

Public Hearing on the
Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 25-12, University Boulevard (UB) Overlay Zone

before

The Honorable Kate Stewart
Council President
Montgomery County Council

October 28, 2025
Testimony of Aaron Droller
Silver Spring, Maryland

Good afternoon members of the Montgomery County Council. I am Aaron Droller, and I am a resident of Silver Spring in the South Four Corners neighborhood. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on the Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 25-12, University Boulevard (UB) Overlay Zone. I testify in opposition to the ZTA and the University Boulevard Corridor Plan (UBCP).

The UBCP and this ZTA are premised on the idea that our community can and should be made into a “15-minute” community. The ZTA specifically says its purpose “is to increase the diversity and supply of housing in a compact, transit-oriented form of growth that supports Bus Rapid Transit on University Boulevard and Colesville Road, creates complete communities, and improves safety for all travelers.” This idea is a fundamental misunderstanding of how most people in our community live and work every day. People need their cars to live in our neighborhoods, and the Planning Board’s attempts to shoehorn multimodal transit in this fashion will fail, while significantly reducing the quality of life along the Corridor.

To that end, I am asking that you reject the proposed dedicated bus lanes and the removal of existing traffic lanes under any proposed street grid option in the Plan. Whatever minimal benefit a bus lane may have for buses moving down the corridor is completely outweighed by the damage to vehicular traffic flow the closer one gets to the Beltway and Montgomery Blair High School. The bus lane wouldn’t even accommodate the very popular Metrobus routes, so we would still have to deal with buses in vehicular lanes under this plan, further showing how little benefit the bus lane provides to the community.

I recognize that the Council has recently passed ZTA 25-02 and that is now the framework we are working under. Neighborhoods along the University Boulevard Corridor (Corridor) are among the most impacted by that ZTA 25-02. The Corridor Plan permits redevelopment twice as deep into our neighborhoods as the ZTA. As an example, houses all along along Gilmore Drive and Edgewood Avenue are directly impacted by the Plan, but not under the ZTA. At the very least, the Council should conform all rezoning and parking requirements under the Corridor Plan to ZTA 25-02 so it permits no further intrusion into our neighborhoods than anywhere else in the county. If the Council chooses to zone this area CRN, please add to the list of prohibited uses any sort of manufacturing and any live music venues, which are not compatible with the quiet, surrounding residential neighborhoods.

If safety is truly a cornerstone of the Plan, it makes no sense to implement any sort of street grid option that connects University to quiet neighborhood streets where children play. This should be completely off the table, and any attempts to reconfigure streets like Gilmore or Tenbrook Drive should be eliminated from the Plan. The Planning Board cannot be given leeway to even consider or study these options, as it has become clear over the last few years that the Board does not take community input seriously when considering its larger plans.

This Council made it clear that eminent domain was not required under the ZTA. Under the UBCP, however, eminent domain will apparently be necessary for installation of a bike lane. Removing portions of front yards and driveways for a bike lane that will likely be little used is unacceptable.

We already see every day how underutilized the bike lane is on Old Georgetown Road. The Planning Board cannot show how we should expect any different result here. Please remove it from the Plan.

Finally, should the Council choose to move forward with the UBCP and this ZTA, I respectfully request that you approve all of Councilmember Mink's proposed amendments as described in her memorandum to the Council dated September 26, 2025. I believe Councilmember Mink's better incorporates resident concerns than the plan produced by the Planning Board. Thank you for your time and for your service to Montgomery County.