

July 8, 2020

Montgomery County Council
Council Office Building
100 Maryland Ave.
Rockville, MD 20850

Bill 13-20, County Property – Disposition – Affordable Housing (Support)

Public Testimony

Jane Lyons, Maryland Advocacy Manager

President Katz and Councilmembers, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on Bill 13-20. Please accept these comments on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the leading organization in the D.C. region advocating for walkable, inclusive, transit-oriented communities. **We strongly support any efforts to make better use of our public land for affordable housing.**

Bill 13-20 would require any disposition of property that will be used primarily for housing development must be 30 percent income-restricted, with 15 percent as moderately priced dwelling units (MPDUs) and the other 15 percent for households earning 50 percent or less of the area median income (AMI).

For too long, the county has not used its public land for its full potential. With many county properties located near high-capacity transit and land being a significant cost of construction, subsidized land costs makes deeper levels of affordability possible. At a time when we need 75 percent of new housing in the region to be affordable for low and middle income households, this legislation is common sense.

We would like to see this legislation go a step further. If county land dispositions meet certain requirements, such as being a certain distance from transit, it should be required for that land be used for affordable housing. There is nothing under current law prioritizing or requiring certain uses to be considered, or giving preference to experienced affordable housing developers as partners.

We need to re-imagine how we use public land, when being disposed of and when redeveloping. Libraries, community centers, and other public facilities should all be co-located with housing. Our region already has several examples of housing co-located with public facilities. We hope this legislation will be a first step for better using public land for the public good.

Therefore, we urge you to support Bill 13-20 and seek provisions to make it even stronger. Thank you for your consideration.