

# ASPEN HILL CIVIC ASSOCIATION

ESTABLISHED IN 1985

## AHCA's Written Testimony on "More Housing N.O.W." Initiative (ZTA 25-02, ZTA 25-03, PILOT Bill 2-25)

Aspen Hill Civic Association (AHCA) represents families and individuals living within the bounds of Norbeck Road, Bel Pre Road, Georgia Ave, The Matthew Henson Trail, Viers Mill Road, Rock Creek Trail to Baltimore Road, back to Norbeck Road. We offer the following concerns with regards to the More Housing N.O.W. Initiative that is under consideration by the County Council. In its current form, we do NOT support this initiative.

1. **We believe construction of affordable housing is sorely needed in Montgomery County, but the "More Housing N.O.W." initiative will not provide any.**  
According to the More Housing N.O.W. initiative, fifteen percent of the units must qualify as "workforce housing." Under their definition, a family making \$148,000 a year would qualify for this "workforce housing." As County Executive Elrich has said, "We have over 50,000 households with incomes around \$50,000 or less." According to Montgomery Planning data, the county lost more than 26,000 middle-income residents from 2005 to 2022, while gaining nearly 88,000 low-income residents and 67,000 high-income residents in the same timeframe. More Housing N.O.W. does nothing to help families who need affordable housing. Montgomery County needs affordable housing.
2. There are many units already approved for housing, so the More Housing N.O.W. initiative is not needed to approve more housing. Again, what is needed is *affordable* housing.
3. If the More Housing N.O.W. initiative does go forward, its **developers would be given a 25-year tax abatement bonanza by being freed from necessary infrastructure requirements (e.g. wastewater mitigation, roads, etc.), a cost that would have to be borne by existing homeowners.** That is wrong. It is more than a little ironic that the Council members who want to give this tax bonanza to developers are at the same time objecting to the County Executive's proposal for a small property tax increase that would be used exclusively for schools. So they

don't want homeowners to help with school improvements but they are perfectly fine with requiring homeowners to cover the cost of 25 years of tax abatement for developers.

4. We believe **affordable homes should not be torn down to make room for non-affordable housing** such as all of the housing that would be built under the More Housing N.O.W. initiative. Working class homes have been targeted, while upscale areas, such as those in Friedson's area along River Road, have been arbitrarily excluded, even though River Road is as much a "corridor" as the roads (e.g, Georgia Ave., Viers Mill, etc.) in working-class areas that have been targeted.
5. Conversion of office space to residential housing should be pursued, with the goal of offering affordable housing without excessively large tax abatements.
6. **A creative solution to housing: find vacant land.** The Chimes at North Bethesda will transform a vacant and environmentally constrained parcel of land into critically needed affordable housing. It will be a multifamily housing development, developed by Montgomery Housing Partnership (MHP), and will include 163 rental units, with truly affordable options.
7. The only winners from the More Housing N.O.W. initiative will be high-dollar developers and the County Council members whose campaigns they finance. The losers will be County taxpayers and people who work here but cannot afford to live here.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Board of Directors of the AHCA

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