

March 16, 2021

Hon. Delegate Kumar P. Barve
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
Room 251, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Testimony in **Support** for HB 980: Prince George's County – Public Ethics – Definition of Application

Dear Chairman Barve and members of the Committee:

Please accept these comments on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the leading non-profit organization in the D.C. region advocating for walkable, bikeable, inclusive, transit-oriented communities as the most sustainable and equitable way for the DC region to grow and provide opportunities for all.

We are pleased to provide testimony in support of HB 980. This bill provides a legislative adjustment needed to complete the Prince George's County Zoning and Subdivision rewrite. A uniquely Prince George's County ethics law has tripped up the Countywide Zoning Map Amendment (CMA), which is the last step in the zoning rewrite process. This ethics law doesn't exist anywhere else in the state including in Montgomery County or Baltimore City which have already updated their zoning regulations.

The County's zoning rewrite was adopted by the Prince George's County Council in December 2018. After the late 2018 adoption, the Countywide Zoning Map Amendment (CMA) process was initiated. The CMA is the final stage where the rewritten zoning regulations are implemented by applying the new or updated zones to the County's zoning map.

Over the course of a number of years, we worked with stakeholders and community activists to engage in the public process to update the county's outmoded zoning and subdivision regulations. We have advocated for the adoption of the modernized regulations through various public fora, and hearings by the County Council.

We made this a priority because this zoning rewrite is a significant advance for the county. The zoning rewrite and CMA are worth the effort because they replace the county's current obsolete and cumbersome zoning regulations which are holding back the county. Here are some of the ways the zoning and subdivision process will improve:

- Design and building form standards: the document establishes transit-oriented zones at the local and regional scales to support the goals of walkable urbanism, creating walkable, and bikable areas that are well-connected to transit;

- Parking standards for urban and transit-oriented areas: the zoning rewrite reduces excessive minimum parking requirements in transit-oriented centers in order to support more multimodal designs and uses.
- Street designs: the revisions require interconnected streets, shorter blocks, and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. It implements newly adopted urban street design standards that support walk and bike friendly streets.
- Transportation demand management: the regulations also establish progressive traffic reduction measures that emphasize encouraging more people to ride transit if available, bicycle, share rides and walk.
- Ease of use: The zoning and subdivision regulations are presented in a more readable format providing tables and graphic illustrations to better understand and visualize the standards.
- Ending perpetual approvals: The zoning rules establish limits on approvals after a number of years. Today, approvals are allowed to live on forever, despite significant changes that may occur after initially projected conditions. While some of the provisions seem overly generous, setting the proposed limits would be a big step forward for the county.

The proposed legislation is clear -- this is specific to the CMA, not for everyday zoning and development review matters that come before the Council. For all these reasons, we urge the delegation to adopt the bill to accommodate the Council's role and responsibility in adopting the CMA. We believe implementation of the zoning and subdivision rewrite is a tremendous improvement for the county and the community. It is a once in a generation opportunity.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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