



Coalition for Smarter Growth
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Montgomery County Council
Council Office Building
100 Maryland Ave
Rockville, MD 20850

January 17, 2023

Support for Bill 33-22: Capital Improvements Program – Affordable Housing Feasibility Study – Required

Good afternoon. My name is Carrie Kisicki and I am the Montgomery Advocacy Manager for the Coalition for Smarter Growth.

CSG strongly supports this bill, which will ensure the county is doing its due diligence to pursue opportunities to build affordable housing on public land, and with opportunities for input from the public and the Council.

Montgomery County is facing a housing shortage, especially when it comes to affordable housing, and public land is a scarce and valuable resource. The County recognized this when it initially required affordable housing feasibility studies for planned developments on public land.

But when we aren't getting the results we want—and we know that we *haven't* seen as much affordable housing on public land as we would like to—we have to ask why. The existing assessment, which is required only after facility planning begins, does not come soon enough for the public and the Council to provide meaningful input on projects. These missed opportunities have resulted in missed opportunities for affordable housing. We shouldn't think of that in the number of units but in the number of affordable homes for families that we failed to build.

What this bill provides is a pragmatic solution to the obstacles to co-locating affordable housing on public land that have become clear since the original legislation was put in place.

First, it increases transparency. It gives the public and Council more insight into these important projects, and requires certain assumptions of the feasibility study be clearly spelled out and open to public and Council review, and revision if necessary.

Second, it requires thoroughness and thoughtfulness from our public officials, who under this bill will have to carefully consider the potential for affordable housing on each applicable project.



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Importantly, if the Council believes that the potential for affordable housing on a given site has not yet been fully explored, there is a process to request further analysis so that we are doing our due diligence on affordable housing on every single site.

Third, the requirements of this bill match the urgency of this issue and the unique value—and important role—of public land. We cannot afford to miss any opportunities to build affordable housing. Land acquisition is a huge cost; public land is a huge opportunity for making deeply affordable housing feasible.

As a public, we and our elected officials should have an opportunity to know what projects are underway and have an opportunity to weigh in before those paths are set and changing a path becomes difficult or disruptive to an important project. In the case of the projects covered by this bill, it is especially important to have a clear, established process with clear expectations and make these decisions at a point where it will not cause delays because these sites by definition often involve important public resources like a library or police station.

Public land offers one of the best opportunities for providing much needed, and often deeply affordable, affordable housing. Therefore, CSG strongly urges you to support this bill. Thank you.