



AIA
Maryland

Promoting Maryland Architecture Since 1965

4 March 2020

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Environment & Transportation Committee Chair
Room 251, House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Letter of Support for HB1406
Land Use – Development – Middle Housing (Modest Home Choices Act of 2020)

Dear Delegate Barve, and Members of the Environment & Transportation Committee;

AIA Maryland offers support of House Bill 1406 which will allow the development of certain “middle housing” types in certain qualifying zones. Our state is facing a housing shortage resulting in escalating housing prices and cost burdened residents. AIA Maryland represents nearly 2,000 Registered Architects in the State of Maryland and we are passionate about providing quality, affordable and sustainable housing for all Marylanders.

The costs of single-family homes in Maryland has been steadily increasing and continues to climb. According to the Maryland Department of Planning home prices in Maryland have increased every quarter since 2012, that’s 28 consecutive quarter-over-quarter increases. According to the Joint Center for Housing Studies, in 2016 about 47% of renters in Maryland were considered “cost burdened” (households paying more than 30% of income for housing) and 25% were considered “severely cost burdened” (households paying more than 50% of income for housing).

The cost of land per single-family dwelling drives the purchase price up for each dwelling. If the cost of that same amount of land can be divided among 2, 3, 4 or even 10 middle housing dwellings the purchase price of each dwelling declines, and not inconsequentially. Most single-family neighborhoods can easily yield more housing if certain zoning regulations were relaxed to allow “gentle” increases in density – especially in the transit-rich, jobs-rich, high opportunity tracts outlined in the bill. Although more dense than single-family housing, middle housing is still relatively low density and can be constructed in forms similar in scale to the existing single-family housing stock.

The Fiscal and Policy Note issued for HB1406 states, “the Maryland Association of Counties advises that the bill could lead to population density increases that could cause local services to become overburdened.” Many urban planners assert that far more taxing to the services of a municipality is the extension of services to new communities often located on greenfield sites and on the periphery of already established infrastructure. This often requires the extension of services including roads, stormwater treatment devices, power grid, sewer, water lines and a handful of other utilities and/or services. It is far more cost effective to upgrade services, if necessary, where they already exist and prevent unnecessary sprawl at the same time.

According to the Maryland Department of Planning, “[d]evelopment on large lots consumes land at a significantly faster rate than other more concentrated land use types. [L]arge lot development has

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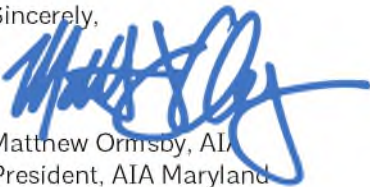
consumed [...] roughly half of the total developed land while only accommodating 15 percent of the State's total housing units. The land-use patterns have many social, environmental and economic consequences, including [...] the need for greater infrastructure investment to reach areas further from development centers [...]."

It is proven that higher density development has been shown to generate incrementally more jobs, higher wages, economic resilience, and lower unemployment rates, all of which advance upward mobility. Single-family zoning has often yielded exclusionary results whereby certain demographics are prevented from purchasing or renting homes in certain zones where housing types are located. By removing unnecessary barriers to attainable housing we can reduce such unintended inequities and make sure Marylanders can afford a roof over their heads.

AIA Maryland, and its membership, works to maintain and improve the quality of Maryland's built environment, including efforts that enhance public health, safety, and welfare. We recognize the dire need for more housing stock that is both attainable and located near jobs, transportation and other opportunities associated with upward mobility.

We encourage you to vote in favor of this legislation and encourage Maryland's commitment to seek solutions to our housing crisis. Thank you for your consideration and your vote.

Sincerely,



Matthew Ormsby, AIA
President, AIA Maryland

cc: Environment & Transportation Committee

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