

Good morning,

Please find my testimony on ZTA 23-02 attached and copied below:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Jane Lyons-Raeder and I'm a renter in downtown Silver Spring. I am writing in support of ZTA 23-02, Regulatory Approvals - Mixed-Use Housing Community Subdivision Regulation Amendment. I strongly support this legislation which would provide an expedited approval process for Mixed-Use Housing Communities with a certain percentage of affordable housing.

We all know that Montgomery County needs more income-restricted affordable housing, so making it easier and faster to build income-restricted affordable housing is a no-brainer. Nearly 50% of renters are spending more than 30% of their income on housing, meaning that they are housing cost burdened. We know that we need to build more housing to help meet demand, but we can never fully meet the needs of the poorest with market-rate housing construction. This county has committed to 75% of all new housing being affordable to low- and middle-income households, and we are even further from meeting that goal than from meeting our housing production goals. The Planning, Housing, and Parks Committee heard back in January that there are 35,000 applicants on HOC's waitlists. The status quo needs to change.

The only change to this legislation that I would advocate for is the requirement for a Mixed-Use Housing Community to include at least two commercial uses. We've seen from experiences in urban centers across the county, region, and country that requiring ground floor commercial in every apartment building is not always successful. We have perhaps taken the smart growth tenant of mixed-use too literally. What is most important is flexibility in uses, and what is most important in relation to this ZTA is moving forward affordable housing, not requiring more commercial spaces. Commercial spaces might not always make financial sense and could negatively impact the feasibility of the project. I understand that the ZTA includes the option for the project to receive a waiver for this requirement, but the need to acquire a waiver is counter to the goal of this legislation to move things quickly.

Therefore, I hope you approve ZTA 23-02, with that suggested amendment. As such, I also strongly support the companion Subdivision Regulation Amendment SRA 23-01, Administrative Subdivision - Mixed-Use Housing Community. Please move forward both of these important pieces of legislation to get Montgomery County closer to being a place where all its communities are welcoming to people of different incomes.

Thank you,

Jane

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** Jane Lyons-Raeder**

