



Builders for the Bay

Press Release

Center for Watershed Protection
Ellicott City, Maryland

For Immediate Release

June 25, 2003

Contact: Anne Kitchell, (410) 461-8323

First “Builders for the Bay” Roundtable Completed in Harford County, MD

Community makes commitment to environmentally-friendly development

Ellicott City, MD - A diverse group of 32 Harford County planners, engineers, environmentalists, builders, developers, lawyers, and other stakeholders agreed on a set of recommended development principles and code changes to protect water resources in the area, as part of a local site planning roundtable conducted under the **Builders for the Bay** project. The roundtable members spent eight months assessing the area’s existing subdivision regulations and road codes to recommend changes that will help protect open space, reduce impervious cover, and minimize the negative impacts of stormwater runoff associated with new residential and commercial development in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

The Harford County roundtable is the first of 12 roundtables planned for the entire Chesapeake Bay Watershed under the Builders for the Bay partnership, which was established last year by the Center for Watershed Protection (CWP), the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay (ACB), and the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) to promote sound land use development throughout the Bay watershed. The Builders for the Bay organizations worked with the Harford County Department of Planning and Zoning and the Home Builders Association of Maryland to complete the Harford County project, which began in September 2002.

The code changes recommended by the roundtable members are intended to make it easier for developers to create more open space and include more flexible better site design features on residential and commercial development sites. Developments created using better site design principles feature less impervious cover, conserve more natural areas, and produce less stormwater runoff, ultimately helping to minimize the impact of development on the waters of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. In addition to being more environmentally-sensitive, residential communities constructed with better site design have the potential to be more attractive, more livable, and worth more as well.

Examples of the changes recommended by the roundtable include establishing locally appropriate minimum and maximum parking ratios, reducing home setback requirements, and removing Natural Resource District protection areas from private lots.

– more –

Environmentalists and developers alike are excited about the success of the Harford County roundtable project. “Many communities are struggling with issues of where development should occur, but how we design the sites designated for growth is also critical in protecting our water resources,” explained Anne Kitchell, a watershed planner with the Center for Watershed Protection. “If every community in the Chesapeake Bay region were to do what Harford County has done, it would be a big step in minimizing the impact of future growth on the Bay.”

Roundtable participant Susan Davies of the Home Builders Association of Maryland (HBAM) was impressed with both the process and the product of the Harford County roundtable. “How encouraging that all different interest groups were able to coordinate and work together on what ended up as a fairly comprehensive document,” she said. Enthusiastic about recommendations that she sees as readily achievable, she added that “there’s a potential for good changes in the not-too-distant future.”

HBAM President Don Sample echoed Davies’ optimism. “We’re very enthusiastic ... it’ll help property owners derive more value, and help the environment – what could be better? We were really pleased that CWP and the ACB were willing to not just talk about the problems, but really do something that makes a difference.”

Donald Bautz, Jr., from the City of Havre de Grace Department of Economic Development and Planning, was also excited to participate in the roundtable process. “I’m glad to know our hard work has yielded an improved resource by which the environment will be protected,” he said.

The Builders for the Bay project complements other ongoing state and local growth management efforts occurring throughout the Chesapeake Bay region. As the first local site planning roundtable completed under this project, the Harford County roundtable serves as an important successful model for other communities interested in fostering sustainable development.

The Harford County Builders for the Bay roundtable was made possible with support from the Abell Foundation, the Cafritz Foundation and the Chesapeake Bay Trust. For more information on Builders for the Bay or the Harford County Roundtable, or to learn how your community can participate in a Builders for the Bay roundtable, visit <http://www.buildersforthebay.net>, or contact the Center for Watershed Protection, 8391 Main Street, Ellicott City, Maryland 21043; phone (410)461-8323; fax(410)410-461-8324; email ack@cwpa.org. You can visit the Center online at <http://www.cwp.org>.

###