



February 27, 2026

Economic Matters Committee

Bill: House Bill 1517 — Land Use – Qualified Project – Retaliatory Downzoning

Position: Unfavorable

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Economic Matters Committee,

On behalf of the City of Gaithersburg, I am respectfully submitting this written testimony in opposition to HB 1517, Land Use – Qualified Project – Retaliatory Downzoning.

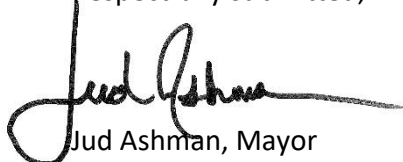
HB 1517 is unnecessarily narrow in scope and grants automatic allowances for so-called ‘qualified projects’ that claim retaliatory downzoning. As currently drafted, the bill would require local jurisdictions to permit density levels beyond what is authorized, regardless of legitimate community-driven zoning decisions.

This proposal undermines the ability of local governments to respond to community priorities. As noted by our Director of Planning and Code Administration, the bill could block a municipality from downzoning a property even when residents and elected officials have expressed clear opposition through public processes.

Furthermore, the bill exceeds simply restoring previous zoning designations, it could enable uses and densities that were never permitted, creating uncertainty and potentially harmful development outcomes. Rezoning already undergo transparent public hearings, and legal remedies exist for developers who believe they have been treated unfairly. HB 1517 therefore establishes a remedy for a problem that is already addressed through established processes.

For these reasons, the City of Gaithersburg urges an unfavorable report on HB 1517. We appreciate the Committee’s attention to preserving local land use authority and maintaining meaningful community engagement in planning decisions.

Respectfully submitted,



Jud Ashman, Mayor
City of Gaithersburg

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