



Bryans Road Business Association
3095 Marshall Hall Road
Bryans Road, MD 20616

June 27, 2023

Commissioners of Charles County
200 Baltimore Street
LaPlata, MD 20646

Re: Bryans Road Sub Area Plan Public Hearing Comments

Dear Commissioners of Charles County:

We are the Bryans Road Business Association (BRBA). We have been formed to promote collaboration between businesses and non-profit organizations. We facilitate activities that support economic development, redevelopment and improvement of Bryans Road and its surrounding areas. We serve as a liaison between business stakeholders and county government. We provide assistance to support the effort to redevelop Bryans Road.

After years of plans that were skewed either towards maximum development or that were overly restrictive with regard to environmental protection, we believe the draft plan offers a balanced framework for the ongoing discussions that are inherent in the development planning process. Accordingly, we stand ready to work with all stakeholders to promote a sustainable business environment in Bryans Road.

Following are some of our comments and concerns related to the planning effort in front of us:

- The BRBA agrees with the overarching premise of the Bryans Road Sub Area Plan, “Environmental conservation and community development can be reinforcing objectives”. We also understand and agree with the draft plan where it states, “Government does not build grocery stores or restaurants, but Government can make the conditions right for the private sector to make those investments.” BRBA stands ready to assist with this effort.
- It is important to remember that Bryans Road is a Development District (DD) as well as a Priority Funding Area (PFA). We believe suggestions in the plan to focus economic activity in these areas are consistent with the objectives of the DD and PFA designations. The Bryans Road community is under-served by a lack of amenities in the

area. It is our hope that the Charles County Government will adopt an approach that focuses on action as opposed to deferring implementation of any initiatives until the Bryans Road Sub Area Plan is complete and the Comprehensive Plan, (expiring in 2026) is updated.

- BRBA supports the proposals in the Sub Area Plan that provides flexibility in zoning and in the development process.
- A key theme in the plan that has been highlighted during work sessions with the Planning Commission and County Commissioners is that Bryans Road will not reach its development potential without intentional and direct government action. The County should undertake and continue simultaneous strategies to promote development in Western Charles County that includes Bryans Road, Indian Head, and the Maryland Airport.
- The plan and discussions during the work sessions confirm that the action by the County to implement the controversial and narrowly approved Watershed Conservation District was an overreach and it scaled back the amount of development that could occur in the area. The plan confirms that “many property owners and organizations representing the African American community opposed the changes as they devalued properties and made intergenerational wealth transfer more difficult.” The County should continue its efforts to address this issue.
- We are concerned that the methodology currently employed by the County to determine consumer demand does not fully consider residents in Western Charles County, who would opt to shop, do business, and receive services in Bryans Road if adequate amenities were available.
- As we welcome the opportunity to coordinate work sessions between appropriate County officials and the business community, we urge the County to move forward with the feasibility analysis for the “Big Idea” in the draft report, *Creating a Multigenerational Community Facility in the Town Center*. This proposal centers on the area that is most appropriate for the densest development and responds directly to the consistent and strong desires of the community. As part of this strategy, the County should also consider the relocation of the Potomac Library, which is beyond its useful life, back to its previous location in the Town Center. As the report states,

“Western Charles County needs a hub for community connections, enrichment, and engagement of people of all ages and walks of life. A multigenerational community facility can breathe life into the Bryans Road commercial area. With a library at its core, the facility could also provide access to technology, a senior center, some recreation activities, and access to public services — and breathe life into renewal of the town center. Multigenerational facilities are becoming the norm across the country. This is not only because it is more cost-effective to build, operate and maintain one place, but because they build trust within communities as a neutral and visible space that is

accessible to all. With services that span from early morning through late into the evening, a multigenerational facility also brings “foot traffic” that strengthens the market for restaurants and retail in the Town Center.

Investment by multiple agencies including the Charles County Public Libraries, Department of Parks, Tourism, and Recreation, and the Department of Community Services, is necessary to bring this vision to life. A logical first step is to conduct a feasibility study to better define what services could be offered, what space is needed, which sites would be available and appropriate, and the cost of the project. A design and construction schedule of three to five years is realistic once a decision is made to proceed with the project and funding is allocated.¹

Further, the Charles County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) notes specifically a lack of Recreational Facilities in Western Charles County². Understandably, these projects take time, and a positive response from the county on this proposal would be a significant signal to the residents and business community.

We understand that redevelopment requires partnership with the business community. In June of 2021, the core group that initiated the formation of the BRBA met with County officials to express our concerns about Bryans Road. At the core group’s urging, a “Welcome to Bryans Road” sign was placed at the Charles County line upon entering Bryans Road. This was our first step at branding Bryans Road. We were encouraged by the county’s responsiveness. It is our hope to build partnerships on these types of collaborations around the “technology corridor” being planned and implemented.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the report. We look forward to helping with the efforts to redevelop Bryans Road and surrounding areas.

Sincerely,



Lori Smallwood-Wheeler
Vice Chair

Tisha McFarland
Secretary

Bryans Road Business Association

Reference: Welcome to Bryans Road Sign

¹ Bryans Road Draft Sub Area Plan p. 24:

² The Charles County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP), p. 203
<https://www.charlescountyparks.com/home/showpublisheddocument/7275/637945258479670000>

