

ZTA 25-02 Workforce Housing - Development Standards

Written Testimony

Amy Waychoff

Unfavorable

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My name is Amy Waychoff, a long-time resident of this county. I appreciate the opportunity to testify.

I am impressed with the sincerity of members of the County Council who want to find a way to provide more affordable housing for county residents struggling to make ends meet. However, I see some faults with specific details of the proposal and the way in which it has been presented to the community,

**Too Fast, Too Soon.** This new ZTA has only been under discussion for about a month. Unlike with the Master Plan process, the land parcels potentially under development are scattered throughout the county, so the engagement of many different civic groups is necessary. But such groups do not meet often enough to be able to gauge the opinion of the affected residents, let alone explain it to them. The speed of this proposal raises concerns about whether the focus is on long-term solutions or short-term political gains.

A more reasonable, slower method of addressing our housing issues is through the Master Plan process. Every parcel should go through a site plan review. This tried and true method is the only way to ensure buy-in from the surrounding community. And that community, by the way, is your voter base.

**Is it Fair?** While ZTA 25-02 may only affect about 2,500 lots in the county, that is still a lot of real estate. There are people living in those houses who worked hard to achieve the American dream. Given the nature of the lots chosen — along major corridors — many of these houses are considered naturally occurring affordable housing. If some of

these houses get torn down, gentrification will inevitably ensue, displacing the very lower-middle class people you were trying to help.

**Putting the Cart Before the Horse.** Opponents of this proposal have repeatedly raised the issue of whether more housing is actually needed. County Executive Marc Elrich stated last fall that “our master plans have enough zoned capacity to house more people than are projected to come here through 2050.”\* I welcome the Planning Department’s decision to do a thorough analysis of why so many projects remain in the development pipeline. Shouldn’t we wait until that analysis is complete before we try to add to our housing stock? Finally, there is the issue of insufficient infrastructure to support the new housing. Even the Planning Department acknowledged in its discussion of the development pipeline that new housing should only be built in “the places that have the infrastructure to support it.”\*\*

I understand the pressure to act quickly, given rising housing costs, but a rushed solution risks doing more harm than good. I urge the council to slow down this process, conduct the necessary studies, and ensure that community voices are heard before making significant zoning changes.

Thank you.

\*Weekly Update Message, 4 October 2024.

\*\*Lisa Govoni, “Montgomery County’s Development Pipeline,” *The Third Place*, 27 February 2025.