



Governor Extends Work of Development Capacity Task Force

Governor Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. has extended for four years the work of the state's Development Capacity Task Force, a group that has developed standard procedures for county and municipal governments to use in estimating future development capacity. Dr. Gerrit J. Knaap, Executive Director of the National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education, is one of the Task Force's nine members.

The Development Capacity Task Force, originally created by gubernatorial Executive Order in 2003, issued its final report in the summer of 2004. This report led to a Memorandum of Understanding between the Maryland Department of Planning and the Maryland Municipal League and Maryland Association of Counties that stipulates methods to be used in computing future development capacity. The Task Force concluded that encouraging counties and municipalities to estimate their future development capacity will lead to better long-range land use planning.

On August 19, 2004, Governor Ehrlich issued a new Executive Order that extends the life of the Task Force until August 2008 and directs the Department of Planning to provide local governments with technical assistance in estimating development capacity. It also directs MDP to consult with the Development Capacity Task Force to develop a schedule for local jurisdictions to conduct their capacity analyses and requires MDP to review local comprehensive plans to assure that development capacity analyses are included pursuant to the procedures outlined in the MOU.

"Development capacity analysis is a fundamental step in any sound land use planning process," said Dr. Knaap. "The recently signed MOU provides an assurance

that local governments will complete this critical task. MDP participation in the process will assure that capacity analysis serves both state and local land use objectives.”

Significantly, the executive order calls on local governments to generate annual development reports and submit them to MDP, including “information on zoning yields, rates of infill and redevelopment, environmental constraints, and development trends.”

The Executive Order also directs the Task Force to decide after two years whether local governments are conducting the capacity analyses agreed to in the MOU or if “legislative remedies” may be necessary to assure that these analyses are conducted.