



August 9, 2010

Secretary Richard E. Hall, AICP
Maryland Secretary of Planning
301 West Preston Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201-2365

Dear Secretary Hall:

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) and the Maryland Association of County Planning Officials wish to convey our concerns about PlanMaryland. The process of creating a statewide land use plan, which has been authorized in State law since 1974, is a daunting challenge and both MACo and the county planners acknowledge the effort and hard work you and the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) have invested.

MACo and the county planners have cautiously supported PlanMaryland and believe that it can be beneficial if it is based on certain principles and structured to serve certain functions. Our concerns are summarized here:

- PlanMaryland should be designed to provide a macro-level view of growth in the State. It should help identify emerging growth trends and land use challenges at both a State and regional level. By providing a “big picture” view, PlanMaryland should seek to foster better communication and cooperation at both the State and local levels. It should also help resolve conflicting policy conflicts between State agencies.
- PlanMaryland should incorporate local comprehensive plans as part of its foundation. While PlanMaryland should not be limited by the parameters of the underlying plans, it would be counterproductive not to take advantage of the information and planning expertise that has been invested in the local plans. This sentiment was echoed by the Task Force on the Future for Growth and Development in Maryland in its December, 2008 report.
- PlanMaryland should not seek to supplant local land use authority or micromanage growth. As long as PlanMaryland is envisioned as an important technical and communication tool, then MACo and the county planners believe it has merit. However, if PlanMaryland seeks to override local comprehensive plans or impose a centralized State-controlled land use model, then county support will evaporate.

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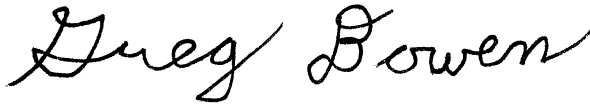
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MACo and the county planners have been heartened by public comments made by you and Governor Martin O'Malley stressing that PlanMaryland will not supersede local land use planning. We also support the reach out MDP has conducted to both local governments and the general public. We urge MDP to keep the drafting process as public as possible and look forward to working with you to realize the creation of a plan that is both useful and beneficial.

Sincerely,



Michael Sanderson
Executive Director
Maryland Association of Counties
Officials



Gregory Bowen
President
Maryland Association of County Planning

Cc: Candace Donoho, Governmental Relations Director, Maryland Municipal League