

26 January 2024

The Honorable Marc Korman  
Chair of the Environment and Transportation Committee  
Room 251  
House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Letter of Support for HB 003  
Land Use – Expedited Development Review Processes for Affordable Housing - Requirements

Dear Chairman, Korman and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

On behalf of AIA Maryland and the nearly 2,000 Architects we represent, we wish to express our support for HB003, providing a potential path for expedited development review processes for affordable housing.

Many of our members assist clients in exploring opportunities for project development. Specifically, as relates to this bill, there may be properties where a building is no longer used for its original purpose or is underutilized for one reason or another. More often than not, the structure may have served a purpose such as education previously and could be re-purposed as a residential/affordable housing use.

- In some cases, a change in use requires a planning department confirmation or review and possible exception to current zoning to enable a property to be used for residential in lieu of its prior use.
- In almost all cases, the change in use requires the design team to bring the existing structure up to speed with current building codes because it modifies the way the building is occupied, the nature of what happens in a space and simply the age of the building may require a full review and renovation from its original condition to make it comply with building and life-safety codes.


Enabling an expedited process of review, whether it is just a change of use, or if it requires some adjustment to planning regulations, this may enable the team to accomplish the project and put more affordable housing in place more quickly than by following standard development and plan review processes.

If possible, it may be beneficial to consider this similar process for long vacant properties with a development interest and confirmed financing tied to approval, or for entities with an offer on a property and a development package contingent on approval for affordable housing.

Affordable housing projects are often financed through multiple sources, and they rely further on credits unique to the project or the property. Long development reviews and long permitting processes, make it very challenging to connect timing of these sources to align. An expedited review process may streamline both the financing and development of affordable housing to enable more to be available quickly.

We believe this sensible legislation may offer just the boost needed to enable more affordable housing to become available and make it to market quicker with the help of the suggested expedited process. We encourage you to support HB003 and ask for a favorable report.

Sincerely,



Chris Parts, AIA  
Director, Past President, AIA Maryland  
CC: Environment & Transportation Committee