

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2008 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 699

(Senator Gladden)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Environmental Matters

**Task Force to Study the Development of Environmentally Friendly Communities
in Urban Areas**

This bill establishes a Task Force to Study the Development of Environmentally Friendly Communities in Urban Areas, staffed by the Department of Housing and Community Development and the Department of Natural Resources. The task force is required to report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by July 1, 2009 and terminates September 30, 2009.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any expense reimbursements for task force members are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing resources. Staffing could also be provided within existing resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: The State currently administers several programs covering the various issues that the task force would be required to study in order to report on the potential for development of environmentally friendly communities. The four things the task force would be required to study under this bill are • mixed-use development; • moderate-income urban housing; • energy efficiency; and • community land trusts.

State initiatives that emphasize mixed-use development include DHCD's Office and Commercial Space Conversion Initiative, Main Street Maryland Program, Smart Keys 4 Employees Program, Smart Codes Initiative, and the Neighborhood BusinessWorks Program. In addition, DHCD administers several affordable housing programs in which moderate-income households of urban areas could qualify for rental or homeownership assistance.

State energy efficiency initiatives include the Maryland Energy Administration's Home Performance Program, ENERGY STAR Program, Clean Energy Incentive Program, and Home Energy Rating System, as well as DHCD's Weatherization Assistance Program. In addition, the General Assembly created the Green Building Task Force in 2006 to make recommendations to modify the State's High Performance Buildings Program. The Administration has proposed legislation in the 2008 session (SB 208/HB 376) that requires new or renovated State buildings and new public schools to be constructed as high performance or "green" buildings in certain circumstances.

The State does not currently administer initiatives dedicated to community land trusts in urban areas. According to the Institute for Community Economics, a community land trust (CLT) is a democratically controlled nonprofit organization that owns and acquires real estate in order to provide benefits to its local community and to make land and housing available to residents who cannot otherwise afford them. According to the Planning Commissioner's Journal, CLTs generally have in place "limited equity" policies that restrict the resale price of the housing in order to maintain its long-term affordability. These features of the community land trust model provide homeownership opportunities to people who might otherwise be left out of the market. There are currently two CLTs in Maryland, the Charm City Land Trust in Baltimore and the Gateway Community Development Corporation of Mt. Rainier.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): E.F. Schumacher Society, Planning Commissioner's Journal, Institute for Community Economics, State Department of Assessments and Taxation, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Business and Economic Development, Department of Legislative Services

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