



December 2025

What we've been up to Lately...

Information Sessions for Prospective Candidates

We partnered with Delta Sigma Theta to hold two information sessions this past fall for prospective candidates for local office, which were well received by attendees. In addition to featuring former and current elected officials (none who will be on the 2026 ballot), speakers from the Maryland Association of Counties and Maryland Association of Boards of Education, The Board of Elections, and several candidate support organizations shared information.

Meetings with Legislators

Members met with legislators from Districts 9, 12, and 13 to discuss two LWVMD Priorities for the 2026 Session of the Maryland General Assembly. The priorities are 1) to require ballot questions to also be written in plain, easy-to-understand language; and 2) to require that special elections (coinciding with planned state-wide elections) be held to fill vacancies in the Maryland General Assembly. We also advocated for measures that would facilitate and support the construction of additional affordable housing in Maryland. Legislators were receptive to our requests. Thanks to Vanessa Duffy, Carol Zervas, Kate Revelle, Linda Frascarella, Fran LoPresti, Marlene Durholz, Cynthia Graham, Nicole Evans, Valerie Montague, Cheryl McLeod, Teresa Baker, and Algie Marvel for taking part in this crucial effort.



We need you!

We have opportunities for you to bring election information to Howard County Voters. Our work to prepare for the June Primary Election needs to happen before May, 2026.

We will hold an Election Planning and Question Writing meeting on **Wednesday evening, January 21, 2026**. So, please save the date. An email will be sent out to all Howard County League Members once we have finalized the time and location.

LWV Newsletter Editor

This requires a few hours a month and we provide the software, which is easy to use. Others write most of the content, you edit and format it for online distribution and publication.

Social Media Coordinator

Manage the LWV Facebook and Instagram. Share content from other National and Maryland LWV accounts, and create original content about our upcoming events to share with local Howard County groups and users.

Voters Guide Team

Write questions for candidates, assist in creating the printed Voters' Guides, and distribution of the finished product at sites throughout Howard County.

Voter Outreach Team

This team has something for everyone! Plan and Attend community events to bring election information to local voters. Focus is on reaching new, first-time voters (students and new citizens)

Candidate Forum Team

Write questions for candidates, advertise the event, volunteer staff at the events.

Good Government Observers Team

Monitor pending legislation at the County Council, Board of Education, and Maryland General Assembly.

Please email us at office-hoco@lwvmd.org if you are interested in any of these roles.

New Member Orientation

The state of Maryland conducts New Member orientation the 1st Monday of the month from 10-11am over zoom. The next session is scheduled for January 5, 2026. Click the button below to sign up and receive the zoom link.

You don't have to be new to attend. Existing members are welcome!

New Member Orientation

Save the Date(s)

We have two exciting events planned for January 2026.

Annual Legislative Forum with the Howard County Delegation to the Maryland General Assembly

Join us to hear from the Howard County Delegation to the Maryland General Assembly about plans and proposed bills for the upcoming 2026 legislative session.

This annual even is open to the public.

- When: Saturday, January 10, 2025 at from 10:00 am to 12:00 noon
- Where: Miller Branch Library, 9421 Frederick Road, Ellicott City, MD

Election Planning and Question Writing Workshop

- When: Wednesday, January 21, 2026 at 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm
- Where: TBD

Help us educate voters by asking candidates great questions. The questions will be used for the Voters Guide and Candidate Forums, so we'll need alot of input. The focus will be on the Board of Education, County Council, and County Executive races. This workshop is only open to Howard County League members and....***the Cone of Silence must descend on these proceedings.*** We do NOT share questions with candidates or campaigns before they are released or asked at a Forum. If you are working closely with a candidate or campaign, you may NOT work on questions for them and their opponents.

Keep an eye on your inbox for an email with more details for each of these upcoming events.

Housing Corner

Below is a quick summary of housing legislation in Howard County.

Council Passed Legislation

- Age-restricted housing is now allowed in more zones in the county.
- The property tax break for seniors who have lived in their home more than 30 years was extended from 5 to 10 years.
- The council passed the Gateway Master Plan, a plan to develop an Innovation District over the next 30 years. It is now incorporated into the new General Plan.
- Increased the number of disability units required for incentives in the TOD (Transit Oriented) zone.
- Section 108 Loan Guarantee that will enable the Ranleagh Place and Waverly Winds, redevelopment housing projects, bringing 205 affordable housing units, to proceed.
- A large TOD (Transit Oriented Development) can take advantage of a PILOT (pay in lieu of taxes) for DIHU or disability income units and they are exempt from meeting APFO (Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance) requirements.

Council Upcoming Legislation

- Land swap to build a central library at the Lakefront and freeing up land for building affordable housing in Merriweather and eventually at the current central library location.
- Permitting Accessory Dwelling Units by Right (in line with a new state mandate).
- Definition of Activity Centers to promote diverse housing in TNC (Town, neighborhood, commercial mixed) and TOD (Transit Oriented) zones. This is in line with the General Plan.

Below are two opportunities to get more involved with Housing.

Maryland League of Women Voters

The Maryland State League has formed a statewide Housing Study Group to review the [current position](#) and suggest changes to it at next year's annual meeting. If you are interested in joining, please email Fran LoPresti at flopresti@lwvmd.org

Howard County League of Women Voters Housing Advocacy Workgroup

A group of local League members has been meeting for almost a year learning about county government and its functions. In 2026 the group will meet monthly to discuss timely, local topics in the county with a focus on housing and senior issues. If you would like to join, please email Fran LoPresti at flopresti@lwvmd.org.

Howard County General Plan and Comprehensive Rezoning

[Maryland's Land Use Article, Subtitle 3, § 3-301](#), mandates that a comprehensive or master plan be reviewed and, if necessary, revised at least once every 10 years in every county.

Once each decade, Howard County updates its General Plan, a long-range, visionary document that guides land use, growth, and development decisions. The approved Plan provides an equitable, predictable, sustainable, and achievable roadmap for Howard County's future land use and environmental protection.

[HoCo By Design](#) is an update of the 2012 general plan and PlanHoward 2030. Initiated in 2020, the HoCoByDesign Plan reflects over three and a half years of community engagement, including nearly 100 public meetings and approximately 12,000 public comments. HoCo By Design advances a long-term vision for how the County will develop and grow alongside evolving land use, conservation, economic, environmental, and social conditions over the next 20 years. It was adopted in October, 2023. It will be a guide for comprehensive rezoning, the final implementation of the plan. The Route 1 Corridor plan developed between 2018 and 2020 was also adopted as part of this plan.

[HoCoByDesign](#) specified that there were a few areas that needed to be addressed prior to comprehensive rezoning which is expected to start in 2027.

The first was the [Gateway Master Plan](#). The Gateway Master Plan provides a comprehensive, actionable roadmap for transforming the Gateway Business Park into an "innovation district" – a vibrant, mixed-use hub for research, ideas, and creativity. A plan for an innovation center at Gateway over a period of 30 years was developed over a year by an Advisory Committee of citizens from across the county. Several opportunities, both live and virtual were provided for public input. It was adopted by the council in October, 2025.

The HoCoByDesign plan also specified to look at the development processes in Columbia or NewTown. Development steps and processes are different in Columbia than the rest of the county. A task force is now meeting to look at that section of the Zoning code to see if it still fits in with the Rouse vision and that of HoCoByDesign.

The task force should complete its work by the Fall of 2026. A public session was held in the Fall of 2025, both in person and virtual. All meetings are public and can be viewed virtually.

The Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) (Sec. 16.1100) provides a growth management process that will enable the County to provide adequate public roads, schools, and other facilities in a timely manner and achieve general plan growth objectives. This process is designed to direct growth to areas where adequate infrastructure exists or will exist. The committee worked for over a year. All meetings were public and available to be watched in person or virtually. The committee submitted its final report in the Fall of 2025. [You may read the report here.](#)

There are a few other items that need to be addressed and in place before comprehensive rezoning begins. These include regulations for Transit zoning and definition and location of Activity Centers discussed in HoCoByDesign. Other items will come up over the next year that will be shared with members.



Stay Socially Connected

🌟 Stay socially connected with us and be part of an amazing community! 📸 Dive into our vibrant world on [Instagram](#), where you'll find stunning visuals and exclusive behind-the-scenes glimpses that will inspire you! 💬 Don't miss out on our lively updates and discussions on [Facebook](#)—join in and share your thoughts! 🗨️ Follow, like, and interact with us—together, we can empower change and make a real impact! 💪 ✨ #LeagueOfWomenVoters #EmpowerChange



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