

TO: Gabe Albornoz, President, Montgomery County Council

CC: Council Members Evan Glass, Andrew Friedson, Tom Hucker, Will Jawando, Sidney Katz, Nancy Navarro, Craig Rice, Hans Riemer

Date: October 3, 2022

RE: 25-22, Forest Conservation – Trees

Please strengthen and pass the amendments to Bill 25-22, the Forest Conservation Law. If we don't preserve our forests, we cannot hope to protect the safety and well-being of Montgomery County residents.

It is well documented that temperatures are rising significantly. Forests are vital to cooling the heat island effect of large urban areas and providing refuge to people and animals from the scorching heat. Forests help to control flooding and prevent erosion of soils through root structure, retain water in soils that are drying out due to extreme heat, and filter pollutants that would otherwise runoff of drought stricken barren lands and impervious cover. Forests sequester carbon and play a role in the complex drive to reduce the County's greenhouse gas emissions.

It is your responsibility to do what needs to be done, and not conform to 'business as usual.' Please ENSURE that this bill will in fact result in no net loss, and even expand our forest cover. Despite the current policy of no net loss, between 2013 to 2018 the County has lost more than 650 acres of forest to newly constructed roads, rooftops, and lawns, while adding only 100 acres of forest in recent years. Another 1800 acres has been fragmented or otherwise impacted by development.

Doesn't it drive you crazy to see the massive migration to coastal areas that are being inundated by sea level rise, stronger hurricane, and higher storm surges? The parallel here is that we continue to allow widespread destruction of forests that are essential for sustainability of life and society. Let's not be hypocritical and bow to unnecessary pressure for uncontrolled growth. Montgomery County can grow sensibly while preserving our vital forests.

Please take this very seriously. It is not just an environmentalist's plea. It is a plea from people like me who have been trying to solve the climate change equation for decades. This is our last chance.

Respectfully, and with hope for our children's future,

Karen Metchis  
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