



February 23, 2023

House Bill 706

**Economic Development - Sustainable Communities - Business Facade Improvement
Program
House Ways & Means Committee**

Position: FAVORABLE

This legislation will establish the Business Facade Improvement Program in the Department of Commerce to assist qualified businesses located in sustainable communities with improving the outside appearance of their buildings. Facade improvements are an important tool for creating more inviting communities and reinforcing local business brands.

The Maryland Sustainable Communities Program offers a place-based designation that provides access to resources for community development, revitalization, and sustainability. The goal of the program is to provide a framework to local governments for promoting environmentally, economically, and socially responsible growth and development in existing communities. In order to be eligible for designation, communities must have a mix of public and private partnerships and investments aimed towards developing a healthy local economy, protecting historical and cultural resources, creating affordable and sustainable housing and employment options, and promoting pedestrian and transit accessibility.

There are currently four Sustainable Communities in Anne Arundel County: Brooklyn Park, the City of Annapolis, Glen Burnie, and Odenton-Severn. In partnership with the State and community stakeholders and businesses, the County is making meaningful investments in these communities. For example, the Anne Arundel Economic Development Corporation was recently awarded a Community Legacy grant to implement a set of initiatives outlined in the 2021 Glen Burnie Town Center (GBTC) Revitalization Plan. That Plan also recommends investment in existing facades in order to set the stage for redevelopment.

This legislation will provide important resources for key investments in our local communities. For these reasons, Anne Arundel County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 706.