



WDG Architecture, PLLC February 22, 2011
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Marvin E. Holmes, Jr., Member, Maryland House of Delegates
House Office Building, Room 313
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: HB 948 Land Use — State Rail Station Overlay Districts (SRSOD)

Dear Delegate Holmes;

I am writing in support of the current legislation before you to establish State Rail Station Overlay Districts (SRSOD) in the State of Maryland.

As an Architect and planner practicing in Maryland and other local jurisdictions, I routinely assist my clients through the rezoning and site plan approval process for projects in our more urban areas that are currently served by public transportation. Unfortunately, it is often a frustrating experience that does not yield the best urban solutions for truly transit oriented, urbane, mixed use communities. More often than not, the process is guided by decision making that is based on arbitrary numerical limitations regarding heights, density, and mix of uses, that does not yield the most compelling design solutions.

It seems to me that the concepts in this legislation are a much needed, precedent setting, re-engineering of a land-use regulatory system that has not kept pace with 21st century opportunities for truly appealing and successful urban centers. It is clear that the suburban sprawl that has overwhelmed our public facilities over the past decades is not sustainable. It is imperative that we re-establish urban centers as the primary area for future growth, where public transportation and effective, vibrant, mixed use communities can provide a truly sustainable environment for future generations of Marylanders.

The proposed SRSOD provides a set of tools that can make this vision a reality. Its premise is rational, efficient and equitable. It provides a framework for land-use regulation that can elicit the best results from state, and local government resources, and enfranchises, and incentivizes the private sector through a true partnering relationship. Of profound significance is that a design review process will replace arbitrarily established, numerical limitations, that almost always force sub-optimal building solutions on sites that could achieve much more for the communities in which they are placed. Under SRSOD, urban centers will enjoy more economically sound

developments, of greatly improved quality, whose by-product will be truly livable city centers with compelling pedestrian environments that will be enjoyed by all who live and work there. Without this bill that vision is in jeopardy!

This is a problem that confronts states and jurisdictions throughout the country. My practice, WDG Architecture, with offices in Washington and Dallas, is being challenged to assist a variety of government entities in tackling this same problem. The results are encouraging. Together we are developing some much improved processes that are fostering creative solutions to this pervasive problem. I believe Maryland has an opportunity, through approving SRSOD, to be precedent making and visionary in its approach to encouraging great communities. I look forward to being a participant in designing a more attractive and sustainable Maryland under the SRSOD. Please feel free to call on me if I can be of help in answering any questions you or your colleagues may have.

In summary, I urge you to enact this bill. The success of your legacy for generations to come may depend on it.

Sincerely,



C. R. George Dove, FAIA, APA

Managing Principal

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