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Governor Ehrlich Establishes Priority Places Strategy Executive Order

Vision for smart growth includes redevelopment and revitalization

BALTIMORE –Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr. today signed the Priority Places Strategy Executive Order, following a walking tour of redevelopment projects in Baltimore’s Westside, including the Centerpoint development and the restoration of the Hippodrome Theater.

The Maryland Priority Places Strategy introduces a rejuvenated and refocused state policy for land use and smart growth, which has a strong emphasis on restoring and protecting quality of life in Maryland’s existing communities through the revitalization of established communities across the State.

“Responsible development is not a political issue. It affects everyone who cares about livable, attractive, vibrant communities,” said Governor Ehrlich. “My Administration intends to build upon smart growth by preserving its core mission – encouraging redevelopment in older communities and neighborhoods.”

The Priority Places Strategy seeks to develop long-term solutions to the complex and related issues of State investment, economic growth, community revitalization, and resource conservation. As part of his Priority Places, Governor Ehrlich has directed State agencies to maximize the effect of limited resources during the State’s fiscal crisis.

The Priority Places Strategy institutes goals for the State agencies that sit on the Smart Growth Sub-Cabinet. Governor Ehrlich has directed the Maryland Department of Planning, under the direction of Secretary Audrey E. Scott, to lead the Sub-cabinet in the development and execution of the strategy, while ensuring that the strategy reflects the perspectives of State and local stakeholders.

"Together, we will evaluate agency functions and make changes as necessary to ensure revitalization of our already established communities," said Secretary Scott.

Priority Places makes sense for the future of the State. It ensures that we maximize taxpayer monies spent on roads, schools, utilities, and other infrastructures."

Governor Ehrlich directed the Sub-cabinet to identify and concentrate their focus on the following areas of smart growth:

Community Revitalization – protect the investments made in older communities and direct new investment to these established areas.

Brownfields – increase efforts to cleanup, redevelop brownfields sites, and promote economic revitalization, while safeguarding the environment.

Transit-Oriented Development – build livable communities that provide people with a range of transportation options and reduce congestion, while maximizing the existing investments in transit.

Priority Funding Areas – streamline state regulations to make it easier to develop quality, well-planned growth inside established growth areas.

Involve Local Governments – respect the role of local jurisdictions in the planning process by tailoring assistance for community revitalization and resource protection to meet unique county and municipal circumstances.

In addition, the Executive Order directs the Department of Planning to complete a Development Capacity Pilot Study that monitors the availability and location of land that can accommodate new growth. The Maryland Department of Planning has already been working with local jurisdictions and other stakeholders to improve this analysis. Secretary Scott will appoint a Development Capacity Pilot Study Advisory Group to review the pilot project and comment on the methodology and findings.

