

I'm in favor of SB0484 - the Housing Expansion and Affordability Act of 2024. As a resident of Cockeysville, I'm frustrated that the recently-passed Baltimore County 2030 Master Plan was neutered such that it will not result in a meaningful increase in residential development in the county. And the County Executive's Mixed-Use Development legislation, which would have brought more abundant housing options to the county, is due to be withdrawn.

In listening to concerns raised about Master Plan 2030, I heard pushback to the plan's promotion of urban development in what is mostly a suburban county. The concerns were spoken to in such a way that the concept of "urbanization" is viewed as being intolerable. But, the densification of our land use and development patterns is really the natural order of things.

As a place matures over the course of time, it develops amenities and characteristics that draw in more and more people. That attraction results in property values appreciating. But, there's a limit to how much people are able to pay for where they live and do business. This causes landlords to redevelop their properties such that more people can fit into the same parcels of land, which lowers the cost of entry into that in-demand place. The cost per square foot keeps increasing somewhat, but the total amount of available square feet keeps increasing, as well.

What should this look like? Single-family homes add on accessory dwelling units, or become duplexes. Duplexes become triplexes, or townhouses, or small apartment buildings. Small apartment buildings incrementally grow in size. This is how densification is supposed to work. But, we have kneecapped this natural and ancient process over the course of the past 70+ years - with exclusionary zoning.

Baltimore County is a poster child for why this legislation is needed. For the most part, all of the single-family homes built across the landscape of Baltimore County have never evolved along to their next logical increment. We've prevented densification. And yet, the demand has kept building.

It's been going on for so long that we've all come to believe that this is the natural order of things - perpetual, unchanging, low-density suburbia. But, it isn't natural at all. In fact, it is unhealthy and unsustainable.

Too many people are clinging to an outdated, unhealthy vision of Baltimore County that forbids density or urbanization. Please understand the fundamentals. **The population of Baltimore County is greater than that of four U.S. states.** It doesn't fall all that much shy of the population of Rhode Island. In fact, the population density of Baltimore County (1,400 people per square mile) significantly exceeds that of Rhode Island. Rhode Island has Providence. Baltimore County's biggest pocket of urbanization is Towson.

The Baltimore County Council has failed to put forth a new and necessary vision for Baltimore County, one that allows for and encourages densification where it makes absolute sense. Their limited, district-specific focus is capping our potential. The Housing Expansion and Affordability Act of 2024 offers Baltimore County (and all of Maryland) the opportunity to move beyond the

weaponization of adequate public facilities ordinances and a paralyzing fear of change that is steering us toward stagnation and population loss.

Please vote for SB0484 - the Housing Expansion and Affordability Act of 2024. Thank you.

Michael Scepaniak  
Cockeysville