

Planning Board Announces Start of "Green Tape" Approvals for Affordable Housing

The Chairman of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Derick P. Berlage, announced the initiation of an expedited development approval process for affordable housing projects in Montgomery County, to be called the "green tape process for affordable housing."

Berlage has frequently expressed the Montgomery County Planning Board's concerns about the critical need for more housing units that are affordable to citizens whose incomes prevent them from purchasing market rate housing. Eligible projects will include any application for residential or mixed-use development that designates at least 20 percent of the total number of housing units to persons or families with incomes at or below the income level for moderately priced dwelling units (MPDUs) as provided in the Montgomery County Code.

"Since production of new MPDU's has decreased in the past few years, the need for other types of affordable housing becomes even more important," said Berlage. "Finding creative ways to increase our supply of affordable housing is one of my highest priorities as Chairman. We want our teachers, police officers and restaurant workers to be able to live and work within the County. Housing most of our own workforce can help a great deal with our transportation challenges by reducing commuting distances and congestion on our roads."

Berlage is directing the staffs of M-NCPPC's Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning to coordinate and streamline their detailed plan review work to assure an expedited development approval process for affordable housing projects.

Among the expected changes to be included in the "Green Tape" process are:

- modified application forms for subdivisions, project plans and site plans to identify affordable housing projects;
- an expedited review process for applications;
- improved communications between the reviewing agencies;
- creation of a geographic information system map overlay of green tape applications for easy identification of these projects;
- expedited construction permits and utilities permits processing.