

27 February 2024

County Council Members:

Regarding ZTA 24-01

Which would allow religious and educational institutions to build affordable townhouses and apartments in residential detached zones.

My response is no----unless amended to protect the environment.

I live in an area which is heavily populated with PIFs (private institutional facilities which do not pay taxes). Within a 1.5 mile radius of Cloverly, there are at least 100 churches, many of which are on large lots. If these churches decided to build dense housing on their lots, the result would be massive deforestation----which is a major cause of global warming.

In fact, trees are essential to human existence. They are major carbon sinks. They protect streams. They filter pollution. They provide habitat for pollinators and other creatures.

Before you vote on ZTA 24-01, take a drive to 15730 New Hampshire Avenue, 20905 and look at what is happening right now. A large church purchased 15.5 acres of intact forest. And, they have already completely destroyed 10 acres. It's estimated that one acre of forest can sequester 2.5-3.5 tons of carbon per year. If that church decides to clear-cut the total 15.5 acres for housing, the carbon released into the atmosphere is expected to exceed 54 tons. In addition, this church is sited at the headwaters of the Northwest Branch. Since this portion of the stream no longer has forest protection, what will happen during the next violent rainstorm? This is a snapshot of the future of this county---if this ZTA passes with no amendments.

In conclusion, my recommendations are to permanently and decisively exempt all properties which are zoned RE-2, RE-2C, and RE-1. And, to unequivocally ensure that the townhouses and apartments, constructed on PIF properties, must be located within 1 mile of a Metro station. Otherwise, this ZTA must be tabled.

Ellen Mann