

March 24, 2025


Bethesda, Maryland 20816

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing to express my significant concerns regarding bill ZTA 25-02.

My wife and I have been residents of Westmoreland Hills for close to 25 years. It's a close knit community and a wonderful place to raise a family.

By way of background, I am an attorney with a specialty in municipal finance and many of my clients are counties and cities. As such, I am familiar with many of the workforce housing initiatives taking place nationwide and the financing tools that political subdivisions may utilize for such purposes.

No doubt that many counties, including Montgomery County (the "County"), have a need for workforce housing. The question at hand, however, is to make sure that the County pursues this policy in a wise and thoughtful manner.

In my opinion, ZTA 25-02 will not help to solve the work force housing problem in the County. By way of comparison with similar initiatives undertaken in other jurisdictions, the bill is inadequate in terms of achieving its stated goals, lacks community support and is poorly drafted.

In similar workforce housing initiatives that I have been involved with, the following building blocks were deemed essential for successful policy implementation – 1. input and support from the local community; 2. studies and analysis showing the impact of the development on roads, parking, schools, and similar infrastructure; 3. complete process transparency regarding advocacy for the initiative and identification of the drafters of the legislation. The above building blocks are essential to earn trust and support within the impacted communities and for the implementation of a successful long-term policy result.

In advancing ZTA 25-02, the County has failed to properly address the above components and, as such, the legislation should be promptly withdrawn at the present time.

Regarding the text of the bill (which is unclear in many respects), various basic questions arise such as, what income and rent guidelines will apply regarding affordability? What policy rational supports a work force set-aside of only 15% of the units in an eligible facility? What time period will any income or rent restrictions apply? Do such rental and income restrictions apply to the building owner or are they a recorded as a deed restriction?

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With respect to the Westmoreland Hills and Westbook area, the County Council has also failed to consider the impact of any new development and certain permitted business (such as day care) on the high level of traffic and congestion on Massachusetts Avenue near Westmoreland Circle, a major commuting corridor.


In addressing local housing needs, the Council must also consider the impact of recent federal actions and ongoing uncertainty such as the downsizing of federal agencies, cuts in federal funding, and the loss of many federal jobs in the area. At a minimum, the Council should pause the legislation to study and understand the fiscal and demographic effects of these changes before passing such a significant change in property zoning.

In closing, many residents of the County are fatigued by certain actions of the Council which appear to be short-sited, have the veneer of virtue signaling and waste taxpayer funds, such as building bike lanes which are both underutilized nor wanted by the local community and creating linear parks which are barren.

Finally, I will not vote for anyone who supports this bill, and I know that many residents in my immediate neighborhood feel the same.

With all due respect, I strongly encourage the Council to listen to the comments and input of the citizens that elected you.

Very truly yours,



Edwin G. Oswald