



Commission on People with Disabilities

Testimony on County Council Public Hearing on Bill 5-13
Property Tax Credit – Accessibility Features
Remarks by Tim Markwood, Commissioner
February 26, 2013

Good Afternoon, my name is Tim Markwood, and I am a member of the Commission on People with Disabilities and I am speaking on behalf of the Commission in support of Councilmember Leventhal's initiative to increase the supply of housing that meets the Design for Life Montgomery design features of being visit-able or live-able to help make our County a more inclusive community.

A Visit-able home has three basic design elements:

1. At least one no step entry at any entry door such as front door, back door, side door (any door) deck or through the garage connected to an accessible route to a place to visit on that level.
2. 32" or 2' x 10" nominal clear width interior doors.
3. A useable powder room or Bathroom

A Live-able home has:

1. The three basic design features of a Visitable home, plus
2. At least one bedroom, full bath, and kitchen with a circulation path that connects the rooms to an accessible entrance.

As a Commissioner, I have served on the Design for Life Montgomery Workgroup for the past 3 years and have been involved in trying to create incentives for both property owners and builders to develop this type of housing. We recommend to you to provide incentives to both builders in the form of an impact tax credit and property owners in the form of a property tax credit to include Design for life features in both existing housing **AND** new construction.

In addition to being a Commissioner I am a Realtor. As a Realtor, I have observed the current numbers of homes in the County with accessible features are at a minimum. With these incentives I feel that it is a good first step to increase the inventory of homes with Design for Life features.

We have had the opportunity to review the Executive's proposal sent to the Council to provide to property owners up to \$3000 of certified costs in Property Tax Credits where there has not been an Impact Tax credit for visit-able homes and up to \$10,000 for homes made to be live-able. Total tax credits issued by the County to eligible persons would be capped at \$500,000 per year. We support this.

For builders, the Executive is proposing a school impact tax credit for visit-ability which is currently on a sliding scale from \$500 per unit for 5% of a development up to \$2000 per unit for developments with 30% or more being made visitable. We believe the \$500 per unit is not significant enough to get the interest of a builder. We believe that \$2000 per unit is more appropriate and provides an increased incentive. We believe a set credit amount should be provided for each home built which meets the Design for Life standards...not a sliding scale based on the percentage of homes built. This is a better and more equitable way of encouraging builders to incorporate Design for Life standards.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the Commission's thoughts with you on this very important issue.