

Howard County Housing Affordability Coalition

Howard County Council Public Hearing
July 8, 2019

Testimony: Council Resolution 97-2019

Council Chair Rigby and Council members, on behalf of the 50 members of the Housing Affordability Coalition, my testimony reiterates the Coalition's June 17 testimony in support of CR 97. Specifically, it is our position that the Robinson Overlook project meets the first four of the five Special Affordable Housing Opportunities criteria necessary to move an affordable housing development project forward even if one or more schools in the development to area is overcapacity.

Specific to the first three criteria, it seems reasonable that assigning to one or more of the three under-capacity elementary schools in adjacent school districts can readily accommodate the 25 or so students that are projected to be generated by the project. To the fourth Special Opportunities criterion, as we and others have consistently noted and data bear out, Robinson Overlook's 43 new affordable housing units will be a small, but important step in helping to meet the County's critical need for low income affordable, and accessible to persons with disabilities', housing. With our perspective that the first four Special Opportunities criteria are met, we therefore ask the Council to approve the PILOT proposed in CR 97 thereby meeting the fifth criterion and enabling the Robinson Overlook project to move forward.

Coalition members know that the Council is committed to ensuring that this first use of the APFO affordable housing exemption establishes a sound and defensible precedent. We also fully understand that the reason the exemption was named "Special...Opportunities" is because it is intended to be used only when an exceptional and unique project opportunity presents itself. We cannot state strongly enough our belief that the Robinson Overlook project could not better fit the "Special Opportunities" criteria established.

The project is *exceptional* in that it uses only a small number of market rate income units to offset the significantly higher costs of providing permanent and stable housing to low and moderate income households; it is also exceptional in that it would bring affordable housing to a new area of the County—a good step toward de-concentration.

The project is *unique* in that it will specifically include nine accessible housing units for persons with disabilities; and it is unique in that it is a small development that has the potential to introduce only 25 or so students into area schools. This project is also unique in that it is the only school waiver exemption request that is likely to come before the Council that was already well into the development pipeline before the school in the district was re-classified as being overcapacity.

The Robinson Overlook project affords you as Council members the opportunity to set a very high bar for any future APFO school waiver exception proposals. We urge your approval of CR 97 and thank you for this opportunity to offer these comments.

Respectfully,

Members, Howard County Housing Affordability Coalition