

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

I was unable to testify on March 11 regarding the More Housing N.O.W. package introduced by Councilmembers Friedson and Fani-González and supported by Council President Stewart and Councilmembers Balcombe, Sayles, and Leudtke, but I would like my comments included for the record.

1. **While the goal of developing workforce housing is a good one**, the reality, which I'm sure all of you know, is that **it leaves out a whole sector of housing where our county's need is even greater – that for low-income families.**

As Jason Sartori, the planning director, noted in an early introduction of AHSI, nearly 75% of the county's housing needs in the next 25 years will be for low-income families whose income is under \$50,000 per year.

One has to wonder why this package excludes those who need housing the most – unless the Council plans to introduce another housing package that will support the significant development of low-income housing in the county.

2. **The development of More Housing N.O.W.**, much like the development of AHSI, **excluded one important group of people – current residents and taxpayers.** This was a major disappointment. So many people had commented, at open forums on AHSI held by Councilmember Friedson, that residents were excluded from the development of that policy, and yet, we were once again excluded from the development of More Housing N.O.W. I know that since the hearing on March 11 a list of properties with addresses has been developed. Have property owners who could be affected by N.O.W. been mailed a postcard or other notification? Will they have the opportunity to testify before the Council to let you know their feelings about this proposal?

And what was even more insulting to those of us who are property owners was to see the photograph of Councilmembers Friedson and Fani-González when they introduced More Housing N.O.W., because the photo included paid lobbyists from Greater Greater Washington and the Coalition for Smart Growth. Where were the representatives from the Montgomery County Civic Federation, the Greater Olney Civic Federation or the Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights? Representatives of these umbrella civic organizations weren't there because they weren't asked to participate in the development of this package either.

3. The implementation of this package raises many questions and concerns.
 - a. **There is the issue of whether the infrastructure to upzone many of the current single-family home properties along transportation corridors can handle the increased development.** Does the county, especially the older parts of our county developed between the early and mid-twentieth century actually have the water, sewage, and electric capacity for the infill proposed? How will larger units on these property affect our green environment and stormwater management? **Where are the studies on the effect greater density will have on this infrastructure?**

Then **there is the questionable definition of “major transit corridors” that this infill will be allowed on.** Many of these transit corridors are primarily used by individuals driving in cars, not people using mass transit because the public transit that runs on these roads

every 40 minutes (the Massachusetts Avenue Ride-On) or every 30 minutes (the River Road WMATA bus) may not be very helpful to workforce employees e.g., firefighters and police officers. Their commute to and from work may not fit conveniently into a mass transit timetable. So then, what happens to their cars? **There is no parking allowed on many of these transit corridors and our neighborhood streets are already clogged with parked cars.**

- b. **Converting unused office buildings to residential units also sounds like a good idea. But offering developers a 100% tax abatement for 25 years sounds fiscally irresponsible.** The County Office of Management and Budget recently indicated that the county would lose \$200 million per year resulting in a total loss of revenue of \$2.6 billion. In addition, if the developer gets all the fiscal tax advantage, how does this encourage home ownership (or condo ownership) for workforce employees?

A more equitable fiscal package – where both developers reap some tax benefit while paving the way for workforce employees to own their residential unit would make much more sense than a tax giveaway to developers.

Finally, as you well know, we live in uncertain times. It is unclear how many federal government workers in our county will lose their jobs and decide to move from this area as a result of Trump's and Musk's slash and burn policy towards the federal workforce. Given the unpredictability of how this will affect our county's housing and economic future, from my perspective as a homeowner and taxpayer the best course of action for the County Council is to move forward with the studies that will show how this package will affect our infrastructure, contact the affected property owners and listen to their concerns, and modify this proposal to make it more practical and realistic financially for the health of our county. In other words, **SLOW DOWN the process of approval.**

I understand the Council's desire to "do something" to fix our housing crisis, but whatever is done should be "smart" not "fast."

Sincerely,

Phyllis Edelman

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