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**Subject:** Testimony for Council Bill \_\_-2020 – An Act Amending *PlanHoward 2030* to include the Ellicott City Watershed Master Plan

**To:** Lonnie R. Robbins  
Chief Administrative Officer

**From:** Amy Gowan, Director,   
Department of Planning and Zoning

**Date:** October 21, 2020

### General Plan Amendment

The Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) supports CB\_\_-2020, an act amending *PlanHoward 2030* to include the Ellicott City Watershed Master Plan. The proposed amendment to *PlanHoward 2030* includes new text to incorporate the Ellicott City Watershed Master Plan by reference. If the amendment is approved, *PlanHoward 2030* text will be amended in the first page of the Executive Summary.

### Ellicott City Watershed Master Plan Background

The Ellicott City Watershed Master Plan provides policies and implementing actions for protecting and enhancing flood-impacted Ellicott City and the surrounding Tiber-Hudson Watershed. To accomplish this, the plan integrates strategies for community character and placemaking, flood mitigation, environmental stewardship, economic development and transportation and parking frameworks. Strategies are then illustrated through options for specific geographic areas including streetscapes, riverfront, lower and upper main, Ellicott Mills gateway, the West End and the courthouse areas. The plan is guided by and builds upon the EC Safe and Sound plan currently underway.

While the EC Safe and Sound flood mitigation plan serves as the foundation for the master plan, it is on a separate, yet parallel track along with the Section 106 process. The master plan is likely to be adopted prior to the resolution of the Section 106 process and is distinct in the following ways:

- **Flexible Document:** The master plan is intended to be a fluid, flexible document containing a menu of options with policies and goals that are designed to be adaptable.
- **Early Guidance:** The master plan offers early guidance on design for projects such as the lower main channel, but the master plan is not meant to represent the final or only design option for the project. If some element of the flood mitigation plan does not come to fruition, the overall comprehensive nature of the master plan—its goals, desired outcomes and policies—should be looked upon for guidance.
- **Detailed Building Information:** The master plan is not intended to include detailed information on impacted buildings or other historic resources (history, mitigation options, etc.). This information will be included as part of the Section 106 process.

The Plan is the result of a multi-year outreach process. Since launching the plan in May of 2017, DPZ has hosted eight public workshops to shape the vision, gather input on emerging ideas, and review the draft plan. A Master Plan Advisory Team (MPAT) served as a sounding board and met eight times throughout the process.

In addition to meetings, the public was invited to provide input through online tools throughout the planning effort. The draft Ellicott City Watershed Master Plan was released in July 2020 and available for public comment for over 30 days (from July 21 to August 28).

On October 15, 2020, in a 5-0 vote, the Planning Board recommended that the Howard County Council approve the Ellicott City Watershed Master Plan as an amendment to *PlanHoward 2030*, the general plan for Howard County.

### **Fiscal Impact**

The Ellicott City Watershed Master Plan includes 75 policies, each of which contain a subset of implementing actions. Howard County government will serve as the entity in charge of implementing the master plan in partnership with other public and private entities and individuals. The plan's implementation matrix identifies the agencies and organizations responsible for implementation of each policy.

The master plan will be implemented over the next two decades and through many different capital budget cycles. While the priority in the current budget is to advance the flood mitigation proposed in the EC Safe and Sound plan (<https://www.ecsafeandsound.org/>), the master plan's implementation chapter prioritizes policies by short (completed in 5 years or less), medium (completed in 6-10 years) and long (completed in 11 or more years). Once the plan is adopted, selected projects will be immediately prioritized for future funding.

The adoption of the plan does not directly obligate the county to funding, or staffing, of particular projects.

cc: Sameer Sidh, Chief of Staff  
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