

Smarter Growth Alliance for Howard County

March 15, 2021

The Honorable Howard County Council
George Howard Building
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, MD 21043

RE: CB22-2021: AN ACT requiring the developer of a TOD (Transit Oriented Development) District site to provide the required moderate income housing units (MIHU) on the TOD site; prohibiting certain actions by the developer relating to optional methods or alternative compliance to optional methods; and generally relating to MIHU requirements.

Dear Council Members:

The Smarter Growth Alliance for Howard County (SGAHC) is an alliance of local and state organizations collaborating to foster healthy, equitable, and sustainable communities through smarter development and transportation decisions and improved protections for the county's natural, historic and cultural resources.

We strongly support the intention of Bill 22-2021 to ensure that all new residential housing in Transit-Oriented Developments include a requirement that MIHU units are provided on-site by developers and disallow alternative compliance and fee-in-lieu.

Howard County has inadequate affordable housing units available for current and future residents at both moderate and lower-income levels. The TODs offer the opportunity to increase the number of and disperse these units while providing transit access to employment opportunities.

We do have concerns and recommendations for CB22:

- As SGAHC stated in our previous testimony on CB7-2021, proximity to transit does not necessarily make new development transit-oriented or more utilitarian for moderate-income residents. Unless pedestrian and bicycle accessibility improvements to stations are made mandatory as part of such developments for TODs barriers may still exist for MIHU residents with no or one automobile. We recommend an amendment that requires accommodations to provide all residents of TODs to be able to walk or bicycle safely to transit.

*Audubon MD-DC • Audubon Society of Central Maryland • Bicycling Advocates of Howard County
Chesapeake Bay Foundation • Clean Water Action • Coalition for Smarter Growth • Community Ecology Institute
Earth Forum of Howard County • HARP • Howard County Citizens Association
Howard County Conservancy • Howard County Sierra Club • Maryland Conservation Council
Maryland League of Conservation Voters • Maryland Ornithological Society • Patapsco Heritage Greenway
Preservation Maryland • Safe Skies Maryland • Savage Community Association • The People's Voice • Transition Howard County*

- B55-2020 requires the County Executive to submit a fiscal analysis for specified legislation. In the case of CB22-2021, a fiscal analysis should be requested on the impact of the MIHU housing requirement versus alternative compliance. This would be useful and relevant for this Bill and future use of this fiscal aspect of alternative compliance measures. The analysis on CB22 should also include an estimate of the cost of County retrofitted installed infrastructure if not provided by developers. The fiscal analysis should be provided to all Council members and archived for the public.

Finally, the goal of requiring affordable housing should be to distribute it throughout Howard County. Socio-economic integration of our schools and neighborhoods cannot occur unless we eliminate alternative compliance to the highest possible degree in TODs and all new housing where required by County Code. You have the opportunity to pave the way to provide additional affordable housing, consideration of reducing the impact on traffic, additional employment opportunities, and improve school capacity problems. We ask that the Council approve CB22's goal of eliminating exemptions to MIHU requirements for TODs.

Sincerely,

Preservation Maryland
Elly Colmers Cowan
Director of Advocacy

Bicycle Advocates of Howard County
Jack Guarneri
President

Howard County Sierra Club
Carolyn Parsa
Chair

The People's Voice
Lisa Markovitz
President

Howard County Citizen's Association
Stu Kohn
President

cc: The Honorable Calvin Ball, County Executive