



## QA County target of lawsuit

### Developer says land-use rulings in Grasonville project were discriminatory

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Queen Anne's County has been targeted in a lawsuit claiming their land-use decisions are discriminatory.

In what has been described as a new use of federal housing rules, developer John Stamato filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court yesterday. The lawsuit alleges a vote by the county commissioners in May to indefinitely delay access to water and sewer service has prevented him from building affordable housing.

Mr. Stamato wants to put 218 homes on 144 acres in Grasonville. Some units would be priced under \$150,000 to meet county standards for moderately priced housing, with a total of 67 units set up for less-affluent populations.

By holding back water and sewer for projects that will have affordable units, the county commissioners are essentially denying housing to the people who can take advantage of the lower prices, said Midgett S. Parker, Jr., the lawyer representing Mr. Stamato and four other plaintiffs.

"That lack of affordable housing is a direct result of land use decisions," Mr. Parker said.

Under the Fair Housing Act, direct providers of homes — including municipalities — cannot engage in biased practices that deny housing based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin or familial status.

"The (commissioners') decisions have a disparate impact on African-Americans and other protected groups," Mr. Parker said.

Commissioners President Eric Wargotz declined to comment this morning and said he had neither seen the lawsuit nor received guidance from the county attorney, Patrick Thompson.

"We'll see what the attorney has to say," he said.

Mr. Thompson could not be reached for comment.

Pete Scanlon, executive director of the Queen Anne's County Housing Authority, was on vacation and unavailable for comment today.

Queen Anne's County has recently become a hotbed of contentious land deals and lawsuits.

In May, the state's Board of Public Works voted down wetland permits for the 1,350-home Four Seasons project, landing the state in court. Gov. Martin O'Malley's administration found itself mired in questions after paying a high price for the 271-acre Kudner property in Grasonville, a property connected to two members of the governor's transition team and the secretary of the Department of Natural Resources.

Last week, the board put off a proposal to pay \$7.2 million for more than 70 acres on the northeast tip of Kent Island after Comptroller Peter Franchot raised objections to spending more than \$97,000 per acre.

*The Associated Press contributed to this report.  
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