

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2006 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1211

(Delegates Rosenberg and Frush)

Environmental Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Task Force on Green Building

This bill establishes a Task Force on Green Building to evaluate and make recommendations regarding methods of facilitating public demand for environmentally sensitive communities and improving low-impact sustainable development. The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) must provide staff for the task force. A preliminary report of its findings and recommendations is due to the Governor and specified committees of the General Assembly by January 1, 2007. A final report is due by October 1, 2007.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2006 and terminates October 31, 2007.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any expense reimbursements for task force members and staffing costs for DHCD and MDP are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: The Maryland Green Buildings Council was established by Executive Order in 2001. The council submitted to the Governor its recommendations of specific

criteria, standards, and a numeric rating system for implementing a High-Efficiency Green Buildings Program in Maryland. This program commits the State to design, construct, operate, maintain, and deconstruct State-owned and leased facilities in an energy-efficient and environmentally-responsible way. The council last met in 2002.

Background: A green building uses less energy, protects local ecosystems, and enhances the health of its occupants. During construction, a green building preserves, restores, or does not disturb local ecosystems and biodiversity. After construction, low-water-use landscaping is used, pesticides avoided, and rainwater collected and used. Recycled or salvaged building materials are preferred, and materials that generate pollution in their manufacture are shunned.

For green building, various strategies are used to reduce environmental impact, beginning in the land-use planning and construction phases through the whole life of the building. Strategies save energy through efficient design, siting, and choice of materials; preserve more open space by recycling existing buildings through renovation; and reduce automobile dependency by providing more access to public transportation and pedestrian corridors. Smaller and simplified building design uses space more efficiently, leaving a smaller building footprint. Green building maximizes the longevity of buildings by designing them for durability and adaptability. Finally, green building provides an environmentally-friendly atmosphere for the inhabitants, promoting health through continuous ventilation, reduced mold and mildew, exposure to daylight, windows that open, task lighting, and individual temperature controls.

Dedicated to advancing the application of economically sound and environmentally sensitive building and site-design techniques, the Environmental Design Program (EDP) within the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provides the business community, local governments, and interested citizens with the information and on-site technical assistance they need to identify, implement, and evaluate actions to enhance and restore natural resources in and around developed environments. According to DNR's web site, the State agencies involved with EDP include DHCD, MDP, the Maryland Department of the Environment, the Maryland Energy Administration, and the Maryland Environmental Service.

Initiated by DNR, the Green Building Network (GBN) is an ad hoc, informal group of architects, builders, contractors, developers, planners, landscape architects, related professionals, and citizens. GBN focuses on promoting and encouraging the design and construction of buildings, and the development of sites, in a manner that encourages efficient use of natural resources and raw materials, protects the environment, and promotes sustainable communities.

State Expenditures: DHCD advises that costs would increase by an estimated \$101,717 in fiscal 2007 and \$43,209 in fiscal 2008 in order to staff the task force. DHCD's estimates include costs to hire one staff person and a part-time assistant Attorney General. The fiscal 2007 estimate also includes costs to hire a consultant with expertise in green building. Legislative Services disagrees. First, staff support will also be provided by MDP. Second, the membership of the task force includes individuals with expertise in green building. Third, there is a wealth of information regarding green building that is readily available on the Internet; for example, the U.S. Green Building Council's web site includes a list of federal, state, and local initiatives as well as links to relevant research and other web sites. Accordingly, DHCD should be able to provide staff support with existing budgeted resources.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Planning, Department of Housing and Community Development, Department of Natural Resources, Maryland State Archives, U.S. Green Building Council, Department of Legislative Services

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