



TO: House Environment and Transportation Committee of the State of Maryland

DATE: February 12, 2025

RE: HB 751 – Municipalities – Annexed Land – Land Use and Density
Written Testimony in Support

Dear Chairman Korman, Vice Chairwoman Boyce and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

On behalf of the City of Hagerstown, I am forwarding written testimony for your consideration in support of HB 751.

The bill provides reasonable authority to a municipality to have exclusive jurisdiction over planning, subdivision control, and zoning in an annexed area.

The bill allows a municipality to apply zoning classification and encourage development that is consistent with, and not substantially different from the land use recommendation in the comprehensive plan of the county or municipality applicable at the time of annexation, including not exceeding 50% of the density that could be granted in accordance with the comprehensive plan recommendation.

Hagerstown, like cities across Maryland and the United States, is facing a workforce and affordable housing shortage. Land contiguous to the corporate boundaries of the City of Hagerstown is available for residential development, and we need this tool to attract housing developers.

Recently we worked with several housing developers who walked away from projects that could have created 900 to 1,000 new housing units, because such a tool did not exist to provide zoning classifications reasonable to us as the municipality and desired by the developer. This included our efforts to attract Pennsylvania and Florida-based developers.

A developer will enter into a contract to purchase a property. They will work to secure zoning entitlements through the due diligence period. When they fail and exit the contract, not only do we not get a housing project, but a message also spreads through the development community negatively affecting our ability to attract future developers.

Landowners saw the benefits of housing development; however, without this tool, they were forced into the alternative of waiting a 5-year period. After 5 years, they hope that they can restart conversations with prospective developers.

Higher density development is one step toward creating more affordable housing. The density would be consistent with the urban character of a municipality. This bill promotes smart growth practices that are consistent with a community's comprehensive planning.

We can help create more workforce and affordable housing for the tremendous need in Hagerstown and our region. However, we need this important tool, and I asked for your support of HB 751.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (301) 797-6190 or email at JillThompson@hagerstownmd.org.

Sincerely,

Jill Thompson
Director of Community & Economic Development

c: Scott Nicewarner, City Administrator
Mayor and City Council of Hagerstown