On January 17, 2019, the Planning Board of Howard County, Maryland, considered the petition of Jay Somnath to amend Section 127.5.E.2.b.2 to increase the maximum gross floor area limitation for hotels on parcels less 20 acres in the CAC zoning district to 50,000 square feet.

The Planning Board considered the petition, the Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) Technical Staff Report and Recommendation, and comments of reviewing agencies. DPZ supported the Petitioner’s proposal and further suggested that hotels be exempt entirely from the maximum gross floor area limitation citing the original intent of the CAC zoning district to only limit the square footage of retail buildings. DPZ asserted that hotels were unintentionally included in the gross floor area limitation through ZRA-98, when the term “retail” was changed to “commercial.” Furthermore, DPZ stated that the recommendation is consistent with other zoning districts (CE, TOD, B-1, and B-2) along Route 1 that do not limit the floor area of hotels; that General Plan policies encourage growth and revitalization along Route 1; and that the purpose of the CAC zoning district to create “pedestrian-oriented, urban activity centers.”

Sang Oh represented the Petitioner and stated that the existing floor area cap on hotels results in fewer rooms and amenities typically provided by mid-to-high end establishments. He also stated that while the petition did request an increase in the floor area limitation, removing the limitation entirely will provide developers more flexibility. No one from the public testified.

Board Discussion and Recommendation

In work session, Board members discussed the unintended consequence of ZRA-98, which changed the term “retail” to “commercial.” Board members also asked DPZ staff to affirm that all other bulk regulations, including setbacks, height, and parking, will remain. DPZ staff confirmed that the existing bulk
regulations will apply and limit the size of hotels, especially through height and parking requirements. Retail uses will still be subject to the 20,000 square foot floor area limitation.

Mr. Coleman made the motion to exempt hotels from the maximum square footage limitation in the CAC zoning district entirely. Ms. Aldler seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote 4 to 0.

For the foregoing reasons, the Planning Board of Howard County, Maryland, on this 21st day of February 2019, recommends that ZRA-186, as described above, be APPROVED.

HOWARD COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

Absent

Phillips Engelke, Chair

Erica Roberts, Vice-chair

Delphine Adler

Ed Coleman

Kevin McAleary

ATTEST:

Valdis Lazdi

Executive Secretary