



April 15, 2011

Honorable Jerry Walker
County Councilmember, District 7
P.O. Box 2700
Annapolis, MD 21404

Dear Mr. Walker,

As part of the comprehensive planning process, Mr. Joseph Bruce has requested that 104 acres in Friendship, Maryland, be rezoned from RA to R-1 (Case CZ09-1152). The Advocates for Herring Bay urge the county to deny this application because it would increase development rights within the Trotts Branch-Herring Bay Greenway and is inconsistent with the land use framework adopted in the General Development Plan (GDP). We encourage the county to work with Mr. Bruce on options like conservation easements, which would protect the county's greenway assets while compensating the owners for their contribution.

Application is Inconsistent with GDP Policies on Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Increasing development rights for the Bruce property would directly conflict with county and state policies that call for reducing development in greenways and other environmentally sensitive areas. As required by state law, the GDP includes a commitment to “preserve, protect, and enhance the designated Greenways network as well as forest cover countywide” because of the ecological and economic value of these habitats (GDP, page 75). In its planning guidance to localities, the Maryland Department of Planning noted that these networks “are critically important to preserve because many species and important ecosystems are dependent on large forested blocks. Forest fragmentation is one of the greatest conservation threats that Maryland faces and continued forest fragmentation reduces the amount of deep interior forest that certain species need for a portion or all of their lifecycles.”¹ The strategies for protecting greenways—such as promoting conservation easements or acquiring development rights through Open Space or other programs—are aimed at minimizing development in those areas, not increasing it as this re-zoning request would do.

As shown in Attachments 1-3, most of the Bruce property has been designated by the state as part of a green infrastructure “hub” and by the county as part of the Trotts Branch-Herring Bay Greenway network. The property also includes streams that feed important estuarine wetlands in

¹ Maryland Department of Planning, *Planning Guidance Bulletin, Sensitive Areas Element*, Volume 1, Number 1, November, 2007, page 3.

the Herring Bay watershed². The proposed up-zoning of this property clearly violates the GDP's promise to protect greenways and other sensitive areas.

Application is Inconsistent with the Land Use Framework of the GDP

The 2009 GDP established a three-tiered framework that provides policymakers “a mechanism for making cost-effective investments in public facilities and services” and reflects the county's natural assets, revitalization goals, and priority funding areas (GDP, page 123). Within that framework, areas were designated for targeted growth, managed growth, or rural land uses. The Bruce parcels are located in an area designated for rural land uses, which are “usually assigned to the Rural Agricultural (RA) zoning district” (GDP, page 139).

Up-zoning the Bruce parcels from RA to R-1 would be inconsistent with the land use framework of the GDP. Both policy and practice at the state and county levels have actively discouraged sprawl and growth in areas that lack infrastructure to support that development. The level of development allowed by the proposed zoning category would be costly for the county because resources well beyond those covered by impact fees would be required to address the infrastructure issues associated with development in a rural area. Adding households in rural areas served by septic systems also would conflict with the county's effort to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus levels in our waterways.

County Should Deny Up-zoning but Pursue Incentives to Preserve Greenway Parcels

Mr. Bruce's application to up-zone land currently designated for “rural land uses” should be rejected because it would undermine the county's efforts to achieve economically and environmentally sound growth. As an alternative, we urge the county to work with the Bruce family to pursue options like conservation easements, which would preserve the ecological health of this “hub” within the greenway and compensate the family for their contribution to Maryland's future.

Thank you for considering our views. If you have any questions about our comments, please feel free to contact us at herringbay@gmail.com or by mail at 404 Arundel Road, Tracys Landing, Maryland, 20779.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Gramp
President

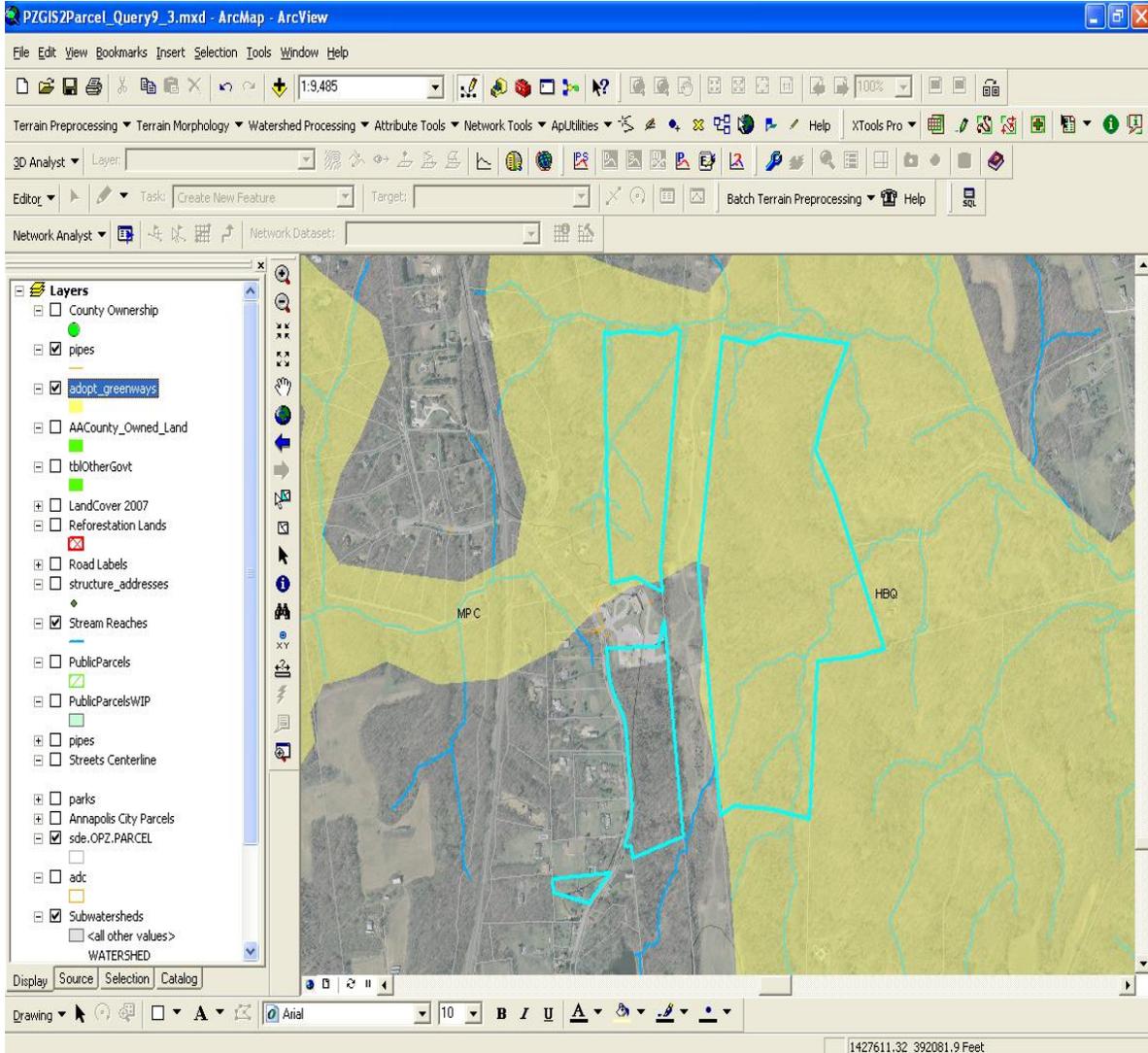
Cc:

Mr. Larry Tom, Director, Office of Planning and Zoning

Mr. Kevin Coyne, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Watershed Services

²W.S. Sipple Wetland and Environmental Consulting, *Field Assessment of Fairhaven Lake*, November 3, 2009, <http://home.comcast.net/~herringbay/pdfs/Sipple-Nov09-complete.pdf>.

Attachment 1
Map Showing Location of Bruce Parcels in Relation to Greenway
Source: Anne Arundel County GIS
Greenway Shown in Yellow



Attachment 2

Map Highlighting Trotts Branch-Herring Bay Greenway, which Includes Bruce Parcels



Source: Anne Arundel County General Development Plan 2008, *Background Report on Natural Resources*, page 29.

Attachment 3
Maps Showing Relationship of Bruce Parcels to
Streams and Wetlands in Herring Bay Watershed
Forested Areas in Green

