



Testimony of the Rockville Mayor and Council
SB 744 – Housing and Community Development – Affordable Housing – Listing and Disposal of
Excess Real Property
Support

The Mayor and Council of Rockville are thankful to Chairman Pinsky and the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee for the opportunity to share the City’s comments on SB 744. We are grateful to Senator Hettleman for sponsoring this important legislation.

The City supports SB 744, and its goals to increase the availability of real property in Maryland for affordable housing development by requiring the prioritization of affordable housing when disposing of public lands no longer necessary for agency use. As you consider the merits of this legislation, we urge the committee to provide the bill with a favorable report and forward it to the full Senate for a vote.

The Rockville Mayor and Council adopted the City of Rockville’s 2040 Comprehensive Plan in August 2021 and its first Climate Action Plan in January 2022. Both documents outline planning goals and specific actions to increase affordable housing opportunities for current and future City residents. The City’s 2040 Comprehensive Plan calls for a mix of infill housing types in certain defined areas of traditionally single-family neighborhoods, compatible in scale with single-family homes. They would include duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, and townhouses/rowhouses – the “Missing Middle.” The city has begun implementing some of these measures.

The availability and affordability of land for development has a significant impact on the supply of affordable housing. The City of Rockville is nearly built out. Most of the future residential development will need to occur through the redevelopment of existing sites (i.e., plan amendment; gentle-density/ in-fill), making it challenging to find available land within or immediately outside of Rockville city limits to accommodate new residential development.

The Rockville Mayor and Council recently adopted policy amendments to increase and preserve its affordable housing supply using an existing tool – inclusionary zoning. Specifically, the City now requires 15% of Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) set aside throughout the city, representing an increased percentage in a large portion of Rockville. Additionally, the City now requires a 99-year affordability restriction, departing from the 30-year control period in previous years, thereby ensuring longer-term affordability of its MPDUs.

Developable land made available through SB 744 would help further and facilitate the City’s implementation of its policy objectives and goals of generating additional affordable housing. Per the Maryland Department of Assessment and Taxation, there are currently 17 State owned parcels in Rockville, including the District Courthouse.

We ask that you incorporate the following amendments into the bill:

- Include municipalities, public housing authorities, and for-profit affordable housing developers as potential recipients of excess real property.
- Consider allowing flexibility that would permit for mixed-use development (i.e., retail) with emphasis on affordable housing and within the context of a municipality’s zoning code.

In closing, SB 744, is a positive step forward as it could facilitate the development of affordable housing. We ask for your support for this important legislation.