



HCCA

Howard County Citizens Association

Since 1961... The Voice of the People of Howard County

To: County Council Members

Date: 19 July 2023

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Stu Kohn from Laurel and testifying as the President of the Howard County Citizens Association, HCCA.

We are very concerned with the potential intended future of our County when one looks at HoCo by Design. Why is this plan any better than the previous three General Plans? How much have we spent on this plan? What are the benefits to all residents in our County? The theme seems to be more uncontrollable growth whereby our infrastructure is not ready for prime time. Can you tell us otherwise?

The General Plan can be summed up by the movie "A Few Good Men" when Jack Nickolson said to Tom Cruise, "You can't handle the truth." The truth is our Infrastructure which incorporates Quality of Life Issues such as Roads, Schools, Police, Fire, Emergency Medical Services, the Hospital, Gas, Electricity, and Stormwater, etc. are in dire straits as long as we are not prepared for the future which should contribute to Managing our Growth. The first sentence of Chapter 9 is very telling only if completely executed. It states, "Infrastructure in Howard County supports the daily needs of the community and delivery of essential services." Certainly, if the Council believes this sentence, then this Chapter needs to be amended before considering approval. We will provide you with several Amendments for your consideration. The first is a must to ensure utmost accountability for you to adopt. All Implementation Action statements for each Chapter of HoCo by Design shall be evaluated and include a written report card by those responsible for action requiring a review with the County Council and Public every two years. This is to ensure all Implementation Action contents are indeed meaningful and not just rhetoric to ensure the proposed goals are actually being met. Without the adoption of this Amendment the document becomes a "so what" as has basically been the case in the past. We don't want to continue business as usual. We need checks and balances. Please advocate for accountability by adopting this suggested amendment.

When we see signs on our roads which read, Stay Alert - traffic congestion next 3 to 4 miles, when we have nearly 250 trailers at our schools, when our hospital can't handle the volume of patient traffic these are major concerns. I know about the Hospital because of my recent experience in the Emergency Department. I was in the Emergency Room for 2 1/2 days because there were no in-patient beds available. I was placed in something called a "Rapid Transit" area. This consisted of basically being in an area the size of a closet with a curtain in the front facing the public restrooms. I sent

a letter to the Hospital, and they agreed the situation is not what they want but have no other choice. With 69,000 Emergency Room visits and 20,000 admitted during FY2022 it's not surprising we find ourselves in a very drastic situation. We need to stop the madness!

The General Plan is supposed to be used as a guidance for the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO). Unfortunately, APFO should be changed to ALPO standing for "A Lousy Public Ordinance." I was a member of the last APFO Task Force. It was extremely difficult to get motions passed because of a declared super majority vote. We recommend you declare a mandate that the Task Force be conducted by majority votes.

For years, HCCA has stated the Hospital is an important ingredient required to be a part of APFO. It is briefly referenced on page 32 of Chapter 9 of HoCo by Design where there is a blurb titled, "Health Services." In this section the Hospital is mentioned as an "important resource," but that's the end of the story. Why? We constantly hear the Hospital is not included because it is a private institution. Yet the County has funded the Hospital millions of dollars over the last several years including this year. HCCA was very instrumental in getting funding approved in December 2017 when we testified to the Council. We have no regrets and are proud of the accomplishment. Thus, the premise the Hospital is private is not entirely true as us taxpayers are subsidizing the Hospital.

We have some other suggested amendments for the General Plan or declarations in major critical areas for your consideration.

Ensure no school will ever be permitted to have additional portables or trailers to mitigate overcrowding.

Any new development shall have major roads either already constructed or the necessary funding approved to construct any major roads prior to the Approval of any given development. An example was Maple Lawn, the Relocation of Route 216 when funding had to be approved by the State until the first shovel was put in the ground. The project was delayed for approximately a year. Secondly, any proposed development whereby any road within two miles has a Level of Service of a "D" or worse will be delayed until remedied.

Minor Collector Roads shall be reviewed in any new development located in the Planned Service Area (PSA). Currently Section 4.2 of the Design Manual exempts the PSA areas, but is included in the non-PSA. An example is the now being constructed Wellington Farms near Murray Hill and Gorman roads. No evaluation was required to be evaluated because it is in the PSA. Ridiculous!

Ensure the Hospital is more than adequate for any future growth by periodically conducting a meeting with the Hospital Administration and the public.

Any proposed increase of housing allocation units shall not be increased until our infrastructure is determined it can manage such growth.

Hopefully you will not Approve HoCo by Design until we can all be assured the County is more than ready for the future. You need to take the necessary action to make this strategic plan a meaningful document which we can all be proud of. The future is in your hands especially if you care about the quality of life for all your constituents.

Thanks for listening but will you take any action regarding our concerns?

Stu Kohn
HCCA President