



CHARLES COUNTY
Maryland
AREA COUNCIL ON AGING

March 8, 2024

Board of Charles County Commissioners
200 Baltimore Street
La Plata, MD 20646

Re: ZTA 22-173 Independent Living Senior Housing Complex – Public Comments

Dear Commissioners:

The Area Council on Aging is aware of a proposal to construct senior housing units in the Indian Head 210 corridor. The Board has discussed this proposal and would like to support its approval. Senior housing is urgently needed in the County, and this would provide some new housing for our most vulnerable citizens, our seniors.

The County's 2018 Report on affordable housing indicated that the County would need 1800 new units by the year 2025. We are now in 2024 and no new units have been constructed. It is critical that the County have new affordable housing for our seniors.

More recently, a Report issued by the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee chaired by Bernard Sanders, outlined the state of retired persons. (This report can be furnished upon request) This Report indicated that almost 52 percent of Americans 65 and older are living on less than \$30,000 annually, and one in four survive on less than \$15,000 per year.¹ Nearly 5.3 million Americans 65 and older live in poverty, roughly 1 in 10 seniors.² These statistics are troubling.

As the senior population grows and prices increase this problem will only get worse. It is anticipated that the senior population will become a major part of the homeless statistic beginning in 2025. We are already seeing this as a problem here in the County. Our seniors should have the right to affordable housing and not have to fear homelessness.

In his State of the State Address, Governor Wes Moore said "[w]e will stand up for renters and confront the harsh truth that Maryland has the highest eviction filing rate in America." This statement highlights another problem with the lack of affordable housing in the

¹ US Census Bureau, "PINC-01. selected characteristics of people 15 years and over, by total money income, work experience, race, Hispanic origin, and sex," August 9, 2023. Available online: https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/cps-pinc/pinc-01.html#par_textimage_10

² Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, "Policy Basics: Top Ten Facts about Social Security," April 17, 2023. Available online: <https://www.cbpp.org/research/policy-basics-top-ten-facts-about-social-security>.

County, eviction. As senior apartments are so scarce, many seniors are finding it necessary to move into housing that is not only unaffordable, but which is geared towards the younger computer-oriented population.

One of our seniors recently was almost evicted because they were accustomed to writing a check for their rent (something most seniors routinely do) and the check was not properly credited. While this is something that could happen to anyone, the management solution of requiring residents to pay their rent by logging onto a computer and accessing their bank account from there and pay their rent was beyond the senior's ability. Someone now must help them pay their rent, because they do not have access to a secure computer. This would be a particular problem in the Indian Head corridor where internet access is both expensive and not always reliable.

The proposed project would be located on land that is already cleared and ready for construction, thereby not disturbing any existing wooded areas. The project fills a substantial NEED in the County, particularly in the 210 corridor. The scarcity of housing on the western side of the county is substantial and the need for affordable housing should be addressed.

Senior affordable housing should be a right, not a privilege. Seniors should be able to get up knowing that they have the ability to put a roof over their head without it taking up most of their available income.

For all these reasons, the Area Council on Aging requests that the Commissioners consider approval of this project.

Sincerely,

Linda Stansbury

Linda Stansbury
Chair
Area Council on Aging