

Top Zoning Questions: What's legal and what's not (from the October, 2106 Hotline) from Melissa Daston

Several questions come up over and over again regarding parking, house occupancy, and what businesses are legal in West Laurel. This is in plain English and only covers select topics – it's not a legal document. For specific questions, check Prince Georges' Zoning code, Subtitle 27, Part 5 (Residential Zones), Division 3 (Uses Permitted).

Parking: Parking questions continue to be a hot topic in West Laurel. You can report violations via 311 to the revenue authority or contact Councilwoman Lehman's office. The most common issues are below:

- **How long can a car/SUV/small van be parked on the street without moving?** No vehicle of any type can be parked for more than 72 hours without moving. Report it as an abandoned vehicle.
- **Can trailers or boats be parked on the street overnight?** No. Report it!
- **How many cars can a family have?** Although the county building code only requires 2 spaces per house, there is no limit on the number of cars a family can have.
- **What about commercial vehicles like big trucks?** Dump trucks and heavy trucks are not permitted to be parked in the neighborhood. Report them.
- **I see more and more panel vans with company names, are they legal?** It depends. If they have no company name or letters less than 4" high, they are allowed. If the van has a company name on its side with 4" or larger lettering, only one (1) can be parked and it must be in a garage, not visible from the street. Report violations.
- **Can commercial vans be parked in a driveway?** NO (except of a contractor you hired who is in doing work).
- **Can any vehicle be parked on the grass?** NO

Housing Questions: Report violations as described above.

- **Can houses in West Laurel be divided into multiple rental units?** No. Most of West Laurel is zoned for single family homes. By definition, they cannot be sub-divided and rented.
- **My neighbor is renting some rooms in his/her house, is that legal?** Yes but with some restrictions. No more than 3 unrelated people can live in a house in addition to the principal resident.
- **The owner doesn't live in the house and has rented it out room by room, is that legal?** No
- **Can I build a granny flat or small (tiny) house in the back yard?** No
- **Can I have chickens in my back yard?** Currently no, unless you are one of the few farms in West Laurel. However, this is under discussion with the rewrite of the new zoning code.
- **How tall can a fence be?** 4 feet in your front or side yard, 6 feet in the back yard. However, any fence above 4 feet in height requires a building permit. All fences must meet the setback requirements.

Please note: this article is NOT intended to unfairly target particular residents but to maintain the legally mandated property standards, to keep everyone's quality of living and property values as high as possible!