

March 11, 2025

Hon. Kate Stewart
President, Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Ave., 6th Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: ZTA 25-03, SRA 25-01 - Streamlining Adaptive Reuse- Expedited Approvals

Dear President Stewart,

The Maryland Building Industry Association (MBIA) representing over 1,100 member companies across Maryland, with a significant portion located in Montgomery County is submitting testimony in support of both ZTA 25-03 and SRA 25-01.

ZTA 25-03, introduces the new Commercial to Residential Reconstruction use. This measure paves the way for converting vacant or underutilized commercial buildings—specifically, office or retail properties with at least 50% vacancy—into residential use, while SRA 25-01 establishes a subdivision process to ensure any necessary lot splits are handled correctly and in a timely manner.

These two initiatives work in tandem to provide an expedited approval process that allows for the reallocation of floor area ratios (FAR) in designated Employment and Commercial/Residential zones. By easing regulatory constraints, ZTA 25-03 accelerates the transformation of nonperforming commercial properties into residential use, depending on the context.

Any initiative to increase review times is welcomed by the industry, especially as it relates to office conversions. The process for converting commercial to residential, whether it be a retrofit or a complete demolition, is a lengthy and relatively novel process. Together, these paired actions underscore the County's commitment to converting surplus commercial space into productive residential use while streamlining the approval process to avoid delays.

The housing crisis was decades in the making, and it will take many strategies for us to ensure that young adults, seniors, and working families can all afford to live here.

The industry appreciates the opportunity to submit comments and would ask the council for a favorable report.

Thank you,

Griffin Benton
Vice President