

**March 11, 2025 Testimony Regarding More Housing Now
Before the Montgomery County Council**

Dear Council Members,

I am strongly opposed to the More Housing Now initiative.

The sponsors of this initiative have been misleading the public. The press release makes no mention of the upzoning that the ZTAs permit, nor does it address the intent to upend single-family housing. Even Council Member Fani-Gonzalez admitted in her recent video that upzoning is allowed under the new plan.

To address this problem, there needs to be direct notification of affected residents on and nearby the affected corridors. Additionally, the Council needs to perform a thorough study of alternatives to upzoning single-family neighborhoods.

I have reviewed more than 1,000 emails from October 2024 through February 2025 and have reached the following conclusions:

1. There were hundreds of emails from individual residents of the County and numerous civic associations.
2. Unlike the Council staff's erroneous counts from last fall, I count approximately a ratio of about 5 to 1 in opposition to the previous AHSI. No civic associations supported AHSI.
3. Of those emails in opposition, there were dozens detailing specific and well-supported objections to the AHSI plan. They often reflected deep analyses from professionals with expertise in economics and other relevant backgrounds.
4. In contrast, the minority of individuals supporting AHSI appeared to be using form letters with identical language generated by organized lobbying groups financed by developers. For the most part, these letters showed no evidence that the authors had even read the plan.

The current ZTA was apparently created without input from citizen groups that uniformly opposed the proposed invasion of single-family zoned areas of the County. In contrast, I was told by a Council staff member that specific lobbying groups and housing activists were briefed on the contents of the ZTAs days before the January 28th press conference. **So, was this really the product of a consensus of the community?**

I also note that of the four Council Members (including Councilman Friedson) with the highest contributions from realtors, three support the current ZTAs. The fourth, Sidney Katz, is not running for re-election and was free to vote his conscience. He declined to support the ZTAs to date. **Is More Housing Now good for the county or good for realtors and builders?**

There are many elements that are common to both the ZTA and the forerunning AHSI plan. These common elements point to the same conclusion we drew regarding AHSI: **More Housing Now needs to be withdrawn, and the County should return to the Master Plan process.**

1. There is no analysis of the true need for additional housing in the County, relying instead on outdated and inappropriate predictions of future job growth and housing availability.
2. There is no analysis of alternative approaches to produce affordable housing at less cost.
3. There is no analysis of the housing units in the pipeline.
4. There is no analysis of whether the existing Master Plan would accommodate future housing needs.
5. Research by Michael Storper (UCLA) showed that there is no relationship between upzoning and housing costs – they do not go down. Rising housing costs are the result of other trends, not low density housing. Upzoning principally benefits high earning households, contributing to increasing income inequality.
6. There is no restriction on the price of these new units, and therefore no real attempt to create affordable or workforce housing, despite the rhetoric behind the new ZTAs.
7. Both plans would contribute to gentrification, rather than promoting affordable housing.
8. There is no analysis of the various adverse impacts: traffic, tree canopy, stormwater, schools, fiscal, public safety, and other factors.

Regarding the new PILOT legislation, this bill is unaffordable. It provides an unnecessary incentive for developers who do not need subsidies for housing that is not dedicated entirely or mostly to affordable housing. The shortfall will be paid for by the remaining property owners. Market price housing is happening today without subsidy.

“Right-Sizing” Property Tax Incentives to Increase Housing Affordability

<https://drexel.edu/~media/Files/nowak-lab/State%20and%20Local%20Housing%20Action%20Plan%20Tools/Tax-Incentives-for-Affordability.ashx?la=en>

The Drexel University Metro Financing Website describes a method for analyzing PILOT programs to determine whether the public investment is justified, and whether the developer incentive is properly sized.¹ The County needs to complete this analysis, rather than using numbers with little foundation.

¹ “Right-Sizing” Property Tax Incentives to Increase Housing Affordability, March 2025

We will remember in November those who stood with the residents and those who stood with developers.

Thank you for your time,

Kevin Bromberg

Chevy Chase, MD

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