

R O G E R K L E W I S f. a. i. a.

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Delegate Marvin E. Holmes, Jr.
House Office Building, Room 313
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401
marvin.holmes@house.state.md.us

Re: Proposed Legislation - State Rail Station Overlay Districts

Dear Delegate Holmes:

I am writing to support the proposed State Rail Station Overlay Districts (SRSOD) legislation to be considered by the Maryland General Assembly. The laudable SRSOD goals, principles and implementation strategies would constructively supersede out-of-date, obstructive zoning concepts and regulations, justifiably replacing them with a much-needed, 21st century land use ordinance. Appropriately higher densities, diversified land uses and a well designed public realm could be developed in areas within walking distance of Maryland's urban, suburban and exurban rail stations. This would contribute greatly toward achieving smart, sustainable growth.

In 1989 planners and architects talked about "growth management" but subsequently embraced the broader concept of "smart growth," a term first coined in the State of Maryland. Smart growth implies wiser land use and infrastructure planning, multiple transportation modes, transit-oriented development, improved urban design, and more effective regulation of growth. It entails specific goals and principles that planners today universally advocate:

- Concentrating much new growth in existing communities to take advantage of existing infrastructure and other public facilities;
- Creating compact, dense, walkable neighborhoods with safe, rational street-block patterns and a strong sense of place;
- Mixing rather than segregating land uses, including housing and especially workforce housing;
- Providing a full range of travel choices - walking, biking and transit, as well as driving;
- Preserving historic buildings and, if feasible, saving and renovating obsolete buildings;
- Preserving agricultural land and sensitive environmental areas;
- Reducing water pollution by properly managing stormwater, natural watersheds and Maryland's streams, rivers, lakes and bays;
- Reducing carbon emissions and air pollution;
- Making the planning and development process predictable, fair and cost-effective;
- Ensuring citizen and stakeholder participation in the planning and development process.;
- Putting in place equitable, economically feasible methods for both public and private sector financing of infrastructure, public facilities and affordable housing.

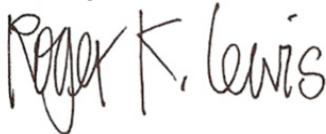
The proposed SRSOD legislation clearly embodies these principles and would contribute to achieving Maryland's smart growth goals. Citizens inhabiting or working in denser, more coherent development centered on existing rail stations could leave cars at home and walk, ride bicycles, or use rail transit when they travel. Fewer cars on the road would reduce congestion, save energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Likewise, property damage, injuries and deaths resulting from traffic accidents, as well as first responder costs, would be reduced. And the SRSOD legislation would serve as an antidote and environmentally sustainable alternative to costly sprawl that persistently threatens Maryland's valuable open space and parkland.

Maryland jurisdictions would prepare SRSOD plans to include urban and architectural design guidelines ensuring creation of aesthetically, functionally and economically desirable rail station district communities. In the interest of achieving a well designed public realm, the SRSOD legislation also calls for each jurisdiction to be responsible for and diligently undertake design review. Qualified, public sector planning officials and design professionals would evaluate the aesthetic, functional and technical quality of specific development proposals and building projects. Thus rational discussion, rigorous analysis and informed value judgments about urban design and architecture would determine what is built, not arbitrary, inflexible and often obsolete formulas and limitations typical of most zoning ordinances.

Finally, the SRSOD legislation wisely integrates cooperative planning with fair allocation of development and investment responsibilities. It envisions and enables a coordinated, non-adversarial process of collaboration between all concerned parties: state, county and municipal officials; public planning agencies; private developers; and affected citizens. Without such collaboration, innovative land use and redevelopment legislation, no matter how visionary, cannot succeed.

For all of the above reasons, I encourage adoption of the SRSOD legislation.

Sincerely,



Roger K. Lewis

Why Roger Lewis' opinion is so important (Jay Hellman's note) :

- Exceptional education: **MIT** B. Arch., 1964; M. Arch., 1967;
- Exceptional experience: Peace Corps Volunteer Architect, 1964-66, Tunisia; Award winning Architect & Planner in US (since 1969) ;
- Exceptional teacher: Prof and co-founder School of Architecture at the U of MD bio: http://www.arch.umd.edu/people/faculty_and_staff/bio.cfm/87
- Exceptional author: Since 1984 he has been writing the **Shaping the City** column in the Washington Post.

On the Woodmont Triangle page of www.VirtualAdjacency.com, where the support documents are for the proposed legislation: State Rail Station Overlay Districts — you will find 14 of Roger's columns -- highlighted and annotated to connect his lessons with this Bill.

- Design: tabs 17a, 17b, 17c, 17d
- Building Height: tab 18
- Parks and Retail: tab 19
- Reality Check: tab 20
(pls read tab 45 to see that Roger was correct, plus tabs 34a, 34b, 34c, 34d and 35a, 35b 35c to see why this BILL is so needed!)
- Encourage & Enable More Walking in Cities: tab 28b
- Green House won't solve Bad Land-Use Regulation: tab 32
- Why the Public Realm is Gov't's Job: tab 37
- Economic Downturn Catalyst for Smart Growth: tab 38
- Affordable Housing: Costs; Sprawl; Role of Gov't: tabs 39a, 39b, 39c