

Brinkley, Elliott oppose Carroll County rezoning plan

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Two lawmakers have weighed in on the controversy over rezoning more than 600 acres south of [Mount Airy](#) from conservation to industrial.

In a letter to David Brauning, chairman of the Carroll County Planning Commission, state Sen. David Brinkley and Delegate Donald Elliott said they oppose the rezoning. The two lawmakers also oppose the rezoning of an extensive tract in Taylorsville for industrial use.

The rezonings are part of a Pathways to Carroll's Future Landscape that Carroll County planners designed to protect agricultural land, while helping the county expand its economic base.

Today is the last day for comments on the proposal.

[Mount Airy](#) officials and many residents have voiced opposition to the proposal.

[Mount Airy](#) Mayor David Pyatt said the town has serious concerns about the Pathways plan, and he has discussed them with the town's planning commission.

Two websites have been set up opposing the plan. The [Mount Airy](#) site is the focus of www.carrollcountypathways.org. Another site in Taylorsville is opposed at www.no2rezone.com.

Kelly Double, who lives in Mount Airy, grew up on part of the 624-acre site, which was then his grandfather's farm.

"I know the topography, springs, all of that land," Double said. He said he has done extensive research on what he sees as the environmental impact on the land if it is developed.

"If it is rezoned industrial, there could be light industrial, almost anything there," Double said. "The only three things not allowed are gas stations, adult stores or mini-storage businesses."

Double said Carroll County noted about 200 homes are on the site, but 102 of those are in a 33-acre trailer park.

"The town would be forced to put water and sewer and other infrastructure service to any businesses there," Double said. "Development should be done wisely, not on top of an aquifer. Environmental laws are only as good as the paper they are written on if they are not enforced."

Sheila Colvin, who lives in the area proposed for rezoning south of Mount Airy, said she and her husband moved there 15 years ago to get away from the hustle and bustle of Montgomery County.

"Carroll County has 5,723 acres of land industrially zoned; however, most is unused because it is not near interstates and (is) not served by public water and sewer. That comes from the county's brochure on Pathways," Colvin said.

Colvin said the proposal would "destroy the headwaters of the Patapsco River" as well as being a site that lacks adequate roads, ties the hands of landowners with the new zoning and is not supported by the town.

"By proceeding with this plan you would be throwing [Mount Airy](#) under the bus," Colvin said.

Colvin also cited what she sees as a lack of political voice for [Mount Airy](#) residents in Carroll County government.

Carroll County Commissioner Michael Zimmer said Thursday he would not comment specifically on Pathways.

"We have a process," Zimmer said. "I did not create the process. It was created by the General Assembly. Out of respect for the process I will wait until the Planning and Zoning Commission completes its work to comment. I do not presume what that body will send to the commissioners."

Debra Wittle is a professional landscape architect and planner who lives in the site at Taylorsville designated for rezoning. Like many residents, she criticized Carroll County for what she sees is a lack of communication with residents.

"I found out about the rezoning from a flier in my door, not from the county. They (the county) said it was on their website, but many people here don't have the Internet."

Wittle said while she opposes the Pathways plan, she doesn't consider herself a NIMBY (not in my backyard).

"Economic development should occur where there is already a population area and where there is infrastructure," Wittle said.

One plan to upgrade part of Md. 26 to four lanes would cost an estimated \$117 million "and that would not even extend those widen roadways to the Taylorsville site. And what about Md. 27 from [Mount Airy](#) to Taylorsville?" she said.

Putting industrial land closer to populated areas that have infrastructure would cost much less, Wittle said. "The cost of putting in everything at a site like this in Taylorsville would probably override any financial gain they would make."

Since the proposed areas are not near populated areas, Wittle said the state would be unlikely to provide any funding. "The burden would fall on the taxpayers of Carroll County. If they (the county) thinks a developer is going to pay for all that infrastructure, I don't think that is going to happen."

Wittle said that if the land were rezoned, houses would be a nonconforming land use in the industrial zone. "It would impact residents if they wanted a loan on the house," Wittle said.

"Planning is good, but it is also powerful," Wittle said "You have to do it wisely."

Brinkley and Elliott serve both [Frederick](#) and Carroll counties. In their letter to Brauning, they said they oppose the Carroll County Planning Commission's choice to rezone the site because "It is in our view that changes in zoning would disadvantage property rights of people in that area."

They also said: "We feel as state representation in Annapolis that it is important for our voices to be heard in the passionate debate that has occurred this summer in the county."

The lawmakers also opposed the rezoning of a 1,728-acre tract in Taylorsville, citing lack of infrastructure.

The lawmakers said Carroll County should look at Taneytown as a viable growth area and "an example of a town in the county where growth is desired."

More than 60 residents attended Mount Airy's Town Council meeting on June 29 to oppose the rezoning.

At that time, Carroll County Planning Director Steve Horn said the draft plan was to allow the county to protect its agricultural character and the environment, while reining in residential development and

growing its commercial and industrial tax base.

"This is a balanced plan that was put forward with a series of recommendations to try to address a series of goals," Horn said at that meeting.