

# Maryland Independent

## Letters to the editor

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### The HUB will help La Plata, Charles County grow sustainably, thoughtfully

I want to thank La Plata resident Michael Runfolo for his March 1 letter, "Residents Need A Voice In Development Decisions," and for this opportunity to provide some additional insight regarding The HUB at La Plata.

Currently, a team that I oversee is working on The HUB, an innovative and proposed mixed-use development that can help our region grow in a sustainable and thoughtful way. Our goal is to locate quality neighborhoods with residential housing and job sites in Charles County, something that is consistent with land-use goals for this part of La Plata near the College of Southern Maryland and also very much needed in this region.

Recently the Maryland Independent reported that, based on a 2019 Bloomberg analysis of U.S. Census Data, Charles County has the most expen-

sive commute in the nation of \$14,612, and individual workers from our county spent 388 hours commuting to and from work.

This news is startling, but The HUB team is aware of these trends, and it is a key reason we believe this area can benefit from our careful planning and vision. We see the importance of building an attractive community where people can live, work, relax and connect locally, but also one that can reduce hellish commutes. The HUB will provide a viable and vibrant place in Charles County to locate federal jobs, companies and shared office spaces.

I want to also note that there have been several iterations, plans and discussions regarding The HUB over the course of years. The latest ones — which will be under formal consideration by La Plata

officials, elected leaders and citizens as part of our request for annexation — represent our current vision and commitments.

The HUB is based on traditional planning principles and creating inter-generational, walkable and smart-growth neighborhoods using best practices and good quality-of-life indicators. We are working hard to gauge how The HUB project can meet the Town of La Plata's and citizens' needs as well as the demands for what successful communities will be like in the future and those that reflect environmental stewardship and maximize open space. Over 60 percent of the property will not be developed.

One of our first objectives is ensuring a thorough and transparent public-participatory process. Our lead planner Seth Harry and his firm, Seth

Harry & Associates Inc., have worked with municipal governments and regional planning agencies throughout the United States, including the Washington, D.C., metro area, on projects informed by public engagement and interactive processes.

For more than 30 years, Harry's firm has been designing projects based on the principles of traditional neighborhood planning, including over 120 using a variety of public outreach and community-engagement tools, to help facilitate community input.

These allow citizens to share their concerns and interests, and have them take shape and be addressed in ongoing designs, planning concepts and work products. The use of specific plans and illustrations help ensure that what the community sees, and is promised, is actually built to those

standards and principles.

The HUB, if approved, will: connect the town with the broader area where the College of Southern Maryland is located; provide varied housing choices and greener and healthier living; use architectural styles that reflect the charm and local building traditions of Southern Maryland; and employ compact and efficient land utilization, which minimizes site disturbance (reducing impacts on the site's natural systems, wildlife corridors and habitat), while reducing storm-water runoff and improving water quality and groundwater recharge.

You can visit our website, [thehubatlaplata.com](http://thehubatlaplata.com), to learn more. We look forward to a fruitful dialogue with La Plata and county residents as The HUB project progresses.

**Bill Murray, La Plata**