



3095 Marshall Hall Road
Bryans Road, MD 20695
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To Whom It May Concern:

Within the Sub Area Plan, considerations need to be made to maintain and preserve the rural heritage and environment of Western Charles County, specifically Bryans Road, while providing improved amenities to meet residents' needs. In my experience as a vested business owner who also lives near Bryans Road Shopping Center, there is a lack of quality and high-quality amenities to serve the area's residents. There also appears to be a disparity in the reporting of medium-income households that keeps Bryans Road out of the realm of improvements and redevelopment because it is perceived from the outside as a poverty-stricken area, which is not the reality.

The current Sub-Area plan, which is slated for many years from now does not fully address immediate needs. Note, the largest retail commodity is the Bryans Road Shopping Center. As a shopping center business owner, seeing a lack of retail activity and foot traffic is disappointing. To sustain the local economy and ensure the success of businesses in the Bryans Road Shopping Center, immediate steps must be taken to upgrade the current status. It is discouraging to see the surrounding businesses, including the building that houses the US Post Office in an antiquated and subpar state. I agree that the proposed subarea plan may bring future enhancements, but immediate attention and remediation/intervention is needed now. Therefore, it is essential to prioritize upgrades to the Bryans Road area as soon as possible in order to guarantee a prosperous future for the businesses within.

As noted in many meetings and independent studies, the Bryans Road buildings are privately owned, and major corporations have completed their own research to conclude that the Bryans Road area does not have the “mouths to feed” or the income to sustain a major company investing in the area. I took a risk and opened an independent boutique day spa and Event Center providing quality service/amenities in the Bryans Road area. Many businesses have come to Bryans Road only to “Fail” and close shop in a short period of time. Not to mention, we were severely impacted by Covid-19 and are still enduring the residual recovery impact from lack of staffing resources to consumers taking a different position on how they shop and are marketed to.

Statistics that show Bryans Road is far from poverty-stricken: Bryans Road is a city located in Charles County Maryland. Bryans Road has a 2023 population of **8,502**. Bryans Road is currently growing at a rate of 3.71% annually and its population has increased by 3.71% since

the most recent census, which recorded a population of **8,198** in 2020. The average household income in Bryans Road is \$100,886 with a poverty rate of 5.94%. The median age in Bryans Road is 39.4 years, 38.7 years for males, and 39.7 years for females. (Source: www.worldpopulationview.com)

Yet, there are thriving fast-food restaurants with minimal healthy food options, thriving liquor stores, and a very much-needed thriving hardware store. Yet no other amenities catering to families with disposable income exist or thrive in Bryans Road. Nor are there any constructive amenities for the youth.

What can be done/considered for immediate remediation? I recommend that Independent of the private owners and the years away future Bryans Road Sub-Area Plan, our local government immediately intercede by providing funding and support for an initiative to revitalize the area that includes a major cosmetic aesthetics revitalization, visible signage, and improved lighting, improved police presence, and youth services in the Bryans Road Shopping Center corridor. This would include supporting the building that houses the Post Office and the laundromat. This effort would be similar to such that was made right down the street in Prince George's County in Forest Heights (210 North). Bryans Road appears to be an upcoming urban/rural area with a 3.1% and greater growth rate.

Let's not reinvent the wheel or wait to create from the ground up but gain valuable lessons from our neighboring county. What did Prince George's County do? ***They implemented the Town of Forest Heights (Prince George's County) – Urban Renewal Authority.***

See attached House Bill 825 which was passed and funded for the purpose of granting the Town of Forest Heights in Prince George's County the authority to exercise urban renewal powers in areas zoned for commercial or residential use for blight clearance and redevelopment under Article III, Section 61 of the Maryland Constitution; authorizing the municipality to levy certain taxes and issue general obligation bonds and revenue bonds to carry out urban renewal powers; and generally relating to urban renewal authority. There is funding at the state level that our local government can appeal for.

Forest Heights is a city located in Prince George's County Maryland. With a 2023 population of **2,557**. Forest Heights is currently declining at a rate of -1.2% annually and its population has decreased by -3.58% since the most recent census, which recorded a population of **2,652** in 2020. Spanning over 0 miles, Forest Heights has a population density of 5,492 people per square mile.

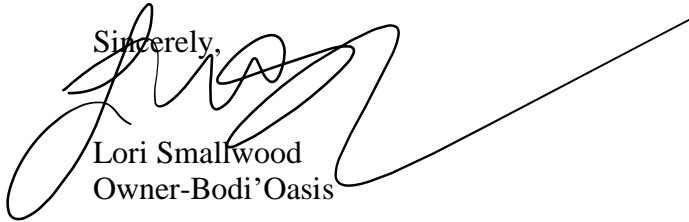
If state funding and intervention can be made available for a declining area, then there should be no argument to adopt a similar effort to revitalize Bryans Road. Additionally, collaboration with our tourism office should be reviewed to garner immediate efforts to bring a Ferry and the Riverboat in discussion to the waters surrounding Bryans Road.

In summary, I am for the redevelopment based on it currently being the only available option. However, I am looking forward to the Planning Commission, Economic Development, County Commissioner, and the Business Owners/Bryans Road Business Association stepping up

to the plate and finding immediate "today" resources to remediate Bryans Road out of "poverty" status and provide an area that will attract the major corporations who overlook doing business in Bryans Road. Business growth creates philanthropic resources that can be channeled back into the underserved citizens of the community. When our elected officials return to Annapolis this fall, we need to lobby for them to put a requirement similar to **House Bill 825** forward to support Bryans Road on the "West" side of Charles County.

Bryans Road is an underserved hybrid rural/urban area. I took a risk as a business owner to bring quality affordable Self-Care amenities to Bryans Road. We are an independent 'Boutique' Day spa serving the busy professionals of the area, so they do not have to endure an additional long commute for a day of Self-Care and Relaxation. Self-Care is important for reducing stress and chronic illness so why add a commute to Virginia for such? Why-because the business corner/corridor is an eye sore and a safety risk for our local professionals living in the area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lori Smallwood', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Lori Smallwood
Owner-Bodi'Oasis