



Open Space Bill No. 15-12 Fact Sheet

Approximately 35,000 acres total of public and private land in Anne Arundel County is zoned Open Space (OS) District. Uses allowed on private OS District land include nonprofit camps including dormitories and cabins, farming and nurseries, conservation uses, golf courses, structures for ice skating, play areas, stables, volunteer fire stations, and telecommunications towers, among other uses. The County owns a significant acreage of OS District land and uses it for ball fields and other active recreation uses as well as passive recreation, conservation and parks. If you ever played a game on a County ball field, you likely played on land zoned Open Space.

Recently, the Planning and Zoning Officer reinterpreted the County Code to prohibit ball fields as an allowed use on privately owned land in the OS District. The impact of that decision upon plans for ball fields for the Boys' and Girls' Club in Crofton, in addition to other privately held lands, was the stimulus for Bill No. 15-12, Zoning-Open Space-Recreational Uses.

The Bill, as amended on April 2 and April 16, clarifies the law and significantly improves the environmental protections for Open Space over existing law. Passive and active recreational uses are defined and made conditional uses subject to the following requirements to protect the environment and adjacent communities:

- Maximum coverage by structures and parking is limited to 20% of the gross area of the property.
- Clearing of existing forest is limited to 25%, which is stricter than the standard for properties in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area.
- If forest is cleared, the site must be reforested at a ratio of 1 ½ acres for every acre cleared.
- In addition to the above, for every acre of playgrounds, playing fields, tennis courts, basketball courts or swimming pools created, one-half of an acre of land must be planted in forest and preserved under an easement.
- Active recreational uses must be located at least 100 feet from a dwelling, 50 feet from all lot lines and 200 feet from any tributary stream, river or waterway.
- The uses must also be subject to an approved soil conservation and water quality plan.
- A community meeting on any active recreation development plan must be held prior to filing the application and after notice to adjacent residents and community associations.
- The building of large stadiums in the OS District is prohibited by limiting permanent bleacher or stand seating to a maximum of 250 persons (less than 1/4 the seating capacity of the smallest high school stadium in the County). Permanent bleacher or stand seating for between 100 and 250 persons requires special exception approval after a public hearing.

- Outdoor lighting other than for public safety, illuminated scoreboards, and public address or amplified sound systems require special exception approval after a public hearing. Such uses must be set back at least 150 feet from any dwelling and 100 feet from all lot lines. The outdoor lighting hours are limited and effects on neighboring properties minimized.

If the Bill is adopted, private development on Open Space will be required to comply with these protective conditions. The Bill does not affect County owned Open Space and the County can continue to build parks and recreational facilities exempt from the requirements of the Open Space Bill.