

SB952 - Economic Development - Charles County Wald

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Position: INFO

HEARING DATE: March 5, 2026

BILL NO: SB952

COMMITTEE: Finance

POSITION: Informational Testimony

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TITLE: Economic Development – Charles County Waldorf Urban Redevelopment Corridor Authority - Established

BILL ANALYSIS:

SB952 specifies the purpose, powers and duties of the Charles County Waldorf Urban Redevelopment Corridor Authority. SB952 exempts Authority undertakings from various provisions of state law, including Maryland Historical Trust review under § 5A-326 of the Finance and Procurement Article.

POSITION AND RATIONALE:

The Charles County Waldorf Urban Redevelopment Corridor Authority target area includes all of state legislative districts 27A and 28 in Charles County. Among the historic properties that have been identified within this area are 47 properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places, 16 Historic Preservation Easement properties, and 1216 historic structures and 1156 archaeological sites included in the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties. As stipulated by this bill, these historic resources would receive no consideration under § 5A-326 of the Finance and Procurement Article when the Authority undertakes state funded projects in the target area.

What does MHT's review of state undertakings entail?

MHT's role in reviewing projects receiving state financial assistance/permits under § 5A-326 of the Finance and Procurement Article is for their effects on historic properties. Historic properties include those resources that are listed in or eligible for inclusion in the National

Register of Historic Places. **In this role, MHT does not approve or deny projects.** Through consultation with the involved state agency, project sponsor, and other consulting parties, MHT strives to ensure the appropriate treatment of any affected historic property. Additional consulting parties may include the applicable local government, a community association, heritage area, or other organization with a demonstrated interest in the project. Through the consultation process, MHT helps facilitate solutions that meet project needs while avoiding or minimizing adverse impacts to historic resources.

Should adverse effects be unavoidable, the consultation process among the parties mentioned above negotiates reasonable and achievable measures that would be implemented to mitigate the harm or loss of historic properties. Mitigation measures may include items such as recordation of a building prior to its demolition, salvage of historic building materials and architectural elements for reuse by others, public education actions such as an interpretive sign, exhibit, or website to tell the story of the property's important history or role in the community. An adverse effect does not stop the project from moving forward. Through consultation, the MHT historic preservation review process helps ensure that Maryland's diverse and unique cultural heritage is appropriately considered during project actions involving public funds.

Under the MHT Act, and its comparable federal counterpart (Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act), MHT annually reviews over 5000 undertakings that entail federal and/or state funds, permits or licenses. Less than 1% of those projects reviewed each year result in adverse effects to historic properties and necessitate implementation of mitigation measures. MHT review of projects under § 5A-326 is designed to ensure the appropriate treatment of historic properties may also assist a project sponsor in leveraging additional financial resources to assist with the proposed rehabilitation and revitalization efforts.

Conclusion

The historic preservation review process required by the MHT Act benefits the public by helping to revitalize communities, promote heritage tourism, and preserve tangible links with our past. MHT routinely works with various development authorities ranging from small locally based entities like the Canal Place Preservation and Development Authority to those with a statewide mission like the Maryland Stadium Authority. MHT review of Authority projects would help to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects on historic properties in the target area and ensure that public views and concerns about these resources would be considered when making final project determinations.