



## Task Force on the Future for Growth and Development in Maryland

November 16, 2009

The Honorable Joan Carter Conway  
Chairperson  
Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee  
2 West, Miller Senate Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Maggie McIntosh  
Chairperson  
House Environmental Matters Committee  
Room 251, House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21041

Dear Chairpersons Conway and McIntosh:

As Chairman of the State's Task Force on the Future for Growth and Development, I am writing to you regarding Senate Bill 276 and House Bill 295 – Smart, Green, and Growing – Annual Report – Smart Growth Goals, Measures, and Indicators and Implementation of Planning Visions. As you may recall, the bill requires local planning commissions or boards to submit annual reports on a uniform set of smart growth measures and indicators. The law also establishes for the first time a statewide land use goal with the specific intention of increasing the current percentage of growth within the PFA and decreasing the percentage of growth outside of the PFA. An uncodified section of the bill required the Task Force to make further recommendations on additional measures and indicators that the State, the National Center for Smart Growth, or a local jurisdiction should be required to collect in seven issue areas such as the impact of growth on the environment and the fiscal cost of growth. This letter serves as the Task Force's report on recommendations for this section of the law.

The Indicators Workgroup of the Task Force has worked diligently since May to identify additional smart growth measures and indicators and reported to the full Task Force at its July and September meetings. The workgroup evaluated many indicators in terms of relevance to smart growth, availability of data, and the practical ability to collect information about the indicator on a regular basis.

After long deliberation, the Task Force strongly encourages a cautious approach to the adoption of additional mandatory indicators at this time. The fundamental finding of the Indicators Workgroup is that there are many potential indicators; each requiring data, which in some cases can be difficult or impossible to obtain. Further, many indicators provide very useful information about the subject they measures, but they may have only a tenuous relationship to assessing a jurisdiction's smart growth performance. Therefore, the Task Force's primary recommendation to the legislature is that potential indicators be fully studied and vetted before new indicators are legislatively imposed. Indicators should be a tool for community assessment and policy development, and generally rely



on readily available data. Indicator development will take time and probably several iterations of the initial list of indicators provided by the Workgroup.

Given this finding, the Task Force is pursuing a process to “test” the indicators presented on the Workgroup’s “List of Potential Smart Growth Indicators” (attachment). These indicators were approved by the Task Force as meeting the criteria described above. The Task Force will enlist the help of the Maryland Department of Planning, the National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education at the University of Maryland, and local government representatives involved in data collection to complete an assessment of the indicators on the “List of Potential Smart Growth Indicators”. This work will do several things including: collect and report information for each indicator, highlight any issues with data collection, presentation, and interpretation associated with each indicator, and relate each indicator smart growth progress. In short this technical review group will answer the question: do the proposed indicators answer whether Maryland is successfully achieving its smart growth objectives? If not, how can indicators be used to determine what is preventing the achievement of statewide visions and goals?

The technical review group will give a progress report to the Task Force in May, 2010. At a minimum, a status report listing progress to-date, including identification of major issues and hurdles encountered, will be presented. By September 30, 2010, the group will produce a final report to the Task Force, which will make any additional recommendations to the General Assembly at that time.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns about the smart growth indicator recommendations or the continued work of the Task Force.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon Laria". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "J" and "L".

Jon M. Laria, Chair  
Task Force on the Future for Growth & Development

cc: Richard E. Hall, Secretary