

Dear Council President Stewart, Vice President Jawando, and Councilmembers Albornoz, Balcombe, Fani-González, Friedson, Glass, Katz, Luedtke, Mink, and Sayles:

I'm writing about the More Housing N.O.W. proposal and ask that this letter be included in the record.

When More Housing N.O.W. was first proposed, it seemed to be a promising compromise to find a way to increase housing at the lower end of the market - one tool that might, with clarifications and some amendments, provide some lower cost housing (although not affordable housing) with far fewer undesirable effects than the Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative.

However, the Planning Board hearing and discussion on March 6 made it clear that there are some serious deficiencies in this ZTA.

Parking

My community, Chevy Chase West, dates from the 1920s. All properties are zoned R-60. We have only one access point, Wisconsin Avenue. All of our internal streets are dead ends, and most are about 20' wide, with one travel lane and one parking lane. We regularly see contractor vehicles, moving vans, lawn service vehicles and others parking in the travel lanes.

For the proposed housing to rely on off-site parking is a non-starter for us. The Planning Board meeting made it clear that *requiring on-site parking*, however limited, would present environmental problems - notably more impervious surface and as a result stormwater management issues - as well as feasibility concerns given lot size and site coverage realities. Planning Board member Hedrick stated at the hearing that "the parking thing will kill it." These two issues, parking and the environment, are not reconcilable.

Allowing ancillary uses will increase parking pressure on side streets, as many of the roads involved, like Wisconsin Avenue, do not allow parking. Ancillary uses will increase parking pressures within the neighborhood and should not be allowed.

If you cannot find a solution to these issues, I and many other residents will be unable to support ZTA 25-02.

OTHER ISSUES IF ZTA 25-02 MOVES FORWARD

Lot Assemblage

The Planning Board approved a recommendation regarding the language, "the frontage must abut" the corridor. It said this means that a property owner cannot consolidate a lot on a corner with frontage on a back street (presumably this includes a side street) at the time of application. Nothing was said about how the official street address plays into this.

It is possible for property owners to officially change their street addresses if they are on a corner; at least two in our community have done that.

Chaining has been a concern of multiple communities and we've gotten many conflicting interpretations. The Planning Board's interpretation would allow owners/developers to change an official address, consolidate with an adjacent lot with frontage, and ultimately add to the parking burden. This needs further refinement and clarification.

Master Planning

Planning has already embarked on corridor planning with the University Boulevard plan. Planning staff noted at the hearing that they will be introducing a new type of boulevard in support of corridor planning.

Although ZTA 25-02 applies to the whole county, it's effectively a patchwork effort that could diminish the effectiveness of local area master planning.

Related to this, just a month ago Bethesda Magazine reported that the County was looking at revising the MPDU program (<https://bethesdamagazine.com/2025/02/07/moco-officials-planners-look-to-revise-moderately-priced-dwelling-unit-program/>). Why not put ZTA 25-02 (and perhaps other parts of the proposal) on hold and develop - with citizen input - a comprehensive plan to improve and broaden these programs?

OLO RESJ REPORT

The bulk of eligible properties for redevelopment under ZTA 25-02 appear to be in East County, where properties are generally less expensive than elsewhere, and house more low-income people and people of color. Because of their lower cost, these properties are immediately more attractive to investors. Please guarantee that anyone who is displaced is ensured replacement housing in redeveloped properties.

OLO ON TAX ABATEMENT

In regard to Bill 2-25, please address the concerns about the disproportionate effects of the tax abatement as well as its effect on the County's ability to provide infrastructure and services for the projected population in the future.

I appreciate the difficulties you face in addressing competing needs and requirements. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,
Naomi Spinrad
Chevy Chase MD