WENDT CONSULTING GROUP

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND URBAN DESIGN

912 W. LAKE STREET
CHICAGO, IL 60607

P: 312-813-1214
F: 312-563-1919

TERRY STEVEN WENDT, AICP, RA
PRINCIPAL
TSWENDT@ME.COM

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Delegate Marvin E. Holmes, Jr.
House Office Building, Room 207
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401
marvin.holmes@house.state.md.us

Re: proposed legislation — State Rail Station Overlay Districts

Dear Delegate Holmes:

I want to express my strong support for the State Rail Station Overlay Districts (SRSOD) legislation being considered by the Maryland State Legislature. I have spent my entire career as a development planner, focusing upon transit-oriented-development. In most places where I have worked, the opportunities brought about by national and regional investments in rail transit have been unrealized or underachieved as a result of local restrictions on development densities and heights surrounding rail transit stations.

From a public business perspective, underdevelopment around rail stations directly diminishes public tax revenues, contributing to local and state budget deficits.

In Massachusetts, a recent Northeastern University study concluded that the exceptionally high housing costs in the Boston area are not due to the costs of building materials, land, or labor but are the result of the zoning impediments that severely restrict the market from building enough housing within walking distance of transit stations to meet the market demand. Sufficient housing cannot be developed because density and height restrictions severely limit the development of multifamily housing that broad segments of buyers and renters want.

Density has been improperly associated with low quality and high congestion. In reality, due to high demand, prices of residences, offices, and retail space around transit stations tend to be among the highest per square foot in a region, and as a result, their quality is the highest, too. Also, congestion is not caused by density in the abstract but is a function of an automobile-dependent environment with roadways that congest due to the aggregation of excessive quantities of cars and lengthy distances of single-purpose trips.

The SRSOD will reduce congestion by reducing the numbers and lengths of automobile trips.

Current zoning restricts not only the supply of housing in transit-served centers, but office and retail space as well. As a result, the costs of doing business are increased by the increased distances between a company's offices and their vendors, suppliers, clients, and employees. On a local level, this makes a municipality less competitive with other municipalities in a region. On a national and international level, this makes a metro region less competitive with other metro regions in the US and the world – collectively reducing America's global competitiveness.

A significant innovation in the proposed SRSOD legislation empowers local governments to sell additional density to developers who meet design quality standards for 50% of what the additional density is actually worth to that specific project. Local governments, acting as Master Developers of the public realm, will cause public services and amenities, including creation and preservation of valuable open spaces, to be financed with private funds – costs that would otherwise have to be paid for with public funds – or foregone as a result of a lack of public funds. This key feature of the SRSOD provides valuable public benefits at substantial cost savings to the public.

The ultimate result will be the development of dynamic, attractive, mixed-use centers with the synergy to compete in a global economy with innovation and productivity efficiency. And the greater office and residential populations surrounding rail stations will result in increased and better distributed Metro ridership, yielding more fare revenues thereby reducing state operating subsidies.

I urge the Maryland Legislature to adopt the SRSOD legislation. It will enable Maryland's businesses, developers, elected officials, municipal staffs, and citizens to combine skills and resources into a new surge of concentrated, smart investment that will make Maryland's centers among the most competitive in the nation.

Sincerely,

Terry Steven Wendt, AICP, RA

Att: Transit-Oriented Development Experience

TERRY STEVEN WENDT, AICP, RA 312-813-1214 TSWENDT@ME.COM

TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Milwaukee Downtown Plan
Led Downtown Milwaukee Plan Update team. District plans emphasize "catalytic projects" linked by streetcar, connected to Intermodal Station being expanded for high-speed rail service to Chicago.

Chicago-O'Hare-Milwaukee High-Speed Rail
Initiating a feasibility study for a high-speed rail corridor incorporating real estate development TIF revenues surrounding station locations to help finance rail construction and operation.

Chicago Transit Authority Development Guidelines
Led team in market research, site capacity analyses, and design concepts for high-density synergistic residential, and commercial, and civic development adjacent to CTA rail stations.

Personal Rapid Transit System Plan, Rosemont/O'Hare Airport, Illinois
Managed the feasibility analysis, a guideway alignment route, and a development plan for a PRT system to be developed between Downtown Rosemont and O'Hare Airport.

Attleboro Station, Attleboro, Massachusetts
Managed planning for a multi-modal transportation center and mixed-use development at the Downtown commuter rail station in Attleboro.

Downtown Mixed-Use Project, Libertyville, Illinois
Preparing a village center plan in historic Downtown Libertyville including 200,000 sq ft of retail space, 120 residential units, and office space within walking distance of commuter rail.

Smart Growth Plan for Newton Centre MBTA Station Area, Massachusetts
Served as Chair of the Newton Centre Smart Growth Committee. Plan calls for overlay zoning district to allow for residential-over-retail development adjoining "T" station.

Power & Light District, Kansas City, Missouri
Prepared plan and obtained development rights for $650 million Downtown mixed-use project on 30 acres, consisting of a retail/entertainment center, 800 units of multifamily housing, an office tower, a hotel, a major civic plaza, and various cultural facilities.

The Community Builders, Boston, Massachusetts
Managed the planning and design processes for The Community Builders' major HOPE VI development projects, including Oakwood Shores, in Chicago, and Broad Creek, in Norfolk, Virginia.

Cochituate Terraces, Natick, Massachusetts
Led the programming, design, and entitlements process for a 50-unit residential condominium building in Downtown, Natick, Massachusetts, adjacent to the commuter rail station.

Pedestrian Zones in Europe
Conducted a University of Minnesota research project that analyzed the functioning of Downtown TOD districts closed to general traffic in two German and two Italian cities.

Education
Masters of City Planning and Architecture, **University of Pennsylvania**
Bachelor of Architecture, **University of Minnesota**

Professional Activities
First elected Chair of the **New Urbanism Division** of the **APA**
2007 **Congress for the New Urbanism** Design Award for Oakwood Shores
Member, **Lambda Alpha**, Land Economics Honorary Society