

March 31, 2015

Baltimore County Council
Historic Courthouse
400 Washington Avenue
Towson, MD 21204

Re: Bill 21-15 – Honeygo Area Revisions - OPPOSED

Dear Chairwoman Bevins and the Baltimore County Council:

The Baltimore County Chapter of the Maryland Building Industry Association (MBIA) has serious concerns with Bill 21-15. The bill makes significant changes to the Honeygo Area Plan including a building permit moratorium conditioned on new school construction, among other capital projects. A building permit moratorium based on school construction circumvents the current school capacity measurement system and sets a bad precedent that impacts every Councilmanic district. As such, this legislation should not be given local councilmanic courtesy.

The MBIA strongly supports adding school capacity to the Honeygo area and all other areas with overcrowded schools and is committed to helping the 5th Councilmanic District achieve its school capacity goals. However, meeting these goals should be done within the existing system of planning, Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances, re-districting and budgeting and not through a building permit moratorium.

Specifically, Bill No. 21-15 creates a building moratorium in the Honeygo area until the County acts on several capital projects and requirements, including:

1. Completion of a Northeastern Elementary School;
2. Dedication of Land for the Construction of a new Middle and High School in the Northeast Area;
3. Right-of-Way Acquisition and Commencement of Construction to expand Cross Road; and
4. Completion of Angel Park, a new community park next to Perry Hall Library.

School construction is an issue outside of the control of the home building industry. Holding construction hostage until new schools are built goes against existing policies that relieve overcrowding like the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance and school re-districting. Further, the Honeygo area is largely built out and with few developable parcels remaining; development cannot support the burden of finding suitable school sites and funding construction.

Once a precedent altering bill like this is passed, every Councilmember will be under pressure to circumvent the normal planning and budgeting process to end construction until their new school or constituent's pet project is built. Halting progress costs the County jobs, tax revenue and the infrastructure improvements achieved through development, including new schools, parks and roads. After years of economic downtown, the building industry is beginning to return. This means more jobs, more affordable housing, better infrastructure and a wider tax base for the County to use on schools, roads, parks, teachers, and police. Passing legislation that slows down this recovery is not advisable.

Because this bill sets precedent that may change the way schools are planned and budgeted for in Baltimore County, it is not a local bill and should not be given local courtesy. This bill poses significant risks to economic growth and development in the County, and the MBIA urges the Council to oppose its adoption.

If you have any questions about these comments and would like to discuss our position further, please do not hesitate to contact me at (410) 720-3021 or dmurphy@elmstreetdev.com or Josh Greenfeld at (443) 515-0025 or jgreenfeld@marylandbuilders.org.

Best regards,

David Murphy, Chair, MBIA of Baltimore County

Cc: County Executive Kevin Kamenetz
Councilmember Tom Quirk
Councilmember Vicki Almond
Councilmember Wade Kach
Councilmember Julian Jones
Councilmember David Marks
Councilmember Todd Crandell

