

September 5, 2023

Joseph Griffiths
Manager of Local Assistance and Training
Maryland Department of Planning
301 West Preston Street, 11th Floor
Baltimore, MD 21201

Dear Mr. Griffiths,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Town of Rock Hall's Comprehensive Plan: 2040 (the "Plan"). When reviewing plans, the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development ("DHCD") comments on items for which political subdivisions can strategically leverage DHCD's resources to accomplish their housing and community development goals. DHCD also reviews comprehensive plans for consistency with relevant statutes and, if appropriate, Sustainable Communities Action Plans.

Overall, DHCD staff were impressed with the quality of the Plan. Staff in the DHCD Division of Neighborhood Revitalization reviewed the plan and provided the following comments, which are meant to help realize the Plan's goals. We present the following in no particular order:

1. The housing and economic development components of the Plan are consistent with and build upon the Sustainable Communities Action Plan.
2. The Plan identifies a need to revitalize the community through adaptive reuse for which the DHCD's Community Legacy Program grants could assist. Planning staff can learn more about Community Legacy online at <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/Pages/programs/CL.aspx> or contact Bill Hersch at 410-209-5810 or william.hersch@maryland.gov.
3. DHCD can further assist with home repairs that improve comfort, livability, and accessibility for homeowners through its Special Loan Programs. Planning staff and residents can learn more about these programs at <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Residents/Pages/SpecialLoans.aspx> or contact the program directly at 301-429-7409 or DHCD.SpecialLoans@maryland.gov.
4. The Plan identifies a need for infill development for which DHCD's Strategic Demolition Fund (SDF) grants could assist. Planning staff can learn more about SDF online at

<https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/Pages/programs/SDF.aspx> or contact Bill Hersch at 410-209-5810 or william.hersch@maryland.gov.

5. The Plan does not show that Rock Hall has conducted a point-in-time count to identify the total number of people experiencing homelessness in Rock Hall, and the Plan does not identify goals or actions regarding services for people experiencing homelessness. For information on DHCD's programs addressing homelessness, please see more online at <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/HomelessServices/Pages/GrantFunding.aspx> or contact the Homelessness Solutions Program Manager, Suzanne Korff, at 410-209-5850 or Suzanne.Korff@maryland.gov. Persons experiencing homelessness who need assistance should call 1-888-407-8018.
6. The Plan identifies the community's needs with respect to income and poverty. Rock Hall or non-profits active in Rock Hall may be eligible to apply for discretionary Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds administered by DHCD in order to provide services for low-income individuals and families at or below 125% of poverty. Planning staff can learn more about CSBG programs online at <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/Pages/programs/CSBG.aspx> or contact the Poverty Solutions Team at 301-429-7525 or csbg.dhcd@maryland.gov.
7. The Plan identifies a need for affordable housing, including workforce and low-income housing. Rock Hall currently has one development supported through Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) with 104 units. If planning staff want to support further affordable housing development with LIHTC or other DHCD programs, information is available online at <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/HousingDevelopment/Pages/lihtc/default.aspx> or contact Edward Barnett, Director of Rental Lending, at 301-429-7740 or edward.barnett@maryland.gov.
8. All of Rock Hall is within a Maryland Mortgage Program ("MMP") target area and residents therefore have enhanced eligibility for the state's homeownership incentives. Planning staff and residents may learn more about Maryland's homeownership programs at <https://mmp.maryland.gov/pages/default.aspx>.
9. The Plan identifies a need to support businesses on Rock Hall's main street. Info on DHCD's support for businesses can be found online at <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Business/Pages/SmallBusinesses.aspx> or by contacting Mike Haloskey, Director of Business Lending Programs, at 301-429-7523 or Michael.Haloskey@maryland.gov.
10. The Plan identifies a need for infrastructure improvements that increase bike and pedestrian safety. DHCD's Community Safety Works program is a potential resource to support these projects. More information on the program can be found online at <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/Pages/csw/default.aspx> or by contacting Todd Scott, Program Director, at 410-209-5818 or todd.scott@maryland.gov.



11. The Plan identifies a need to support green infrastructure. DHCD has several programs that support energy efficiency for single-family and multifamily homes, and more information on those programs can be found online at <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Pages/EnergyEfficiency/default.aspx>.
12. The Plan addresses residential vacancy but does not address commercial vacancy. DHCD's Project Restore can be leveraged to attract and retain businesses that occupy vacant commercial properties. More information on the program can be found online at <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Pages/ProjectRestore/default.aspx> or by contacting Kristin Dawson at 410-209-5847 or kristin.dawson@maryland.gov.
13. The Plan's Housing Element includes an assessment of fair housing as required by the Maryland Annotated Code. For technical assistance in further development of the Plan's Housing Element with respect to fair housing, please contact staff at the Maryland Department of Planning.

We in the Division of Neighborhood Revitalization look forward to continuing our productive partnership with Rock Hall in its future initiatives. Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Plan. If you have any questions regarding the comments above, please contact me at carter.reitman@maryland.gov or 410-209-5849.

Sincerely,

Carter Reitman
Program Manager, State Revitalization Programs

Cc: David Dahlstrom, Maryland Department of Planning
Bill Hersch, DHCD Division of Neighborhood Revitalization
John Papagni, DHCD Division of Neighborhood Revitalization

