



May 26, 2023

Prince George's County Council
Wayne K. Curry Administration Building
1301 McCormick Drive, Largo, MD 20774

Dear Council President Dernoga and members of the Prince George's County Council:

My name is Dan Reed and I serve as the Regional Policy Director for [Greater Greater Washington](#), a nonprofit that works to advance racial, economic, and environmental justice in land use, transportation, and housing throughout Greater Washington. As an organization that works to both reduce suburban sprawl and make sure our region has an adequate supply of housing, we strongly oppose Bill CB-050-2023, which along with Bill CB-052-2023 are colloquially known as the "townhouse ban."

As written, these bills would ban permits for new townhouses in a vast swath of Prince George's County, with the exception of Local Centers, Corridors, and Regional Transit Districts. They have been described as tools for combating sprawl, which is a laudable goal. However, these bills would prevent townhomes from being built in most of the County's established neighborhoods, including inside-the-Beltway communities which are exactly where new investment should go. The lines drawn by this bill between areas where townhouses can or cannot be built are arbitrary. To give just one example, this bill would have prevented the approval of Capital Court,¹ a recently completed townhouse development less than a mile from the Downtown Largo Metro station, because it is across Central Avenue from the Largo Regional Transit District.² If passed, this bill risks exacerbating sprawl, not reducing it. It would likely push development further out into surrounding counties and place greater burdens on County infrastructure as people commute in from outlying areas.


We have a national, regional, and local housing shortage, and this bill will only make it worse. According to the Urban Institute, Prince George's County needs 35,000 new homes in the next 20

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https://www.washingtonpost.com/realestate/options-applauded-at-capital-court-in-largo-md/2020/06/29/ebfd84f8-acb9-11ea-a9d9-a81c1a491c52_story.html

² Maps provided by M-NCPPC staff of areas covered by this bill,

https://granicus_production_attachments.s3.amazonaws.com/pgplanning/931a3f19849d03b7330fc2adf42425340.pdf

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years to accommodate its share of the DC area's growing population.³ Home prices in the county have risen dramatically over the past four years, and some zip codes have seen double-digit increases.⁴ Not only are people at risk of being priced out of Prince George's County, but as the 2021 Comprehensive Housing Strategy notes, people are choosing not to stay or move here due to a lack of diverse housing options—including townhomes.⁵ It would be a missed opportunity for Prince George's County to push out working families who want to build lives and careers here by disallowing a specific type of home that is both affordable and in demand.

For these reasons and others, both the Planning Board and the County Executive oppose these bills. We urge the County Council to vote against Bill CB-50-2023 and Bill CB-52-2023, and hope to work with you to find real housing solutions that accommodate our region's growing, diverse population while protecting our environment and supporting the local economy. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Dan Reed
Regional Policy Director

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https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/100946/meeting_the_washington_regions_future_housing_needs.pdf#page=109

⁴ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/interactive/2023/housing-market-price-trends/>

⁵ <https://pgccouncil.us/627/Comprehensive-Housing-Strategy>