

**ZRA-217**

# **Department of Planning and Zoning, Petitioner**

Howard County Planning Board  
October 9, 2025



# Purpose of the Proposed ZRA

1. Respond to changes in market conditions and new industry opportunities related to Agritourism.
2. Implement new and relevant policies as outlined in HoCo By Design.
3. Address issues and reduce conflicts in the current code to improve clarity, accessibility, and ease of technical administration.

# Summary of Proposed Changes

Use	What's currently allowed?	What's changing?	Code reference
<b><i>Agritourism Enterprises</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessory to farming with Special Farm Permit in RC and RR</li> <li>• 50 acre minimum or any lot size if subject to ALPP or dedicated easement</li> <li>• Hours of operation 6am-10pm</li> <li>• 4 events/year, 8 days/year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renaming to “Agritourism”</li> <li>• Owner(s) of agritourism business must reside on the property or abutting property</li> <li>• Festival events: weekends (Fri.-Sun.), not more than two consecutive days, hours 8a.m.-8p.m.</li> <li>• Driveway access shared with other properties cannot serve as primary entrance for Agritourism business</li> </ul>	103.0, 104.0.C, 105.0.C, 106.1.C, 128.0.I
<b><i>Small-Scale Agritourism</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not a current use. New use being added.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessory to farming with Special Farm Permit in RC, RR, R-ED, and R-20.</li> <li>• Minimum of 5 acres</li> <li>• Maximum of 50 visitors</li> <li>• Maximum of 25 events/year</li> <li>• Hours of operation 8am-8pm</li> <li>• No festival events</li> </ul>	103.0, 104.0.C, 105.0.C, 106.1.C, 107.0.C, 108.0.C, 128.0.I
<b><i>Incidental Outdoor Stays – Lodging</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not a current use. New use being added.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessory to farming with Special Farm Permit in RC, RR, R-ED, and R-20.</li> <li>• Minimum of 20 acres or on any parcel under ALPP or dedicated easement</li> <li>• 3 structures/sites, 3 days/stay</li> <li>• 450sqft/structure, 3,500sqft/site, 10,500sqft in aggregate</li> <li>• DILP approved sanitation</li> <li>• RV's being used as part of this use cannot be owned by property owner</li> </ul>	103.0, 104.0.C, 105.0.C, 106.1.C, 107.0.C, 108.0.C, 128.0.I

# Summary of Proposed Changes

Use	What's currently allowed?	What's changing?	Code reference
<b>Detached Accessory Structures Developed with Single Family home</b>	Cumulative Lot Coverage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 600 sqft in public water/sewer</li> <li>• 1,200 in RC/RR on 2 acres or less</li> <li>• 2,200 sqft in RC/RR on 2 acres or more</li> </ul>	Cumulative Lot Coverage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 600 sqft in public water/sewer</li> <li>• 1,200 in RC/RR on 2 acres or less</li> <li>• 2,200 sqft in RC/RR on 2-5 acres</li> <li>• 5,000 sqft in RC/RR 5 acres or more</li> </ul>	128.0.A.12.a
<b>Bed and Breakfast</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permitted by right with ALPP easement</li> <li>• Conditional use in historic structures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessory to farming with Special Farm Permit in RC, RR, R-ED, R-20, R-12, R-SC on more than 20 acres</li> <li>• Conditional use may be granted for properties less than 20 acres</li> <li>• No longer has to be a historic structure</li> <li>• B&amp;B does not have to be operated by the property owner but inn manager must reside at the B&amp;B</li> </ul>	103.0, 104.0.C, 107.0.C, 108.0.C, 109.0.C, 110.0.C, 106.1.C, 128.0.I, 10, 131.0.N.8
<b>Festival – Agritourism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not a current use. New use being added.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adding definition for new use which encompasses large-scale outdoor events</li> <li>• Establishes events that are unlike the usual activities associated with the property</li> </ul>	103.0

# Summary of Proposed Changes

Use	What's currently allowed?	What's changing?	Code reference
<b>Farm Winery/Brewery Class 1A</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum of 5 acres</li> <li>Accessory to farming in RC and RR</li> <li>10am-7pm daily Sun.-Thurs., 10am-10pm Fri.-Sat. (DPZ may reduce but not increase hours)</li> <li>50 visitors max.</li> <li>Permitted on ALPP or dedicated easements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Renaming to "<i>Farm Alcohol Producer</i>"</li> <li>150 visitors max.</li> <li>Noise log</li> </ul>	103.0, 106.1.C., 128.0.O
<b>Farm Winery Class 1B</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum of 5 acres</li> <li>Conditional use in RR cluster preservation parcels</li> <li>10am-7pm daily Sun.-Thurs., 10am-10pm Fri.-Sat. (HE may reduce but not increase hours)</li> <li>50 visitors maximum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Removing – no Winery's currently operating under this Class</li> </ul>	103.0., 131.0.N.57
<b>Farm Winery Class 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum of 25 acres</li> <li>Conditional use in RC, RR, ALPP and other dedicated easements</li> <li>10am-10pm (HE may reduce but not increase)</li> <li>Everyday event – 50 visitors</li> <li>Special event – 15 days/year; 150 visitors and HE may increase by 5 people/every acre over 25 acres up to 500 guests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Renaming to "<i>Farm Alcohol Producer</i>"</li> <li>Special event – HE may increase by 10 people/every acre over 25 acres, up to 500 guests</li> <li>Noise log</li> </ul>	103.0, 106.1.D, 131.0.N.58  106.1.D 131.0.N.58

# Summary of Proposed Changes

Use	What's currently allowed?	What's changing?	Code reference
<b>Limited Social Assembly</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conditional use in RC, ALPP or dedicated easement</li> <li>• Minimum 5-acre lot size</li> <li>• 150 attendees maximum</li> <li>• 25 events/year</li> <li>• 9am-10pm Mon.-Thurs.</li> <li>• 12pm-12am Fri.-Sat.</li> <li>• 12pm-10pm Sun.</li> <li>• Site must be historic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing name to "<i>Rural Venue Space</i>" and adding a definition</li> <li>• 150 attendees on 5-acre parcel</li> <li>• 250 attendees on 20-acre parcel</li> <li>• 10 additional attendees for each acre in excess of 20 acres, not to exceed 300</li> <li>• Hearing Examiner may increase number of events/year over 25 total</li> <li>• The site does not have to be historic</li> <li>• Noise log</li> <li>• Any amplified noise after 10pm must be located indoors</li> </ul>	103.0,106.1.D, 131.0.N.26, 131.0.N.33
<b>Farm Vehicle</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not a current use. New use being added.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing a definition of what farm vehicles are and are not for clarity</li> </ul>	103.0

# Evaluation of Criteria

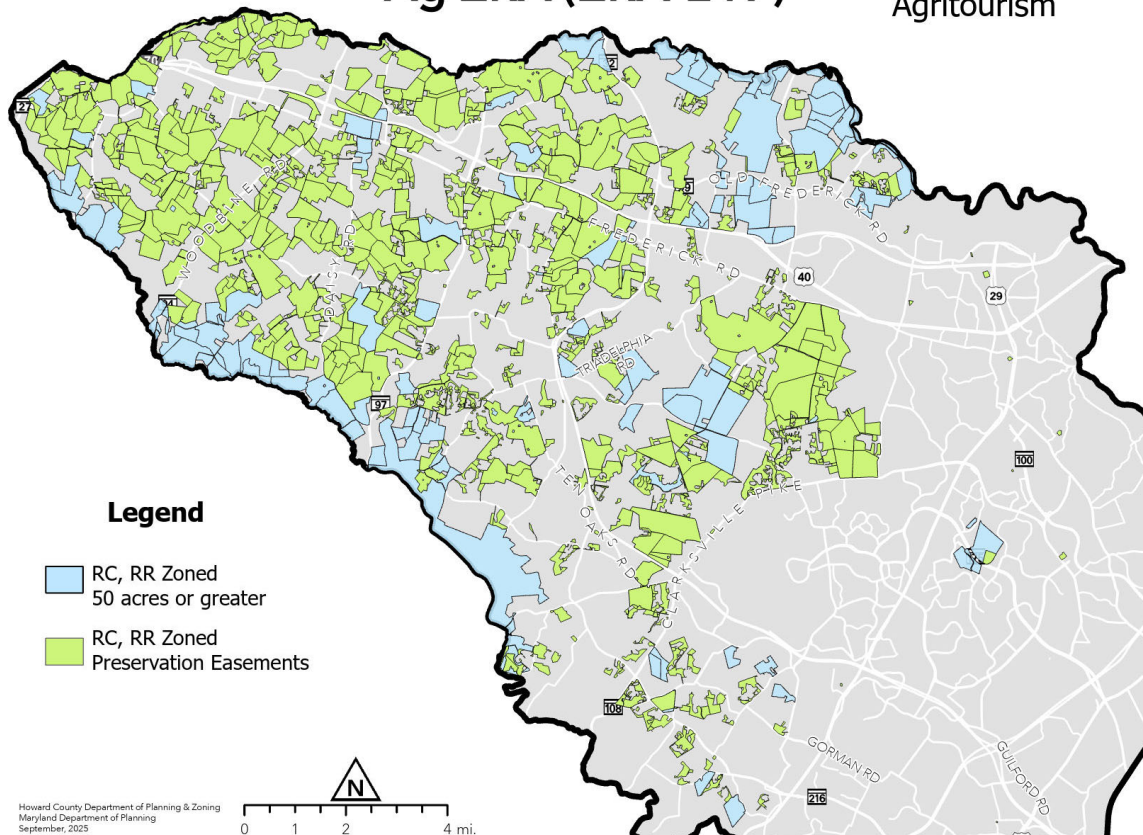
**1. The compatibility, including potential adverse impacts and consequences, of the proposed Zoning Regulation Amendment with the existing and potential uses of the surrounding areas and within the same zoning district.**

- Staff does not foresee any adverse impacts of the proposed ZRA.
- The ZRA would generally have an impact on all parcels that are zoned RC, RR, R-ED, R-20, R-12, R-SC, and RVH because the proposal would be:
  - Amending provisions for certain uses in the districts,
  - Adding new uses permitted in the districts.

# Evaluation of Criteria – Properties which the ZRA could apply and, if feasible, a map of the impacted properties.

## Ag ZRA (ZRA-217)

Agritourism



## Agritourism Special Farm Permit Currently Allowed:

- RC or RR zoned
- 50 acres or greater or any size if an Easement property
- 4 events/year, 8 days/year
- 6a.m.-10p.m.

## What's Changing:

- *Festival Events*: weekends (Friday-Sunday), not to exceed 2 consecutive days, 8a.m.-8p.m.
- Owners of business must reside on property
- Shared driveway access cannot serve as primary entrance for business



# Evaluation of Criteria – Properties which the ZRA could apply and, if feasible, a map of the impacted properties.

## Ag ZRA (ZRA-217)

Small-Scale Agritourism

## Small Scale Agritourism Special Farm Permit

### Currently Allowed:

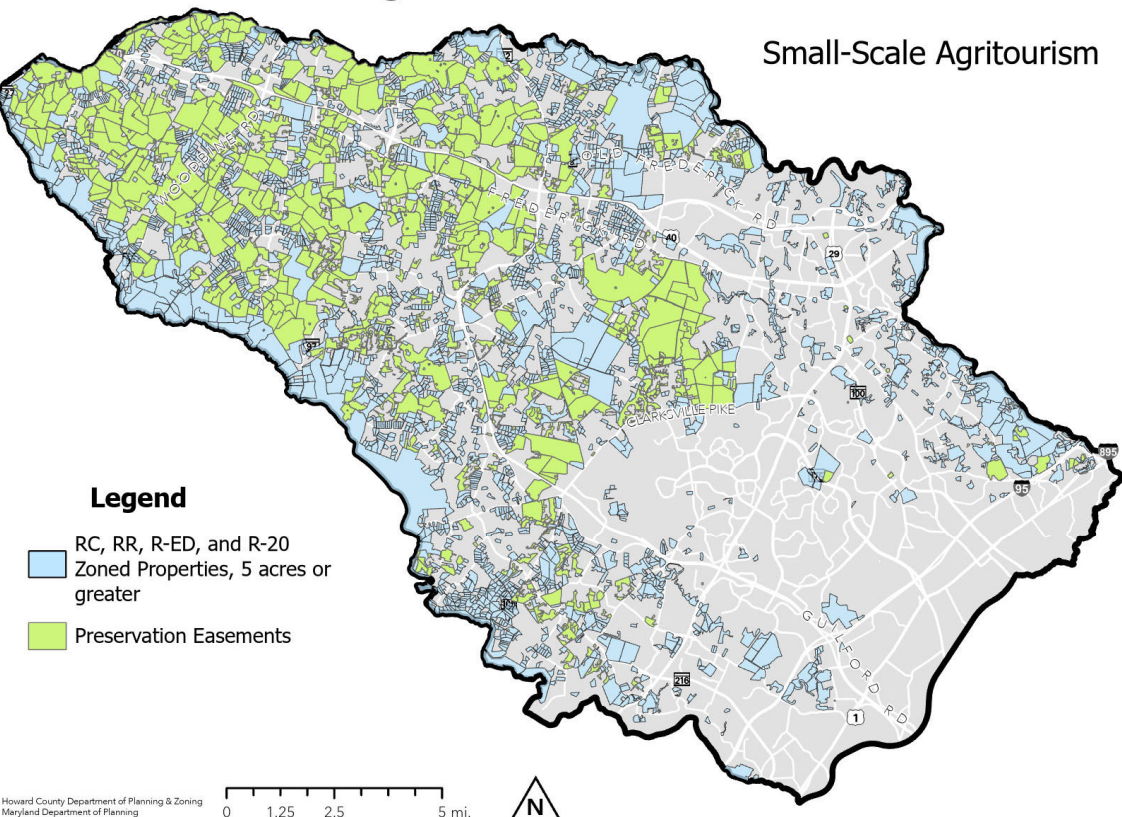
- Not currently a use.

### What's Changing:

- Accessory to farming in RC, RR, R-ED, and R-20 and on Easement properties
- Minimum of 5 acres
- Maximum of 50 visitors
- 25 events/year
- 8a.m.-8p.m.
- No festival events

### Legend

- RC, RR, R-ED, and R-20  
Zoned Properties, 5 acres or greater
- Preservation Easements



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0 1.25 2.5 5 mi.



# Evaluation of Criteria – Properties which the ZRA could apply and, if feasible, a map of the impacted properties.

## Ag ZRA (ZRA-217)

Bed and Breakfast Inns -  
Accessory Use

## Bed and Breakfast – Accessory Use

### Currently Allowed:

- Conditional use in historic structures
- Permitted by right on ALPP properties, subject to requirements

### What's Changing:

- Accessory to farming in RC, RR, R-ED, R-20, R-12, and R-SC
- Minimum of 20 acres or any size if an Easement property
- On-site caretaker must be residing on the property
- Does not have to be a historic structure

### Legend

RC, RR, R-ED, R-20, R-12, R-SC Zoned  
20 acres or greater

RC, RR, R-ED, R-20, R-12, R-SC Zoned  
Preservation Easements

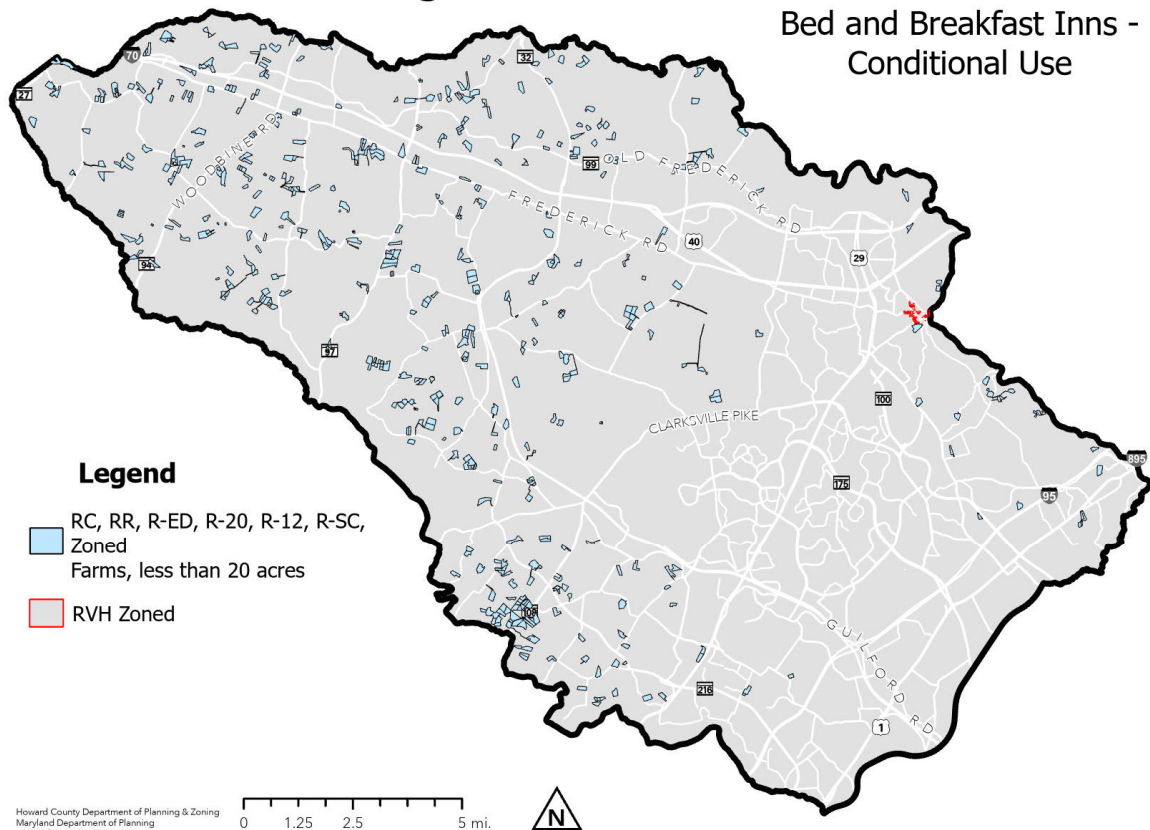
0 1.25 2.5 5 mi.



# Evaluation of Criteria – Properties which the ZRA could apply and, if feasible, a map of the impacted properties.

## Ag ZRA (ZRA-217)

Bed and Breakfast Inns -  
Conditional Use



## Bed and Breakfast – Conditional Use

### Currently Allowed:

- Conditional use in historic structures
- Permitted by right on ALPP properties, subject to requirements

### What's Changing:

- Expanding to the R-SC district
- Less than 20 acres
- Does not have to be a historic structure
  - Must be located on a farm if not located in a historic structure
- On-site caretaker must be residing on the property



# Evaluation of Criteria – Properties which the ZRA could apply and, if feasible, a map of the impacted properties.

## Ag ZRA (ZRA-217)

Farm Alcohol Producer -  
Accessory Use

## Farm Alcohol Producer – Accessory Use

### Currently Allowed:

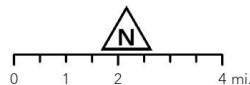
- Accessory to farming in RC, RR, and Easement properties
- Minimum of 5 acres
- Maximum 50 visitors
- 10a.m.-7p.m. (Sun-Thurs), 10a.m.-10p.m. (Fri-Sun)
- Winery and brewery Class 1A

### What's Changing:

- Renaming to Farm Alcohol Producer
- Maximum of 150 visitors
- Noise log

### Legend

- RC, RR Zoned  
5 acres or greater
- RC, RR Zoned  
Preservation Easements



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# Evaluation of Criteria – Properties which the ZRA could apply and, if feasible, a map of the impacted properties.

## Ag ZRA (ZRA-217)

Farm Alcohol Producer -  
Conditional Use

## Farm Alcohol Producer – Conditional Use

### Currently Allowed:

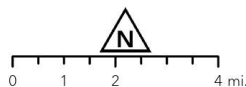
- Conditional use in RC, RR, and Easement properties
- Minimum of 25 acres
- Maximum 50 visitors, special events 150 visitors
- HE may increase visitors 5 people/every acre over 25 acres, up to 500 guests
- 10a.m.-10p.m.
- Winery Class 2

### What's Changing:

- Renaming to Farm Alcohol Producer
- HE may increase visitors 10 people/every acre over 25 acres, up to 500 guests
- Noise log

### Legend

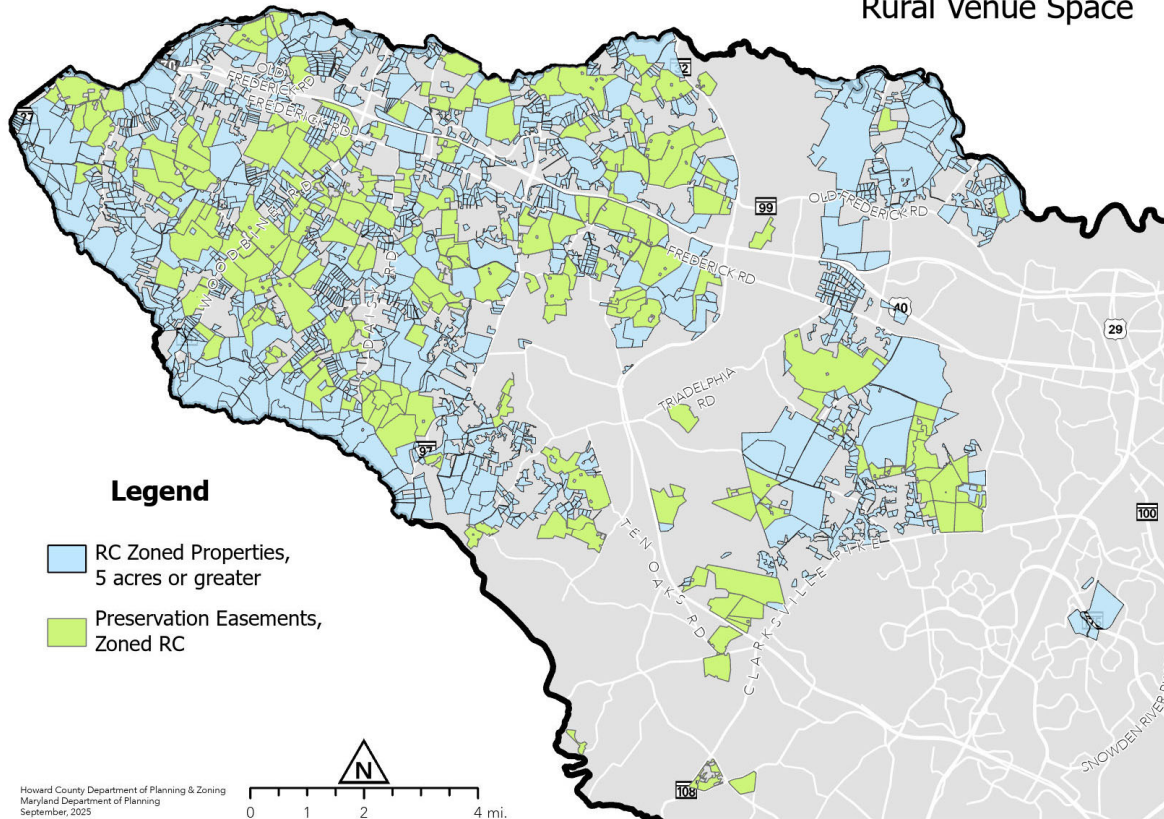
- RC, RR Zoned  
25 acres or greater
- RC, RR Zoned  
Preservation Easements



# Evaluation of Criteria – Properties which the ZRA could apply and, if feasible, a map of the impacted properties.

## Ag ZRA (ZRA-217)

Rural Venue Space



## Limited Social Assembly

### Currently Allowed:

- Conditional use in RC
- Minimum of 5 acres
- 25 events/year
- Maximum 150 visitors
- Site must be historic

### What's Changing:

- Renaming to Rural Venue Space
- Increased number of visitors allowed per acreage
- Site does not have to be historic
- Noise log



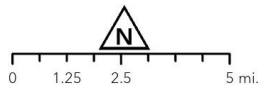
# Evaluation of Criteria – Properties which the ZRA could apply and, if feasible, a map of the impacted properties.

## Ag ZRA (ZRA-217)

Incidental Outdoor  
Stays - Lodging

### Legend

- RC, RR, R-ED, R-20 Zoned  
20 acres or greater
- Preservation Easements,  
Zoned RC, RR, R-ED, R-20



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## Incidental Outdoor Stays – Lodging Special Farm Permit

### Currently Allowed:

- Not currently a use.

### What's Changing:

- Accessory to farming in RC, RR, R-ED, and R-20
- 20 acres or greater or any size if an Easement property
- Maximum of 3 structures
- Maximum 3 days/stay
- 450sqft/structure, 3,500sqft/site (10,500sqft in aggregate)
- DILP approved sanitation

# Evaluation of Criteria

## 3. Conflicts in the Howard County Zoning Regulations as a result of the Zoning Regulation Amendment:

- Staff does not foresee any conflicts with the proposed ZRA and the current Howard County Zoning Regulations.
- One of the purposes of the proposed ZRA is to reduce the number of conflicts in the existing code and aid in certain code enforcement investigations.



# Evaluation of Criteria

## 4. The compatibility of the proposed Zoning Regulation Amendment with the Policies and objectives, specifically including the environmental policies and objectives, of the Howard County General Plan.

The HoCo By Design (The General Plan) Economic Prosperity chapter is supportive of continuing to grow opportunities for agricultural diversification and agritourism in the county supported in this ZRA.

- **Policy Statement EP-10:** “Promote and support modern farming initiatives that reflect the changing needs and economic drivers of agriculture in Howard County”
- **Policy Statement EP-13:** states that the County should “Reduce regulatory barriers to diversified agricultural operations in both the Rural West and the East.”

# Evaluation of Criteria

## 4. The compatibility of the proposed Zoning Regulation Amendment with the Policies and objectives, specifically including the environmental policies and objectives, of the Howard County General Plan.

The HoCo By Design (The General Plan) Economic Prosperity chapter is supportive of continuing to grow opportunities for agricultural diversification and agritourism in the county supported in this ZRA.

- **Implementing Action EP-13.1:** calls for updates to “the Zoning Regulations and other policies to promote agricultural expansion and diversification, especially for on-farm processing and other agribusiness opportunities,”
- **Implementing Action EP-13.2:** calls for the county to “Work with agricultural and community stakeholders to review and update the Zoning Regulations and other regulations to create more opportunities for agritourism.”

# Evaluation of Criteria

## 4. The compatibility of the proposed Zoning Regulation Amendment with the Policies and objectives, specifically including the environmental policies and objectives, of the Howard County General Plan.

The HoCo By Design (The General Plan) Economic Prosperity chapter is supportive of continuing to grow opportunities for agricultural diversification and agritourism in the county supported in this ZRA.

- **Implementing Action EP-13.3:** calls for the County “Reduce barriers to the burgeoning demand for on-farm breweries, wineries, cideries, meaderies, distilleries, farm stays, event venues, and other agritourism uses.”

# Evaluation of Criteria

## **4. The compatibility of the proposed Zoning Regulation Amendment with the Policies and objectives, specifically including the environmental policies and objectives, of the Howard County General Plan.**

### Environmental Policies

- The proposed ZRA-217 would not change any development requirements for sensitive resource protection, stormwater management or forest conservation.

# Evaluation of Criteria

**5. If the zoning regulation text amendment would impact eight parcels of land or less.**

ZRA-217 impacts more than eight (8) parcels; therefore, this criterion does not apply.

# Timeline and Planning Board Recommendation

## Timeline:

**2021-2024:** Agriculture workgroup and stakeholder meetings

**January 2025:** Drafting with DPZ

**July 25, 2025:** DPZ presentation to Ag Board

**August 20, 2025:** DPZ posted signs outside GHB and Office of Agriculture

**September 4, 2025:** DPZ presented to Farm Bureau

## Planning Board Action:

Advisory – Make a motion on the proposed Zoning Text Amendment to the County Council

- Favorable recommendation of the regulatory text as proposed
- Favorable recommendation with suggested amendments to the regulatory text
- Non-favorable recommendation