



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING

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TECHNICAL STAFF REPORT

Planning Board Meeting of February 5, 2026

Case No./Petitioner: **ZB-1133M – The Howard Research and Development Corporation**

Location: East side of Commerce Center Drive
 Approximately 100 feet southwest of the intersection of Snowden Square Drive and Commerce Center Drive
 Tax Map 42, Grid 6, Parcel 513, Lots A-71 and A-73
 9131 & 9121 Commerce Center Drive (the "Property")

Area of Site: Lot A-71: 5.5 acres; Lot A-73: 5.51 (cumulative acreage: 11.01 acres)

Current Zoning: Business: General (B-2)

Proposed Zoning: Manufacturing: Light (M-1)



Zoning & Vicinity
9121 Commerce Center
Drive

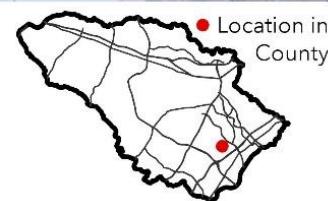


0 240 480 Feet

Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, & OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

ZB-1133M
Zoning

- B-2
- M-1
- NT
- Subject Parcels



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Petitioner: The Howard Research and Development Corporation

I. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

The Petitioner, The Howard Research and Development Corporation, requests a Zoning Map Amendment to rezone the Property from Business: General (B-2) to Manufacturing: Light (M-1).

The B-2 district was established to provide for commercial sales and services that directly serve the general public.

The M-1 district was established to permit a mix of manufacturing, warehousing and business uses with provisions for limited retail sales.

The Petitioner asserts that the proposed Zoning Map Amendment is justified based on a mistake in Zoning made during the 2004 Comprehensive Zoning Plan (the “2004 CZP”). This assertion is evaluated in the Evaluation and Conclusion section.

II. ZONING HISTORY

A. Subject Property

The Property was zoned “Residential” in 1951 and was rezoned to the Business 2 District (B-2) in 1954. The Property remained B-2 until 1962, when it was rezoned to Residential (R-20). The Property was rezoned to Industrial Development (ID) in 1972 and retained this designation until 1992. In 1992, it was rezoned to M-1 and remained M-1 until 2004. In 2002, Map Amendment 42.01 was submitted for the previous addresses of 9141 Snowden River Parkway/9131 Robert Fulton Drive, Tax Map 42, Parcel 513, Lots A-71 & A-73, to request rezoning the lots from M-1 to B-2. During approval of this request, the Planning Board indicated that the proposed B-2 designation was an “appropriate extension of commercial zoning.” During the 2004 Comprehensive Zoning Plan, the Property adopted the B-2 designation and retained this zoning through the 2013 Comprehensive Zoning Plan.

B. Adjacent Properties

The properties to the west share the same zoning history as the subject Property, until 1992 when the properties were rezoned to the current B-2 zoning designation. Conversely, the parcels to the east were rezoned from residential to ID in 1972, and rezoned to the current M-1 zoning designation in 1992.

III. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A. Site Description

The Property consists of two adjacent parcels totaling 11.01 acres in size.

Lot A-71 is currently undeveloped. The rezoning area is approximately 5.5 acres. GEAPE Land Holdings II, Inc. conveyed the lot to The Howard Research and Development Corporation in 2009.

Lot A-73 is currently undeveloped. The rezoning area is approximately 5.51 acres. The Howard Research and Development Corporation is the fee-simple owner.

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B. Vicinal Properties

Direction	Zoning	Land Use
North	M-1/B-2	Commercial/Industrial
South	M-1	Commercial/Industrial
East	M-1	Industrial
West	B-2	Commercial

C. Roads

Commerce Center Drive has two travel lanes within a 30-foot right-of-way. Annual Average Daily Traffic data is not available for this portion of Commerce Center Drive. Commerce Center Drive is classified as a Private Road.

The nearest intersection is Commerce Center Drive and Snowden Square Drive, approximately 100 feet northwest of the parcels. Snowden Square Drive is classified as a Local Public Road.

D. Water and Sewer Service

The Property is within the Planned Service Area for water/sewer.

E. General Plan

The Property is designated as a Regional Activity Center on the Future Land Use Map adopted in the General Plan, *HoCo By Design*. HoCo By Design envisions Gateway transforming into a regional Activity Center and states that “Industrial, warehouse, and flex space buildings should be considered for specific areas in Gateway.” Regional Activity Centers are identified as a Character Area consisting of the Columbia Gateway business park, an existing employment center with large-format buildings and surface parking lots that should be redeveloped as a large regional growth center in the future.

The Gateway Master Plan, adopted in December 2025, states that “The Gateway Innovation District will be a major hub for cybersecurity, defense, technology, artificial intelligence, quantum, and other emerging industries while also offering residents a well-connected, vibrant, and thriving community in which to live, work, and play.” The Gateway Master Plan further states, “Industrial uses will continue to thrive, in appropriate locations, and support the innovation ecosystem.”

The Gateway Master Plan organizes the site into nine subareas, each with a different land use vision. The subject property is located in Subarea 6 (Snowden River Parkway), for which the master plan states: “This subarea includes properties with existing low-density industrial uses, where redevelopment within the 30-year horizon of this plan is unlikely. The master plan recommends that future development continue to have an employment focus where industrial coexists with other uses. This approach allows these areas to redevelop with a broader mix or uses or continue to thrive as industrial sites.”

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F. Agency Comments

Agency comments are attached.

IV. EVALUATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

A. Relation to the General Plan and the Zoning Regulations

General Plan:

The Petitioner asserts that the request to rezone the Property to M-1 is in harmony with the General Plan because the rezoning will increase the supply of industrial areas. The Petitioner states that the M-1 zoning district would be more appropriate since the parcels are behind an existing retail center and do not have frontage on any major roadways. The Petitioner also stated that due to the decline of in person retail sales, these parcels would not be feasible for those types of uses. The Petitioner asserts that this rezoning would be in line with HoCo By Design's Chapter 5: Economic Prosperity.

HoCo By Design Policy EP-2 states that the County should "*Retain and expand the use of industrial land to support employment opportunities that pay a living wage*".

Amending the Zoning Map to reclassify the parcels from B-2 to M-1 with proposed industrial uses is consistent with the Policy Statements and Implementing Actions in the General Plan, and the vision and recommendations in the Gateway Master Plan.

Zoning Regulations:

The M-1 district permits numerous industrial uses including warehousing, research and development, offices, and other light industrial uses. The Petitioner is proposing to develop the lots with industrial uses; however, there is no site plan to show the specific use of the Property.

The requested M-1 district requires a 50-foot structure and use setback from an internal or external public street right-of-way. Commerce Center Drive is designated as a Private Road.

B. Evaluation of the Petition Concerning the Change Rule, Delineation of Neighborhood, and Description of Land Use and Zoning in the Neighborhood

To substantiate a change in character of the neighborhood, the petitioner must establish the "neighborhood" boundary and specify the changes that occurred after the comprehensive zoning that altered the character of the "neighborhood".

No statement was provided in the petition as to whether there is an allegation of substantial change in the character of the neighborhood since the 2013 CZP. Furthermore, the Petitioner did not provide any neighborhood boundaries, so the Petition was not evaluated in regard to the Change Rule.

C. Evaluation of the Petition Concerning the Mistake Rule

To substantiate a mistake in zoning, evidence must show that the Zoning Authority erred when it adopted the comprehensive zoning map.

The Petitioner asserts that the proposed Zoning Map Amendment is justified based on a mistake made during the 2004 CZP. The purpose of the B-2 zoning district is intended to for consumer facing commercial and retail uses. The Petitioner explains that these parcels are located behind an

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existing retail commercial center and do not have frontage on any major roadways. The Petitioner asserts that the current zoning designation is not appropriate for the site and is not marketable as commercial retail property. In addition, the Petitioner stated that since the B-2 designation in 2004, commercial retail has experienced a decline with most consumers converting to online sales, and as a result have reduced the feasibility to develop these lots with additional commercial retail uses.

The Petitioner asserts that the M-1 district is a more suitable zoning designation that is consistent with the surrounding areas. The Petitioner further explained that the parcels were originally zoned M-1 but were rezoned to support the growth of “big box commercial” that occurred in the late 1990’s and early 2000’s. Thus, the County Council failed to take these existing facts into account during the 2004 CZP, representing a mistake in the underlying zone.

The Petitioner asserts rezoning the Property to M-1 is appropriate to correct the Council’s mistake. Rezoning the Property to M-1 will allow the underutilized properties to be developed with Industrial uses.

D. Appropriateness of Zoning District and Staff Findings

B-2 (Business: General)

The B-2 district was established “*to provide for commercial sales and services that directly serve the general public.*” Developments within the B-2 district are encouraged to be multi-use centers combining commercial uses and services that serve the public. In addition, the B-2 district permits up to one square foot of residential space permitted for each square foot of commercial space, as long as it is within the same structure.

The B-2 district was established during the 1953 zoning regulations to provide for a mix of commercial uses in developments around the County. These uses range from retail and personal services to restaurants, entertainment areas, and other commonly needed services that create active commercial centers.

M-1 (Manufacturing: Light)

The purpose of the M-1 District is “*to permit a mix of manufacturing, warehousing and business uses with provisions for limited retail sales.*” Developments within the M-1 district are encouraged to encourage industrial and commercial uses along with limited retail sales within retail centers. The proposed rezoning and development of warehouse/industrial uses is in line with the purpose of this zoning district.

Approved by:

DocuSigned by:

Lynda Eisenberg

1/21/2026

Lynda Eisenberg, AICP, Director

Date