CB22-2021: MIHU requirements on Transit Oriented Development (TOD)

03/15/2021

The Howard County Citizens Association fully supports this legislation and urge its passage. We commend the sponsor Councilmember Rigby and its co-sponsors Councilmembers Jung and Walsh.

Howard County's affordable housing deficit has largely been caused due to low MIHU fees-in-lieu, alternative compliance, and exemptions, that have contributed significantly to the compounding demand for affordable housing.

Contrary to the dogma, housing prices are not a simple function of demand and supply. It is not a commodity. Housing also relies on other factors. In communities with high quality public infrastructure, prices are high because people find those communities desirable. In places of low-quality infrastructure, home prices are very low, because people with means will always find other places with good infrastructure.

The challenge is always how to create an equitable community that allows people with means and people without means to live in an integrated society. Howard County's policy toward affordable housing has largely led to segregated communities as the county's zoning laws created low income and high-income regions by exempting MIHU housing from high income communities and concentrating them in certain areas. This bill will ensure the MIHU is built as required.

We echo the concerns raised by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) that the unintended consequence of this bill would prevent Disability-Income Housing Units (DIHUs) from being built.

But this is primarily due to CB50-2019, where a developer is allowed to substitute one MIHU with 0.33 DIHU for townhomes on site or 0.4 DIHU for apartments. This ratio does not make sense. Why pit one person in need against another person in need? We urge that the DIHU and MIHU be a one-to-one ratio. This is yet another example of how the deficit is exacerbated.

We urge passage of this bill with an amendment to substitute one DIHU for one MIHU.

Hiruy Hadgu

HCCA