



AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

May 21, 2025

Planning, Housing & Parks (PHP) Committee
Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue,
Rockville, MD 20850

Subject: Support for ZTA 25-05, Development Standards – Optional Method Public Benefits

Dear Councilmember Friedson:

The Montgomery County Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) supports ZTA 25-05 and its efforts to strengthen incentives for the County's Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and Building Lot Termination (BLT) programs and to help fulfill the promise made to farmers and landowners when the Ag Reserve was created.

Revitalizing the marketplace for TDRs is a complex undertaking; no single action will solve the downturn in the TDR market. The AAC recognizes that updating the public benefits point system for Incentive Zoning is a meaningful first step, but we also understand that this effort alone will not be enough. We are committed to working with the County Council and County Executive to develop additional strategies to increase the demand for TDRs and BLT programs, ensuring farmland preservation remains a top priority.

Additionally, the AAC shares the Ag Preservation Advisory Board's concern about the Maryland legislature cutting \$100 million from land preservation programs over the next four years. These cuts severely impact the State's Agricultural Land Preservation Programs, which are vital to protecting Montgomery County farmland. Given these financial constraints, establishing greater incentives to support farmland preservation efforts in Montgomery County is more important than ever.

We urge the PHP Committee to prioritize policies that enhance funding mechanisms, tax incentives, and grant opportunities to ensure the continued success of TDR and BLT programs. Investing in farmland preservation is not just about protecting open space—it is about sustaining local food production, preserving natural resources, and maintaining a viable agricultural economy.

Thank you for considering these important points as you address this matter.

Sincerely,

Lori Larson, Chair

