



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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Howard County Local Bills Hearing Testimony

Creation of a State Debt – Howard County – East Columbia 50+ Center (Ho.Co. 25-21)

To: Howard County Delegation

From: Mark Stromdahl, Chief, Bureau of Facilities

Date: November 17, 2020

The Howard County Department of Public Works **SUPPORTS** nomination of this project by the Howard County Delegation.

Demand for space has far exceeded the available 4,200 SF of the current East Columbia 50+ Center for years. This project will provide a new, two level building of about 30,000 SF to provide enhanced programming for our older adult population.

The building will accommodate fine arts, dance, exercise classes and other health promoting leisure activities. It will have a full commercial kitchen so that meals can be served in the large and flexible multi-purpose room. A special program called Kindred Spirits, intended for older adults in early stages of dementia will have its own space. The original 4, 200 SF center, which is attached to the East Columbia Library, will be renovated to work as a multi-service center offering a variety of aid to the 50+ community.

This highly efficient building is intended to achieve a LEED Gold rating. It is built into an existing slope and provides exterior access from both levels. It is landscaped with drought resistant native plants which will be attractive to birds and butterflies. Together with the library it will provide an attractive and functional community complex for residents of the County.

Delegation support for this project would be a collaborative effort alongside the administration's ongoing commitment to the *Age-Friendly Howard County Initiative*, a three- to five-year plan to join the AARP network of age-friendly states and communities. Roughly 21 percent of Howard County residents are over 60 years old. In 25 years, this number will increase to nearly 30 percent. County Executive Ball understands that long-term investments in our older adult population, such as the new East Columbia 50+ Center, will allow these individuals to educate themselves, socialize with their peers, and access quality and affordable resources that can enrich their lives. Our community is stronger when all individuals, regardless of age, can thrive in Howard County.

For these reasons, the Department of Public Works supports approval of this bond initiative.