

February 20, 2024

Mr. Peter Shapiro, Chair
Prince George's County Planning Board, M-NCPPC
1616 McCormick Drive, Largo MD
Via: pgcpb@mncppc.org

RE: Support LDR-40-2024 -- increased housing around transit in LTO and RTO zones

Dear Chair Shapiro and members of the Board:

Please accept this testimony on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth (CSG), the leading organization advocating for walkable, bikeable, inclusive, transit-oriented communities as the most sustainable and equitable way for the Washington, DC region to grow and provide opportunities for all. We also support and work closely with RISE Prince George's, a group of county residents and allies advocating for policies and practices that build shared, sustainable prosperity in Prince George's County by creating safe, walkable, inclusive and transit-oriented communities.

CSG participated in the extensive process to create a new zoning code, following Plan 2035. While the code was a major advance for the county overall, it needs further refinement to function as it should and support the county's goals. We wish to express our support for two key provisions proposed in LDR-40-2024.

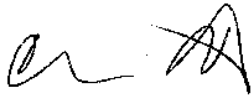
First, we support ensuring that the Transit-Oriented/Activity Center Zones are tied to designated transit centers, and avoid the abuse of who occurred with M-X-T zones, which were applied anywhere a Council Member was able to designate without a connection to transit. We support this safeguard against potential abuse by future Council actions.

Second, we support the proposed changes to the LTO and RTO zones to allow increased numbers of homes per acre. We have long expressed concern about the low densities permitted around transit stations in the new zoning code. The importance of allowing sufficient housing capacity around transit stations is to attract quality investment that is feasible. Inappropriately low numbers of homes allowed in close proximity to transit stations will both waste the value of the accessibility of transit, and discourage investments in desirable mixed use, and quality buildings.

Providing the capacity for higher density multifamily buildings does not mean they will be constructed, but retaining low densities in the zoning regulations for LTO and RTO will discourage higher cost, high rise construction types. High rise construction is far costlier than wood frame construction, so zoning alone may not increase the density of housing opportunities around transit, but it's an important encouragement. We need more homes in multifamily buildings around transit to create a vibrant, mixed use, energetic environment that fosters walkability, thriving retail streets, and the kind of places that more people want to live in, work in, and visit. The proposed increased densities for LTO and RTO zones help to advance the vision of great, walkable, transit-oriented communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Cort
Policy Director