



MARTIN O'MALLEY  
Governor  
ANTHONY G. BROWN  
Lt. Governor  
RAYMOND A. SKINNER  
Secretary  
CLARENCE J. SNUGGS  
Deputy Secretary

September 11, 2013

The Honorable President and Members of  
Charles County Board of Commissioners  
P.O. Box 2150  
La Plata, MD 20646

Dear President Kelly and Members of the County Board of Commissioners:

I am writing in reference to concerns of the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) regarding the draft 2013 Charles County Comprehensive Plan as approved on August 5, 2013 by the Charles County Planning Commission. It is my understanding that the Plan has been transmitted to the County Commissioners, who will hold a hearing in the near future.

Of greatest concern is the change in the plan from the agricultural land use to a low-density rural residential designation. The changes in the draft plan signal a policy shift away from smart growth and preservation of natural resources to promoting low-density sprawl development. In addition to the environmental impacts of low-density residential development, DHCD is concerned that the designation is inconsistent with the plan's stated goal of promoting higher density development in the Waldorf area as new, lower density development will draw investment away from town centers. Low-density residential development also makes it more difficult to provide housing that is affordable to residents with a range of incomes.

The Governor's Smart Growth Subcabinet, comprised of cabinet secretaries from principal state agencies, recently approved sustainable community plans and boundary maps for the Town of La Plata and the unincorporated areas of Hughesville and Waldorf. This place-based community revitalization designation is supported by applications approved and submitted by local governments. To demonstrate approval, we ask that local governments submit a local government resolution with applications for sustainable community designation. The Charles County Commissioners passed a resolution in support of both the Waldorf and Hughesville Sustainable Community areas. As a result of the designation, these areas are eligible for, or receive additional consideration in funding applications for State of Maryland revitalization programs.

The sustainable community plans include strategies to promote investment in town centers and provide housing opportunities with a range of incomes. The proposed change in land use designation in the Charles County Comprehensive Plan will make the Sustainable Community plans much more difficult to implement and reduce the effectiveness of Maryland's revitalization programs targeted for these areas, because low density residential development draws private investment away from these town centers. New, low density development on the edge of town centers will compete directly with investment inside the town center boundary.



The Honorable President and Members of  
Charles County Board of Commissioners  
September 11, 2013  
Page 2

The comprehensive plan provides a framework for decisions regarding growth, economic development and resource management through the year 2040. The plan's land use designations should be consistent with the goals of the plan, the 12 planning visions as well as recent approved sustainable community plans. Therefore it is the recommendation of DHCD that inconsistencies between the proposed land uses in the plan, plan policies and approved sustainable community plans be corrected.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter prior to voting on the 2013 draft Comprehensive Plan. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Ms. Carol Gilbert, Assistant Secretary for Neighborhood Revitalization at 410-514-7229 or e-mail, gilbert@mdhousing.org

Sincerely,



Raymond A. Skinner  
Secretary

cc: Ms. Carol Gilbert, Assistant Secretary, Neighborhood Revitalization, DHCD

RAS/kb