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July 19, 2023

Howard County Council Members
George Howard Building
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, Maryland, 21043
General Plan Public Hearing #2, July 19, 2023

Position: Support Amendments to HoCo by Design Proposed by the Howard County Housing Affordability Coalition

Dear Council Chairperson Rigby, Vice-Chairperson Jung, and members of the County Council:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership (BRHP). I am writing to express our support for the amendments proposed by the Howard County Housing Affordability Coalition to the County's General Plan Update, HoCo by Design.

The Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership is a non-profit organization that expands housing choices for low-income families who have historically been excluded from housing in well-resourced neighborhoods by helping them access and transition successfully to safe, healthy, and economically vibrant communities. As the Regional Administrator for the Baltimore Housing Mobility Program, BRHP has been opening pathways to better futures for low-income families for over 10 years. BRHP currently provides over 4,300 low-income families rental assistance in the form of Housing Choice Vouchers coupled with counseling support for families as they move from areas of concentrated poverty to areas of opportunity in Baltimore City and the five surrounding counties, including Howard County.

To further our mission of ensuring equitable housing, BRHP is dedicated to helping achieve racially and socially equitable public policy that ensures low-income families have access to quality and affordable homes in communities of their choice. **In 2022, BRHP paid nearly \$19 million in Housing Assistance Payments to 450 property owners serving over 1000 BRHP-assisted households living in Howard County.** Howard County's strong economic and educational opportunities, as well as development outlined in HoCo by Design, are sure to continue to appeal to many households, including lower-income families.

However, both the updated Plan and the proposed amendments outline an undersupply of approximately 20,000 homes – including 7,500 affordable units – as well as expectations for job creation and housing demand for an additional 31,000 homes by 2040. Already, 44 percent of renters in the County are burdened by unaffordable housing costs and over half of Black renter households are considered cost-burdened.

The Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership is an equal housing opportunity provider.





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Further decreases in housing supply amidst a spur of economic development threaten to price out many households of color.¹ Past discriminatory actions and policies have caused Black and Hispanic households to have the lowest homeownership rates in Howard County.² 2022 survey data show that low-income renters throughout the County are already extremely underserved, with only approximately 30% of low-income renters served, and that the market is failing to add housing options for Low and Very Low income renters, further cementing the need for more units of planned and affordable housing across the County to enhance the County's diversity and equity goals in conjunction with new jobs and economic development.³ **The proposed amendments to HoCo by Design thus offer a unique opportunity to not only respond to growing community needs for housing, but also enhance equity and diversity in Howard County communities through developing more, accessible, and affordable homes.**

BRHP appreciates your consideration and respectfully urges the Council to consider adoption of the amendments to HoCo by Design proposed by the Howard County Housing Affordability Coalition.

Sincerely,

Adria Crutchfield

Executive Director

¹ "The Path to an Equitable Capital Region," HAND, 2022, <https://hit.handhousing.org/jurisdictions/howard>.

² Ibid.

³ Howard County Rental Survey 2022, June 2022, <https://www.howardcountymd.gov/sites/default/files/2022-07/HoCo%20Rental%20Survey%202022%20ver%207.01.pdf>.

