

Policy Regarding Planning Commission Recognition of Plans



**City of Baltimore,
Department of Planning**

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Community-based organizations engage in a variety of planning efforts across the City of Baltimore. In order to assist neighborhoods and stakeholders to effect positive change and access resources for their communities, the Planning Commission desires to support and recognize as many planning efforts as possible. In support of this goal, Planning staff has developed guidelines that allow for various types of plans to be recognized by the Planning Commission.

Note: Any plans required by the Zoning Code are not affected by this policy. The requirements and process for those plans are identified in the Zoning Code.

City-managed Plans

Per the City Charter Article VII, § 72, the Baltimore City Planning Commission is responsible for preparing and updating plans showing the physical development of the City. The Planning Commission relies on staff of the Department of Planning to help accomplish this mandate. This mandate is largely met through a variety of *citywide* initiatives and plans, such as, but not limited to, the new zoning code and related zoning studies, community development strategies, sustainability plans, agency plans (bicycle master plan, solid waste management plan), the capital improvement program, etc. In addition to citywide initiatives, Planning Department staff is currently managing three planning initiatives with a *neighborhood* focus:

- **INSPIRE** - Through the 21st Century Schools Initiative, Baltimore City Public Schools, in partnership with the Maryland Stadium Authority, Baltimore City, and the State of Maryland, will be investing nearly one billion dollars to renovate or replace schools over the next several years. The Department of Planning is conducting a planning program for the neighborhoods around each of the new or renovated schools. The program is called INSPIRE, which stands for *Investing in Neighborhoods and Schools to Promote Improvement, Revitalization, and Excellence*.
- **LINCS** - Leveraging Investments in Neighborhood Corridors (LINCS) is an interagency partnership to revitalize key corridors that connect neighborhoods and communities throughout the City. The goal of this initiative is to enhance the aesthetics and economic vitality of these gateways, while seeking to improve quality of life and increase community capacity.
- **Green Network Plan Focus Areas** - Abandoned buildings and vacant properties plague many Baltimore City neighborhoods, making communities less safe, hurting property values and diminishing quality of life. With the Green Network, Baltimore City is creating a bold vision for reimagining these vacant and abandoned properties and transforming them into community assets. The vision will provide a thoughtful blueprint for turning vacant properties into parks, gardens, urban farms, open space and future development sites to benefit residents, promote economic development and make Baltimore communities more connected and sustainable.

All of these plans inform City agencies' recommendations related to land disposition, transportation, zoning, facilities management, the capital improvement program, and other policy areas. The City-

managed plans are created in concert with area stakeholders, including residents, property owners, business owners, local institutions, etc. Additionally, the Department of Planning or sponsoring agency holds at least one public meeting and /or provides a public comment period prior to any plan being presented to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission is then able to review and adopt the plan as appropriate.

Community-managed Plans

Many communities initiate their own planning processes that result in a neighborhood master plan or other topical plan document. Planning Department staff often plays an advisory role in the development of these independent neighborhood plans. With the establishment of this new neighborhood plan policy, communities seeking to have their plan recognized by the Planning Commission and receive an official acceptance letter must meet the Community-managed Plans Procedures & Guidelines. The acceptance letter recognizes and supports the goals, direction and major concepts expressed by the plan, but does not obligate the City to support every recommendation or fund/implement recommended projects.

Community-managed Plan Procedures & Guidelines

These guidelines apply to plans created by organizations other than the Department of Planning and other City agencies. In preparing a community-led plan pursuing Planning Commission recognition, the community sponsor must:

- Meet with DoP staff to discuss the nature of the plan, proposed boundaries, preliminary stakeholders identified, etc.;
- Create an advisory committee to guide the planning process that includes DoP staff;
- Host at least three (3) open, public meetings during the process with broad notification at least 10 days in advance;
- Provide documentation of all meeting notifications; and
- Meet with stakeholders who will be affected by the plan's recommendations (property owners, institutions, public agencies, other neighborhoods, etc.).

The Planning Commission will not accept more than 1 community-managed plan for the same geographic area. Good-faith efforts by the sponsoring community organization(s) must be made to address any geographic boundary issues or conflicts during the planning process.

The plan document must:

- Be consistent with the City's Comprehensive Master Plan and other City policies;
- Include standardized topics such as process, existing conditions, background data, goals, strategies, recommended action steps;
- Include a detailed implementation chart, in a format acceptable to the Planning Department; and
- Be in a well-designed, easy to read format.

If a community wishes to use their plan to pursue state, federal or other funding for implementation of strategies or projects, the plan document should also adhere to those guidelines

Once a community-managed plan is completed and it has been determined that all of the procedures and guidelines have been met, the Planning Commission will review the plan and issue an acceptance letter as appropriate.

Benefits of Planning Commission Acceptance

- The issuance of an “Acceptance Letter,” recognizing and supporting the goals, direction and major concepts expressed by the plan,
- Accepted plans can provide general policy guidance to the Planning Commission;
- Accepted plans can provide input to the City’s larger comprehensive planning process;
- For accepted plans, the Planning Commission can recommend public funding, land disposition, rezoning, or other staff resources necessary to carry out the recommendations of the plan;
- The Planning Commission can encourage other City agencies to use accepted plans in similar fashion; and
- Accepted plans will be made available on the Department of Planning website providing interested parties the ability to ascertain a community’s vision for its neighborhood.

*The Planning Commission recognizes that plans substantially completed prior to adoption of this policy, may not meet all of the above guidelines, but should meet most of them in order to be accepted by the Planning Commission.