Accokeek Smart Growth Coalition
PO Box 501
Accokeek, MD 20607
August 10, 2009

The Honorable Martin O'Malley
Governor, State of Maryland
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401-1925

The Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller
President, Senate of Maryland
State House, H-107
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: Minority opposition letter dated July 27, 2009 against South County Land Rezoning Proposition

Dear Governor O'Malley and Senator Miller,

Hello, my name is Wes Courtney; I am the President of the Accokeek Smart Growth Coalition (ASGC), and a resident of Accokeek. I'd like to respond to the letter that you received from the small minority opposition in Accokeek, dated July 27, 2009, about the South County Land Rezoning Proposition.

ASGC is an all volunteer nonprofit organization, not funded by any other business or organization. Our goal is to help build a bridge between our community, businesses, and government to improve the quality of life for the citizens in the Accokeek region. This organization has been working with the local businesses and the citizens on their view of what's needed for the greater Accokeek community. The common theme from our discussions is that Accokeek lacks upscale retail stores, restaurants and jobs that will support the needs of the growing community and their children. Housing developments cannot sustain the area; it needs to be complemented and supplemented by good sustainable employment and business. The existing shopping areas in Accokeek are simply small convenience stores and fast food places and are not the upscale outlets needed and desired by the community. We can't purchase clothing, shoes, electronics, office, home supplies or enjoy a nice restaurant without driving miles away. Our children are required to drive many miles from home to work minimum wage jobs. This is a huge added burden in cost to our families, in wear and tear on our vehicles, gas, unnecessary pollution to the environment, and precious time lost from our families.

The majority of the residents in Accokeek, that the organization represents, are concerned that the very aggressive minority opposition has attempted to undermine the County process by asking the State to intervene on their behalf. The opposition is not willing to accept the fact that

the majority of Accokeek residents are in disagreement with their position on how to improve the Accokeek area in Prince George's County. This group is opposed to the Subregion 5 Master Plan that the County Council has tentatively approved and is now asking for a "do over approach" hoping for a different result. They had their opportunity to voice their opinion at the first hearing, like everyone else, and after a poor showing are now only trying to undermine the County process. Their rhetoric is hurtful to the Accokeek area and is specifically aimed at possibly ruining the political careers of decent hardworking politicians such as Councilwoman Bland. **Please don't let this happen and threaten the credibility of the County process with its constituents.**

Councilwoman Bland actually is restoring the original property zoning in the rural tier that Park and Planning attempted to change and take away from the County residents. I am appalled with the attitude of Park and Planning and their continuing lack of regard to the property rights of the residents. On issues such as the upscale shopping center, once again, Park and Planning chose to ignore the majority view from the community which was established by professionally done surveys and an 876 signature petition stating they wanted the upscale shopping area. We overwhelmingly proved this point to Park and Planning with our petition, letters and technical facts versus the opposition's, which only showed interest from 141 individual's and provided no real evidence, only conjecture, during the first hearing.

Our observation through this process is that Park and Planning fails to see the true consensus of the Accokeek community. Park and Planning has blatantly disregarded our petition on several occasions while defending their process as flawless. The opposition claims that the County Council is corrupt and has a secret agenda is ridiculous and slanderous, it is obvious from the surveys and evidence presented by ASGC that County Council is cleaning up the failures and arrogance of Park and Planning that was being levied on the Subregion 5 communities in Prince George's County. This is a testament that shows the County process is working as designed using checks and balances to uncover these issues. **The only thing the process can't fix is the attitude of a few individuals who don't like the end result.**

I'd like to address some further items presented in the opposition's letter. The letter claims that 200 acres will be rezoned commercial. We aren't sure how this number was derived because the proposed land for the shopping area to be rezoned is approximately 49 acres. In fact, this location is a heavily commercial area and isn't suitable for a school that the opposition has petitioned for in that location. This location doesn't meet the Prince George's School Board policy #7115 of not placing a new school next to existing commercial space. An exception to the school policy would be required to use that location. The school icon on the Subregion 5 Master Plan is a place holder (floating location) for another school some day in Accokeek area not necessarily that location.

In all cases, Councilwoman Bland has taken the time to fully understand the issues, carefully review all sides, and make an informed decision. She has balanced the needs of the County with all of the residents in mind. She should be commended for her fair and unbiased efforts.

Our experience over the years with these groups has been that when they can't force their short sited views on people, they begin a smear campaign of misinformation to the media, look to undermine the process and use general intimidation to bully everyone into submission. Their letter is a blatant disregard to the will of the people and is a retaliatory measure against the process. **Please refrain from getting into a local fight, have confidence that the County process is working as designed. Our hope is that everyone can graciously accept the will of the people in the community, no matter the outcome.**

Sincerely,

Wes Courtney
President
(c) 301-908-3683

Cc: James V. Proctor, Delegate
Joseph Vallario, Jr. Delegate
Thomas Dernoga, Councilman District 1
Will Campos, Councilman District 2
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Andrea Harrison, Councilwoman District 5
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Rev. Leo Harrington, The Barber's Chair
Tony Watkins, Accokeek Seafood Restaurant
Jermaine Taylor, Accokeek Community Activist
David Gregory, Accokeek Community Activist
Ovetta Wiggins, The Washington Post
Joshua Garner, The Gazette
Daniel Valentine, The Gazette
Nancy Bromley McConaty, Maryland Independent