

FROM	NAME & TITLE	Eric W. Tiso,  Director of Development Oversight and Project Support	CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Department of Planning 8 th Floor, 417 East Fayette Street		
	SUBJECT	City Council Bill #25-0139 / Zoning – Rezoning – Conditional Use Conversion to a Commercial Composting Facility – 6101 Bowleys Lane		

TO

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

DATE: January 16, 2026

At its regular meeting of January 15, 2026, the Planning Commission considered City Council Bill #25-0139, for the purpose of changing the zoning for the property known as 6101 Bowleys Lane (Block 6195, Lot 008), as outlined in red on the accompanying plat from the OIC Zoning District to the IMU 2 Zoning District; permitting, subject to certain conditions, the establishment, maintenance, and operation of a commercial composting facility on the same property; and providing for a special effective date.

In its consideration of this Bill, the Planning Commission reviewed the attached staff report, which recommended approval of City Council Bill #25-0139 and adopted the following resolution:

RESOLVED, That the Planning Commission concurs with the recommendation of its departmental staff, adopts the findings and equity analysis outlined in the staff report, with consideration for testimony and facts presented in the meeting, and recommends that City Council Bill #25-0139 be **approved** by the City Council.

If you have any questions, please contact me at eric.tiso@baltimorecity.gov or by phone at 410-396-8358.

attachment

- cc: Ms. Nina Themelis, Mayor’s Office
 The Honorable John Bullock, Council Rep. to Planning Commission
 Mr. Justin Williams, BMZA
 Mr. Geoffrey Veale, Zoning Administrator
 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



Tim Keane
Director

January 15, 2026

LEGISLATION: City Council Bill #25-0139/ Zoning – Rezoning – Conditional Use Conversion to a Commercial Composting Facility 6101 Bowleys Lane:

For the purpose of changing the zoning for the property known as 6101 Bowleys Lane (Block 6195, Lot 008), as outlined in red on the accompanying plat from the OIC Zoning District to the IMU-2 Zoning District; permitting, subject to certain conditions, the establishment, maintenance, and operation of a commercial composting facility on the same property; and providing for a special effective date.

SUMMARY OF REQUEST: The proposed ordinance combines both rezoning and conditional use approval into a single bill, allowing both processes to advance concurrently. The site is already designated 'Mixed Use: Predominantly Industrial' in the General Land Use Plan, so shifting the zoning to IMU-2 aligns the map with the plan. It's also worth noting that IMU-2 offers more long-term flexibility for public uses than OIC, which is really tailored to private office campuses. The Department of Planning recommended that the rezoning and conditional use be packaged in one bill so the review process is cleaner, and both actions can move forward on the same timeline.

The \$1 million EPA grant DPW was awarded for construction, must be committed by August 2027. Based on the expected procurement schedule, we need the zoning legislation finalized by spring 2026 to stay on track and not forfeit the award. This double-barrel approach minimizes the risk of project delays that could jeopardize time-sensitive funding. As stated per the Zoning Code, conditional use approval is required for composting operations. The IMU-2 district also ensures compatibility with surrounding industrial and mixed-use areas. The proposal will be reviewed by the Site Plan Review Committee to ensure compliance with environmental, design, and infrastructure requirements before subdivision application and review.

RECOMMENDATION: Approval

STAFF: Austin C. Davis

INTRODUCED BY: Council President Cohen

OWNER: Mayor and City Council of Baltimore

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 2

SITE/GENERAL AREA

Site Conditions: 6101 Bowleys Lane is located on the southwest side of Bowleys Lane, west of Moravia Road, and north of the intersection with I-895. The site is bounded by the Herring Run on its western side. This property contains approximately 82 acres of land and is currently improved with the Eastern Drop-off Center, operated by DPW. This site is zoned OIC (Office Industrial Campus) portions of the property are within a floodplain.

General Area: This site is located within the Pulaski Industrial Area, which is a predominantly industrial area spanning from either side of I-895 eastward to the City's eastern boundary, and southwards along I-95, including the traditional industrial areas.

HISTORY

The Department of Public Works (DPW) plans to expand and enhance operations at 6101 Bowleys Lane by constructing a new composting facility, upgrading the existing collection center, and adding parking. The site is currently zoned OIC (Office Industrial Campus), which does not permit composting operations. Per the zoning code, commercial composting is a conditional use only in the IMU-2 district. The proposed rezoning and conditional use approval are thus required to advance this project. This legislative effort is also critical to securing and expending a \$1 million EPA grant before its expiration in August 2027. The rezoning must be completed by April 2026 to allow design, bidding, and permitting to proceed on schedule.

CONFORMITY TO PLANS

The 2024 Comprehensive Master Plan for the City of Baltimore was enacted by Ordinance #24-426, dated December 2, 2024. The project aligns with the City's Comprehensive Master Plan and the General Land Use Plan, which designates the site as Mixed Use: Predominantly Industrial. Rezoning to IMU-2 is more consistent with this designation than the current OIC zoning. IMU-2 permits recycling and refuse collection by right and composting as a conditional use, thereby supporting Baltimore's waste diversion and environmental sustainability goals

REZONING:

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 AND RECOMMENDATION

As noted above, for rezonings, the City Council must consider the following, where appropriate. Staff's assessment follows each of these criteria.

§ 5-508 (b) Evaluation criteria:

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; (ii) a mistake in the existing zoning classification.

Prior to the comprehensive rezoning completed in 2017, the area was zoned R-6 residential, which was an obvious misalignment with the historic land uses in this area. During the 2017 rezoning, known as *Transform Baltimore*, the area was recognized for its industrial nature. This specific parcel was designated OIC zoning by itself, which was a newly-created zone at the time. Similar light industrial areas across the street to the east were designated I-1, and properties to the south were designated I-2 to recognize their light industrial uses.

Evidence of either a substantial change or a mistake in the zoning is needed in order to support a rezoning. Staff notes that the district description of the OIC zone is: "The OIC Office-Industrial Campus Zoning District is intended for developments of large office structures, research and development facilities, and light industrial uses." (Art. 32 – *Zoning*, § 11-201). While the transfer station is a light industrial use, the OIC zone tends to lean more towards office and development types of uses. Given that this parcel is in a zone by itself, staff believes this assignment wasn't the best fit for its actual operations. The statement of intent for the Industrial Mixed-Use zones are: "(1) The IMU Industrial Mixed-Use Zoning Districts are intended to encourage the reuse of older industrial buildings for light industrial use, as well as a variety of non-industrial uses. (2) These older industrial buildings are often surrounded by residential and other non-industrial uses, though in many cases they are also transition zones between a heavy industrial area and a major road or a less intense use or district." Staff believes that this will be a better fit, as this site is an existing facility, and can serve as a buffer between more intense uses to the east and south, and Herring Run.

Required findings of fact:

(i) Population changes

Since the adoption of *Transform Baltimore* in 2017, the surrounding area has experienced modest but notable population fluctuation. According to the U.S. Census and ACS estimates:

- In 2017, the area population was just over 17,300 (ACS 5-year).
- By the 2020 Decennial Census, the population had dropped slightly to around 17,100.
- Most recently, 2025 ACS 1-year estimates show the area has grown to over 19,000 residents.

This growth reflects regional demographic trends and potential reinvestment in East Baltimore neighborhoods. The proposed zoning and use are not expected to directly influence residential density or drive additional population change.

(ii) **Availability of public facilities**

The area continues to be adequately served by existing municipal water, sewer, and public services.

(iii) **Present and future transportation patterns**

No substantial changes in present or future transportation patterns have been identified.

(iv) **Compatibility with existing and proposed development for the area**

The proposed project at 6101 Bowleys Lane seeks to construct a municipal composting facility as part of a broader upgrade to the existing DPW waste collection site. The project would enable the City to process organic waste locally, reduce landfill reliance, and meet its climate and waste diversion goals.

(v) **Recommendations of City agencies and officials**

Currently, the property is zoned OIC, which does not permit composting – either by right or conditionally. A rezoning to IMU-2 is required, as IMU-2 permits recycling and refuse collection facilities by right and allows composting as a conditional use. This zoning change is necessary to facilitate construction and operation of the facility.

(vi) **Consistency with the City’s Comprehensive Master Plan**

The current conditions are consistent with the adopted Comprehensive Plan, which identifies the area for mixed industrial uses.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff therefore recommends that the Planning Commission adopt these findings and recommend the bill favorably, with respect to the rezoning.

CONDITIONAL USE:

§ 5-406. Approval standards.

(a) Evaluation criteria.

As a guide to its decision on the facts of each case, the Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals or the City Council must consider the following, where appropriate:

- (1) the nature of the proposed site, including its size and shape and the proposed size, shape, and arrangement of structures;
- (2) the resulting traffic patterns and adequacy of proposed off-street parking and loading;
- (3) the nature of the surrounding area and the extent to which the proposed use might impair its present and future development;
- (4) the proximity of dwellings, churches, schools, public structures, and other places of public gathering;

- (5) accessibility of the premises for emergency vehicles;
- (6) accessibility of light and air to the premises and to the property in the vicinity;
- (7) the type and location of adequate utilities, access roads, drainage, and other necessary facilities that have been or will be provided;
- (8) the preservation of cultural and historic landmarks and structures;
- (9) the character of the neighborhood;
- (10) the provisions of the City's Comprehensive Master Plan;
- (11) the provisions of any applicable Urban Renewal Plan;
- (12) all applicable standards and requirements of this Code;
- (13) the intent and purpose of this Code; and
- (14) any other matters considered to be in the interest of the general welfare.

(b) *Limited criteria for denying.*

The Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals or the City Council, may not approve a conditional use or sign unless, after public notice and hearing and on consideration of the standards required by this subtitle, the Board or Council finds that:

- (1) the establishment, location, construction, maintenance, or operation of the conditional use or sign would not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, or welfare;
- (2) the use or sign would not be precluded by any other law, including an applicable Urban Renewal Plan;
- (3) the authorization would not be contrary to the public interest; and
- (4) the authorization would be in harmony with the purpose and intent of this Code.

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION:

As noted above, for Conditional Uses, the Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals or the City Council must consider the following, where appropriate. Staff's assessment follows each of these criteria.

§ 5-406 (a) Evaluation criteria:

The nature of the proposed site, including its size and shape and the proposed size, shape, and arrangement of structures;

This site is already developed for use as a refuse transfer station. The proposal will include a composting facility, which is a compatible addition to the existing operation on the property. This allows for an increase in the services offered at this City facility, and incorporates a sustainability feature.

The resulting traffic patterns and adequacy of proposed off-street parking and loading;

Staff does not anticipate a significant change in vehicle traffic to this site with the expansion of services when the composting facility is added.

The nature of the surrounding area and the extent to which the proposed use might impair its present and future development;

This site is in an industrial area of the City, which is an appropriate location for this form of City service. Staff does not anticipate any significant impacts to development potential in the surrounding area.

The proximity of dwellings, churches, schools, public structures, and other places of public gathering;

Given that this is an industrial area, none of the sensitive uses listed are in close proximity to this site, so there will be no negative impacts there.

Accessibility of the premises for emergency vehicles;

The site will remain accessible to emergency vehicles.

Accessibility of light and air to the premises and to the property in the vicinity;

The additional of the proposed compost facility will have no impact on the accessibility of light and air to nearby properties.

The type and location of adequate utilities, access roads, drainage, and other necessary facilities that have been or will be provided;

Utilities, roads, and drainage will remain unchanged, as the proposal would only impact the interior arrangement of the site.

The preservation of cultural and historic landmarks and structures;

No anticipated impact.

The character of the neighborhood;

No anticipated impact.

The provisions of the City's Comprehensive Master Plan;

The conditional use aligns with the City's Comprehensive Plan and General Land Use Plan.

The provisions of any applicable Urban Renewal Plan;

There is no applicable Urban Renewal Plan for this area.

All applicable standards and requirements of this Code;

Staff is not aware of any other regulatory impediment to this proposal.

§ 5-406 (b) Limited criteria for denying:

The establishment, location, construction, maintenance, or operation of the conditional use or sign would not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, or welfare;

Staff finds no reason the establishment would be detrimental to public health, safety, or welfare.

The use or sign would not be precluded by any other law, including an applicable Urban Renewal Plan;

This site is not located within a URP, so there is no impact.

The authorization would not be contrary to the public interest; and

The authorization would not be contrary to the established procedures of the Zoning Code.

The authorization would be in harmony with the purpose and intent of this Code.

The authorization would be in harmony with the Code as it is compatible with the proposed General Land Use Plan, and does not generate any negative impacts according to the required findings for conditional uses.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff therefore recommends that the Planning Commission adopt these findings and recommend the bill be approved, with respect to the conditional use.

EQUITY:

1) Short / long-term impact on surrounding community: In the short term, this zoning bill won't change much physically about the site—it's already in active use by DPW. But in the long term, the proposed composting facility adds a new layer of environmental value by keeping organic waste out of landfills and turning it into a usable product. This reduces greenhouse gas emissions, cuts disposal costs, and helps the City lead by example on zero-waste strategies.

Locating a facility like this in an existing DPW campus also avoids siting new infrastructure in neighborhoods without strong buffers or access.

2) Impact on Baltimore’s existing patterns of inequity: Organics recycling infrastructure is unevenly distributed and largely absent in the urban core. By investing in this kind of capacity in Baltimore, we are helping to reverse historic patterns of underinvestment in public services and sustainability infrastructure. This rezoning enables a project that supports more equitable access to composting options and the environmental benefits that come with them.

3) Impact on internal operations: The zoning change and conditional use approval are necessary to move the project forward, but implementation will also require coordination between Planning, DPW, DoT and Zoning staff through subdivision review. The composting use itself is subject to conditional use criteria, so the review team will need to confirm compatibility with surrounding uses and compliance with environmental and design standards. While that adds a few extra steps compared to a by-right use, the proposed IMU-2 zoning gives the City the right framework to move efficiently through permitting, without needing future legislative actions for similar improvements on-site.

NOTIFICATION: The site has been posted per DoP Guidelines, and DoP and DPW staff briefed the Frankford Community Association at their in-person community meeting early January. Additional, GovDelivery electronic notification was sent out when the project was scheduled for Planning Commission.



Tim Keane
Director