

INTERSECT!

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D.C. RENT CONTROL HEARING HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR COMPREHENSIVE HOUSING STRATEGIES

On October 11th, WRN President Cheryl Cort testified before the Committee on Consumer and Regulatory Affairs of the D.C. Council in favor of keeping the existing rent control law in the District. "We welcome the return of new households, investment and jobs to the city, but we are greatly concerned that residents in certain neighborhoods are now threatened with displacement due to this smart growth trend," Cort said in her testimony.

Testifying on behalf of WRN and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Cort explained that WRN and CBF want to ensure that redirecting growth away from farms and forests towards urbanized areas enhances communities, not displaces residents. She noted that as the desirability of the city and inner suburbs grows, pro-active measures are needed to ensure that housing in these areas is affordable for a diversity of households.

The purpose of the hearing was to seek public comment on the continuation of the rent control law and a report commissioned by the D.C. Financial Control Board to examine the social and economic impacts of rent de-control. WRN stated its support for retaining the existing moderate rent control law and asked the Council to be forward-looking and work with the public to create a comprehensive strategy for ensuring that neighborhoods maintain housing affordable to a diversity of residents. In addition to improved support from traditional government and private foundation sources for low- and moderate-income housing such as subsidized construction and vouchers, WRN recommended these elements as part of a comprehensive housing strategy for the city:

- moderation of rent increases (rent control),
- repair and deduct programs in buildings where landlords refuse to make needed repairs,
- tenant right of first refusal on building sale,
- reduced property tax burdens on rapidly increasing home values for retired and fixed-income owners,
- inclusionary zoning, for example mixed-use zoning combining retail, office and housing; provision of accessory units or "granny flats;" and density bonuses in exchange for affordable housing units,
- smart codes to promote the rehabilitation of existing buildings,
- moderately-priced unit requirements for large residential projects,
- lowering property tax rates on buildings (split-rate tax) to reduce construction and renovation costs,
- expanded support for tenant associations and land trusts to convert rental buildings to limited equity cooperatives, and
- better neighborhood and small-area planning, particularly near Metrorail stations, that engages the public and requires each area to maintain a fair number of affordable housing units.

WRN further recommends developing a regional plan for providing affordable housing to improve the jobs/housing balance, as the District currently provides a disproportionate share of the region's low-income housing. Through such strategies, WRN hopes to ensure that the revitalization of the District and inner suburbs provides housing for a competitive workforce and maintains the vibrancy and diversity of urban neighborhoods.

REGIONAL BUS STUDY UNDERWAY

Until recently, many observers viewed Metrobus service as a stepchild to WMATA's rail service. A

(Continued on page 2)

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WRN advocates transportation investments, land use policies, and community designs that enhance existing communities and the environment of the National Capital Region.

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Comments and articles welcome.
Views expressed are not necessarily those of WRN.

(Continued from page 1)

new effort to comprehensively review and improve Metrobus and local bus service may change that perception.

Improved bus service is important not only to make bus transportation more attractive in its own right but also to better connect neighborhoods to rail transit stations and activity centers. In September, 1997, a panel of business, labor, and citizen representatives convened by WMATA issued a report on regional mobility recommending a comprehensive review of all bus services. Picking up on this recommendation, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and the public bus operators in the region have embarked upon a major study of current and future bus service, hiring a team of consultants who specialize in assessing public transit bus services.

WMATA operates the regional bus system with a fleet of 1,400 vehicles. Four hundred vehicles operated by five local jurisdictions complement this system. Together these bus systems carry approximately 550,000 passengers per day. This represents the fifth highest ridership in the nation after New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and the San Francisco Bay area. Between 2000 and 2020, the region's population and employment growth is projected to increase 30 percent. The region's bus services intend to keep pace with this growth and be positioned to support increasingly complex travel patterns.

Besides recommending service enhancements in currently served areas, the study may recommend new markets for bus service as well as new types of bus service and physical or technological improvements that facilitate bus operation in congested environments. Types of bus service being reviewed are rail feeders, service to regional activity centers, bus circulators within these activity centers, service to residential areas, reverse commuting and access to jobs/services, and service to the growing elderly population. Quality of bus service is also being examined, with public comments being sought on reliability of schedules, frequency and routing of service, vehicle condition, drivers, facilities such as bus shelters, and connections to other transit services.

The study group has met with local officials and has conducted a series of meetings with interested members of the public. WRN has participated in these meetings. A second round of stakeholder discussions will take place this winter. For more information, to

request a comment form, or to be added to the email distribution list, contact WMATA via Joan Schindel of TransManagement at (202) 547-2717 or email jfschindel@yahoo.com.

GOOD AND BAD NEWS ON I-66 WIDENING

The good news is that the Transportation Planning Board (TPB, the Washington area's regional transportation planning body) did not include widening I-66 inside the beltway in its revised 25-year transportation plan issued September 20th. The TPB thus joins the Northern Virginia Transportation Coordinating Council, the body of elected officials that develops transportation priorities for northern Virginia, in passing on adopting it as a priority.

The bad news is that Governor Gilmore and the Virginia Department of Transportation are ignoring the TPB, the Coordinating Council, and the people and elected officials of Arlington. A group appointed by Governor Gilmore has revised Virginia's 6-year transportation plan to include \$5 million for initial engineering of widening I-66 inside the Beltway. The plan becomes final on October 18th.

The really bad news for the citizens of Arlington, the region, and the country is that, in order for Governor Gilmore to take this step, the U.S. Congress had to renege on its deal with the people of Arlington to restrict I-66 to four lanes inside the beltway. Moreover, widening I-66 might move more cars in absolute numbers, but there will still be gridlock (widening roads encourages more driving), and then we can add worse air and water pollution to our troubles.

A more promising alternative would be to spend the \$5 million studying how best to build rail to Tyson's or suburban Maryland. A citizens group called the Arlington Coalition for Sensible Transportation has been working to educate the citizens of Arlington about the proposed widening and its negative impacts. Contact: Adrienne Pilot, adrienne.pilot@bea.doc.gov. Or you can send comments directly to: The Honorable Shirley J. Ybarra, Secretary of Transportation Chair, Commonwealth Transportation Board, 1401 E. Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23219.

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND AND CITY OF COLLEGE PARK SUPPORT PURPLE LINE

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

After discussions spanning two months, the City of College Park unanimously endorsed a joint statement with the University of Maryland in support of the Purple Line at its meeting on September 12, 2000. The City and University recommend that the proposal move from the current Major Investment Study "quickly through the Environmental Impact Statement and into design and construction." The Purple Line is the name given to a proposed rail line that would essentially parallel the beltway and connect suburb to suburb.

The joint statement "strongly endorses" continued study of light rail transit options. The statement points to the potential value of the Purple Line in "promoting community revitalization" and the goals outlined recently in Prince George's Commission 2000 report on development in the County. It notes that "two light rail options being considered [in a study of beltway transportation options] would provide service to all four of the proposed "Metropolitan Centers" identified by Commission 2000.

While the statement is directed to the State of Maryland and focuses on the importance of providing a connection between Prince George's and Montgomery Counties, it also notes the importance of "a rail component at the Wilson Bridge crossing" to the east and a connection to Tyson's corner to the west."

The vote is consistent with a steady stream of endorsements for the Purple Line by civic and business groups based in inner suburban communities in both Montgomery and Prince George's Counties as well as environmental and land use planning organizations. Recent endorsers include the City of Takoma Park, CASA of Maryland, the Allied Civic Group, the International Corridor Revitalization Corporation, the Silver Spring Regional Advisory Board, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and the Environmental Defense Fund, as well as WRN.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON FEDERAL PARK AND OPEN SPACE PLAN FOR THE REGION ENDS OCT. 17TH

The National Capital Planning Commission's (NCP) parks and open space plan affects all federal lands in

the Washington area for the next 10-15 years so it is important to comment! The parks plan is part of an overall comprehensive plan for the National Capital that establishes goals and policies for future development and helps to coordinate planning between federal and local jurisdictions in the National Capital Region. The comprehensive plan is composed of two parts: the federal elements, which are formulated by NCP and guide development of the federal establishment in the District of Columbia and the region; and the District elements, which are prepared by the District of Columbia government and direct city planning.

The federal elements of the comprehensive plan aim to protect the aesthetic qualities of the Nation's Capital while ensuring its efficiency as the seat of government. NCP is currently revising the federal elements and circulating for public comment a draft of the section of the plan that affects planning for parks, open space, and natural features. The revisions to the plan incorporate several of the Commission's recent initiatives, such as its vision plan, "Extending the Legacy: Planning America's Capital for the 21st Century," and recommend policies affecting the placement of antennas and towers on federal property.

The plan is to be commended for incorporating some smarter growth ideas, such as strongly discouraging localities from widening roads next to federal parks and open space. Instead, the plan encourages local governments to preserve greenspaces around such areas as Manassas National Battlefield through transfer of development rights and scenic easements. The plan also urges that localities protect stream valleys from development. Some have criticized the plan for its emphasis on monumental gateways and scenic vistas rather than a more holistic approach of preserving ecosystems.

Copies of the draft parks and open space plan can be obtained from Bob Cosby, NCP, (202) 482-7200 or downloaded in a .pdf file from http://www.ncpc.gov/planning_init/comprehensive.html. Comments may be emailed to bobc@ncpc.gov.

NORTHERN VIRGINIA REGIONAL CONFERENCE RESCHEDULED

The 10/21 NVRC Financial Toolbox conference has been rescheduled for spring, 2001. Details to follow. For more info, email info@novaregion.org.

UPCOMING

Sat., Oct. 14, 10 - 2 pm - Metro Festival: Metro In Oxon Hill Now! The \$2.5 billion replacement of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge provides an excellent opportunity to bring Metro to Oxon Hill, an inner beltway community in southern Prince George's County, now, not 25 years from now. Activities include building a 40-foot model metro station, a parade, children's train ride, food and beverages, entertainment, poster contest, face painting. Location: The John Hanson School (next to the Oxon Hill Post Office on Oxon Hill Rd.) Sponsors: Friends Of Oxon Hill, Campaign to Re-Invest in the Heart of Oxon Hill. Contact: Bonnie Bick (301) 839-7403 or bonnie@radix.net.

Sat., Oct. 14, 9 am - Tivoli Partners will brief the community on their plans for RLA Parcel 29 (Tivoli Theater site) at Cardozo High School, 1300 Clifton Street, NW. The briefing will be a part of a day-long session of workshops on various issues of concern to the community. Event organized by the Development Corporation of Columbia Heights, (202) 483-4986.

Sat., Oct. 14, 10:45 am sharp - Bike Tour of Solar Homes. Open-house tour will showcase diverse Washington-area homes that apply various solar, geothermal, energy-efficiency, and material technologies to reduce resource consumption. Bike tours are expected to take 4 to 6 hours, but you may bike the route and inspect the homes at your own pace. Meet at Takoma Park Metrorail station. \$10/person, \$15/couple, \$5/student or senior, includes brochure that serves as an admission ticket to all homes and describes each home's features. For more info or to obtain cue sheets in advance, contact Allen Muchnick, (703) 237-8967 or e-mail muchnick@capaccess.org.

Sat., Oct. 14 - Kingman and Heritage Island Workshop. Help decide the future of these islands in the Anacostia River. Call the D.C. Office of Planning, (202) 442-7606.

Wed., Oct. 18, 6:15 Reception, 7 pm program - University of Maryland School of Architecture New Urbanism lecture series begins with John Torti, AIA, Torti Gallas/CHK. Torti Gallas/CHK is one of the leading architecture firms in the region for traditional-style development. Rm. 1213, School of Architecture (Building 145), College Park, MD. Call Anne Petrone, (301) 405-6283.

Sat., Oct. 21, 10 am - 3 pm - Chesapeake Bay Foundation Volunteer and Member Appreciation Day. Boating trips, tree plantings, guest speakers, and other activities. Mason Neck State Park, Fairfax, VA. To RSVP or for more info, contact: Alli Alligood, (703) 684-5923 or aalligood@savethebay.cbf.org.

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) Meetings, 777 N. Capitol St, NE (Union Station metro). For more info call (202) 962-3311 or visit <http://www.mwcog.org/trans/cmtes.html>.

- Wed., Oct. 18, 12 noon - TPB. Important opportunity to ask local elected officials for transit alternatives, dropping outer beltway proposals, and integrated land use and transportation planning in the region's long-range transportation plan.
- Fri., Nov. 3, 9 am - 12 noon - TPB Tech Committee

WRN Contribution Form

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- ___ Supporter \$80* (includes WRN mug, \$7 value)
- ___ Sustainer \$120 (includes WRN mug & a copy of WRN's vision *A New Approach*, \$12 value)

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- ___ Small \$60*
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 - Intersect sent to up to 15 individuals by email or local fax*
 - Recognition in Intersect 4x/year
 - Constant recognition on WRN's website with link (starting 2/99; email 200 word description & your web address to debkatz@megsnet.net)

Please attach separate sheet for additional persons:

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Please return this form with a check payable to WRN, 1777 Church St, NW, Washington DC, 20036. WRN is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Thank you!