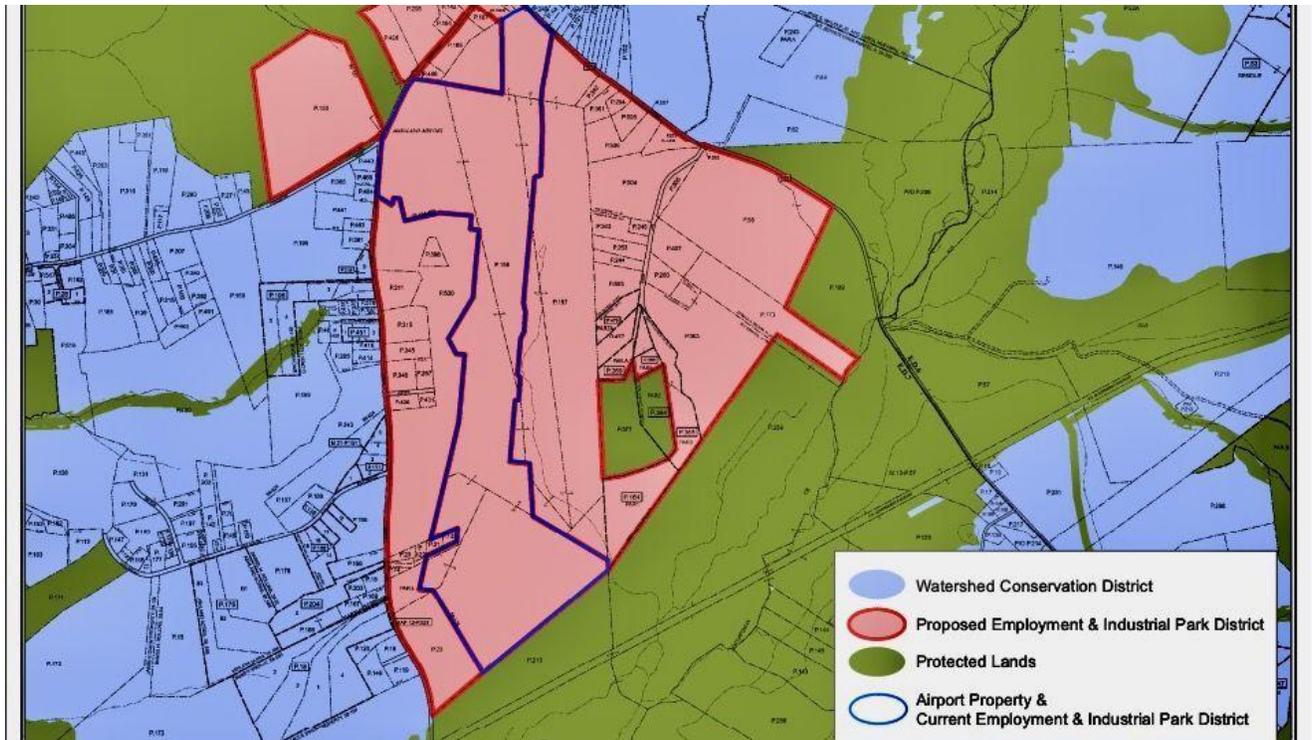


# Charles commissioners approve airport land amendment

[somdnews.com/independent/news/local/charles-commissioners-approve-airport-land-amendment/article\\_4714aec5-e9e7-5920-8a0c-d60c6ad26b64.html](https://www.somdnews.com/independent/news/local/charles-commissioners-approve-airport-land-amendment/article_4714aec5-e9e7-5920-8a0c-d60c6ad26b64.html)

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Land around Maryland Airport originally designated for watershed conservation has been returned to employment and industrial land use.

A vote to adopt an amendment to the 2016 Comprehensive Plan passed unanimously during Tuesday's Charles County commissioners' meeting, ending a nearly 11-month odyssey.

The decision returns some 500 acres for potential development, but according to a September conversation with Dilip Patel, one of the owners of the airport, the amount of usable land was significantly smaller.

The vast majority of the land around the airport was already developed, contained forest that could not be removed or was part of a Federal Aviation Administration-mandated safety zone.

The amendment was hotly debated throughout the entire process, with fierce opposition from environmentalist groups and residents concerned about air and water pollution from airport use.

But proponents of the measure believed opening up the land to building could create expanded environmental opportunities for Western Charles County.

Amy Blessinger, a planner with the Charles County Department of Planning and Growth Management, discussed some residents' concerns during her presentation to the commissioners before Tuesday's vote.

"The proposed amendment is to change the land use of properties around the airport, not to consider expansion of the airport itself," Blessinger said.

Staff members with the planning and growth management department will now be tasked with drafting zoning text and map amendments, which require approval from the Charles County Planning Commission and county commissioners before they become official.

### **Development report given**

Commissioners also heard from Matt Wineman, vice president of operations in Maryland/Delaware with Lennar, a home construction and real estate company based in Fontainebleau, Fla., on a report of housing developments in St. Charles as a part of an annual Docket 90 report.

Docket 90, enacted in 1972, governs the process for submitting and approving neighborhood and village construction in St. Charles.

The report highlighted work on the Highlands, Stonehaven and Parklands neighborhoods which reside along St. Charles Parkway.

Some 316 homes remain to be constructed in the neighborhood, which Wineman said is about "60 to 65%" complete.

Once that construction is complete, Wineman said work would move on to the Highlands community, a 734-home development across St. Charles Parkway expected to be completed next summer.

That development also includes a brand new elementary school currently in the design phase with the Charles public school system.

The facility, currently dubbed "Elementary School #23," is expected to open in July 2024.

Construction would also progress on an active senior community expected to open in the spring of next year.

The 1,002 homesite community will include villas and single family homes as well as a clubhouse, outdoor stage and a village green, which will also contain a community farmers market.

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