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# LOCUS

## RESPONSIBLE REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS AND INVESTORS

April 11, 2010

Delegate Marvin E. Holmes, Jr.  
House Office Building, Room 207  
6 Bladen St.  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: proposed legislation — State Rail Station Overlay Zones

Dear Delegate Holmes;

I am writing this letter in support of the proposed legislation to establish State Rail Station Overlay Zones (SRSOZ) in the State of Maryland. I represent a coalition of real estate developers and investors who recognize that there is pent-up consumer demand for what is referred to as ‘walkable urban’ places; mixed-use, walkable communities and regionally significant places generally served by rail transit. These are places like downtown Bethesda and Silver Spring which have grown so impressively over the past 15 years due to this pent-up demand.

Unfortunately, developing the future Bethesda’s and Silver Spring’s, even where there is existing rail transit, is generally illegal, has misguided NIMBY opposition and is much more risky and costly than it should be, exacerbating an affordable housing crisis Maryland already suffers. Not taking advantage of the development and investment potential of existing as well as future rail transit locations would reduce local and state government revenues while increasing public costs by spreading infrastructure all over the countryside. There are also significant environmental and public health problems with the prevailing “drivable suburban” form of development as well.

The proposed legislation creating SRSOZs will affect less than one percent of the land in Maryland yet it would satisfy ninety percent of our growth goals. It will take economic and fiscal advantage of the existing and future rail transit and other infrastructure the federal, state and local governments have already made and will make in the future. It responds to consumer demand and increases the quality of life, public health and economic value of the single family housing surrounding these places. This last fact is why the neighborhood groups surrounding White Flint Metro station have surprisingly come out in strong support of increased density and more walkable development there.

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Transportation drives development. Taking further advantage of the substantial public investment in rail transit through the adoption of the proposed SRSOZ legislation will be one of the most substantive legislation steps Maryland will take in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. It will allow for the 35% of the economic assets that are invested in the built environment (real estate and infrastructure) to be efficiently deployed to maximize government revenues, will be environmentally sustainable yet meet existing pent-up consumer demand.

The SRSOZ creates true public / private partnership. It empowers local governments to actually create the public realm that has been studied and discussed too many times. Its re-engineering the "TDR" is the first time this tool is actually designed properly. The logic and common-sense of the SRSOZ is long overdue. In today's unprecedented economic times, this is exactly what is needed.

Passing this legislation will be a major step forward in implementing the smart growth policy that Maryland has led the nation. The SRSOZ will enable us to achieve desperately needed results.

Very Truly Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. B. Leinberger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and "B".

Christopher B. Leinberger

President