

**Background:** This amendment was introduced in direct response to evolving design needs within the One Westport Master Plan, a major mixed-use redevelopment project on the Middle Branch. The W-2 view corridor spacing standard (currently 300 feet maximum) was identified as overly restrictive given the site's physical constraints and public space ambitions. The amendment offers a clear alternative standard that preserves the overlay's goals while enabling superior site planning.

**Impact:**

This proposal allows for more thoughtful and inclusive design of public spaces within the Westport redevelopment, encouraging community-facing waterfront access and high-quality open space. It supports long-term goals of economic inclusion and equitable access to amenities.

**Engagement:**

The Westport Master Plan was reviewed by UDAAP and informed by community planning processes, including the Westport Mount Winans Lakeland Master Plan. Continued public engagement is expected through future design review phases.

**Internal Operations:**

This amendment represents a minor administrative burden, but addresses a specific development

constraint with a clear policy response. It is anticipated to reduce future requests for variances or legislative exceptions in similar waterfront contexts.

Notification: The Westport Neighborhood Association, Westport CEDC, Mt. Winans Community Association, St. Paul Neighborhood Association, and South Baltimore Gateway Partnership have been notified of this application, and the property has been posted in accordance with Planning Commission guidelines.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Chris Ryer**  
**Director**