



OUR MISSION:

Working to enhance the economic prosperity of greater Silver Spring through robust promotion of our member businesses and unrelenting advocacy on their behalf.

March 10, 2025

The Honorable, Kate Stewart, Will Jawando
and Members of the Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue, Sixth Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Council President Stewart, Vice President Jawando, and Members of the Council:

On behalf of the Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce, representing more than 300 employers, mostly small and minority owned businesses, in greater Silver Spring and surrounding areas in Montgomery County, the Chamber would like to ask for approval of the zoning text amendment ZTA 25-10, Self-Storage – Civic and Institutional Activation and Vacancy Elimination (SAVE). The Chamber has always been about making greater Silver Spring a thriving business community, a place where people want to live, work, and come to enjoy what so many of us love about Silver Spring – our wonderful arts and entertainment venues, our breweries, and what I like to call our “United Nations” of restaurants. Activating spaces that have been long dormant would contribute positively to this goal.

The Chamber understands the concern raised about storage facilities in general, however, there is always a need for storage in the area, and this proposal puts this use on upper floors, not on street (eye) level, making it more palatable for all involved. Allowing this, redevelopment, particularly when space has been vacant for decades in some cases, and not able to be converted, is an opportunity to address this vacancy and put that building and the public space around it back into use. This change in the County, and the subsequent street level activation made possible by it, will add to the overall look and feel of an area, increase public safety, add activity and foot traffic which helps businesses located next to these spaces, as well as the ability to support and house a valuable non-profit organization. This is a benefit to all businesses in urban areas of the county.

This is also good for local economic development because tax revenue on commercial properties is based on rent or use, and this would mean an empty building with no economic activity would be brought back online to have economic activity vs being empty. A win-win for the County, the building owner, the non-profit that has a new home, and the surrounding businesses that will benefit from this activation. For buildings where conversion is extremely expensive or more likely impossible, this would give the owner of the property another option for filling a ghost building. From the building owner’s perspective, they would rather convert to have public storage vs be empty and have no revenue.

With the above-mentioned points taken into consideration, the Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce believes that the zoning text amendment ZTA 25-10, Self-Storage – Civic and Institutional Activation and Vacancy Elimination (SAVE) is a step in the right direction for communities where these long dormant buildings exist. Therefore, we ask that the County Council support this amendment!

Should you have questions, do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie M. Helsing". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Stephanie Helsing
President & CEO