

Martin O'Malley
Governor



Maryland Department of Planning

Richard Eberhart Hall
Secretary

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Matthew J. Power
Deputy Secretary

June 25, 2008

Board of County Commissioner
Charles County Government
P.O. Box 2150
La Plata, MD 20646

Dear Commissioners,

The Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) has reviewed the proposed Chaney Zoning Request (ZMA 07-31) for a 149 ± acre parcel of land located just outside of the Hughesville Village Center. We have found the proposed zoning change to be inconsistent with the County's Comprehensive Plan and the State's Smart Growth principles.

The property is zoned Agricultural Conservation (AC) and Village Commercial (VC). The applicant is requesting that these zones be changed to Heavy Industrial Zone (IH). It is our understanding that the applicant is proposing to develop multiple industrial uses on site including a wash plant for the Chaney company's trucks.

As part of our evaluation, MDP reviewed the County's Comprehensive Plan, the Hughesville Village Revitalization Plan (HVRP) and the County's Comprehensive Water and Sewer Plan.

The rezoning request is for land that is not located within the sewer service areas for the County's Comprehensive Water and Sewer Plan nor is it located within a Priority Funding Area (PFA). This site does not fall within the Hughesville Village Center but is located at the gateway to the Village along MD Route 231. It is the location of this property, adjacent to the Village Center that makes any development on this parcel critical to the success of the Hughesville Revitalization efforts.

The completion of the Hughesville By-Pass in 2007 created an opportunity to redevelop Hughesville into a vibrant, pedestrian friendly Rural Village. The Hughesville Village Revitalization Plan, adopted in 2007, establishes policies and a vision to serve as a guide for creating such a place. The placement of Heavy Industrial Zoning District and subsequent developed uses would significantly hinder the County's ability to implement the vision of the Hughesville Village Revitalization Plan. In particular, the ability to create pedestrian friendly

crossings as well as the use of traffic calming devices would become very difficult due to the impact of truck and other traffic traveling through the core revitalization area. In addition, the placement of an industrial use such as those permitted under the proposed zoning district, may take away from the intent of the Village Center, which is to attract residential development that otherwise would occur in the County's rural areas.

The following are comments based on information provided within the Hughesville Village Revitalization Plan and the County's 2006 Comprehensive Plan:

Village Center Designation (Page 4, and page 5 Hughesville Village Revitalization Plan)

Characteristics common to most of the villages are post offices, country stores and, frequently, fire departments. The Plan's objectives for villages are to preserve and enhance their present character so that they may continue to act as rural service areas and to serve their traditional roles in county life. *The designation of Heavy Industrial Zoning and the subsequent development of this site will have a negative impact on the County's ability to preserve Hughesville as provided for in the Hughesville Village Revitalization Plan. The Plan states "in villages, consistency means that a project must serve to maintain the character of the community and not serve to increase the growth capacity of the area except for limited peripheral and in-fill development". The uses permitted under the Heavy Industrial Zoning district, such as a Truck Wash Plant, will not contribute to preserving the character of the Village Center.*

Importance of Village Designation (Page 5, Hughesville Village Revitalization Plan)

Village designation in the Comprehensive Plan is important in that designated villages are Priority Funding Areas (PFAs). PFAs are areas where the County and State encourage economic development and growth under the State's Smart Growth policies. *The location of this proposed zoning amendment does not fall within the County's Priority Funding Area and may not be eligible for growth related funding from the State.*

Plan Revitalization Recommendations (Table 24, Hughesville Village Revitalization Plan)

Develop a County/MSHA partnership to explore opportunities for improvements to MD 5 to reduce the number of travel lanes, widen and improve sidewalks, provide on-street parking at the appropriate locations, and make traffic calming and intersection improvements. *The increase in truck traffic that the development of this site will bring, will impact the ability of either the County or State Highway to accomplish this effort.*

Maintain a planned land use pattern of compatible utilization of land and water guiding future growth into efficient and serviceable form. (2006 Comprehensive Plan)

The proposed rezoning is not consistent the County's Comprehensive Plan in that the Comprehensive Plan designates the area outside of Hughesville, dominated by agricultural and forest cover, for rural development densities, agricultural use, and conservation. Heavy Industrial Zoning is not consistent with rural development, agricultural uses or land conservation. The Plan also states that the County provides services for surrounding rural and agriculture areas in

existing villages while protecting their unique character. The additional traffic and noise brought on by the truck washing facility will have a negative impact on the village character and the County's ability to make the community safe for pedestrian access that is vital to the success of Village Center.

Encourage future industrial and office uses to locate in and near existing office and industrial areas in Waldorf (including St. Charles), in White Plains, near the Pomonkey Airport, in the Towns, and adjacent to the Harry Nice Bridge. (Sect. 3.6, 2006 Comprehensive Plan)

The land proposed for Heavy Industrial Zoning is not located in or near any of the areas mentioned in the Comprehensive Plan where industrial uses are to be encouraged and is therefore not consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

The opening of the Hughesville By-Pass created a unique opportunity for the County to revitalize and in some cases redevelop the Hughesville Village Center. The issue was so important to the County that a committee was formed and subsequently created the Hughesville Village Revitalization Plan, adopted by the County Commissioners as an amendment to the 2006 Comprehensive Plan. Though the property under consideration for Heavy Industrial Zoning does not fall within the Hughesville Village Center, it is adjacent to it and is located at one of the gateways/entrances to the Village. It is clear that the truck traffic that will in many cases cut through the Village Center Core will inhibit the County from implementing many key aspects of the Village Revitalization Plan and make it more difficult to create a village center that is a destination place for those living in Southern Maryland. The proposed amendment to rezone the 149 ± acre property located adjacent to the Hughesville Village Center is not consistent with the County's Comprehensive Plan including the Hughesville Village Revitalization Plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and offer comments on the proposed rezoning for the property adjacent to the Hughesville Rural Village Center. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (410) 767-4500 or our Regional Planner Michael Paone, at (410) 767-4554.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Martins
Director, Land Use Planning and Analysis