



COMMISSION ON AGING

March 1, 2019

Jeff Zyontz, Senior Legislative Analyst
Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue, 4th Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Re: ZTA 19-01 – Accessory Residential Uses – Accessory Apartments

Dear Mr. Zyontz:

I am writing on behalf of the Montgomery County Commission on Aging in reference to ZTA 19-10, which would amend the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 59 of the Montgomery County Code, to facilitate the use of accessory dwelling units.

Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 19-01 would allow accessory apartments and detached dwellings, provided that specified standards are met. It would remove the current one-acre lot minimum requirement and allow detached accessory buildings in six of the seven areas of the county that are zoned as “residential detached.” The amendment would mandate that owners of ADUs live on the premises and that they provide two off-street parking spaces. It would also limit to two, the number of adult residents of the ADU. ZTA 19-01 would also enact several technical changes, including set-back rules for accessory apartments.

The Commission on Aging supports the spirit of ZTA 19-01 without taking a position on all of the technical changes. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) can help to address one of our areas of great concern, namely, the affordable senior housing crisis. The County will not be able to build enough housing to meet the demand. It is therefore essential that alternative solutions to this problem be explored.

Older adults are the fastest growing age group in the County. Between 2015 and 2040, the Montgomery County older adult population (age 60+) is projected to increase by 53%, from 205,841 to 315,666. Life expectancy is also increasing, with the population of older adults age 85+ expected to increase by approximately 39% between 2015 and 2030. The County’s older adult population is also growing more diverse. Approximately 14% of residents age 60 and older are Asian; 13% are Black or African American; and 8% identify as Hispanic or Latino. Approximately 38% of County residents age 60+, the majority of whom are women, live alone.

The County is also home to significant numbers of elders with low or moderate incomes: 18% of households headed by an individual age 65+ have income less than \$20,000 per year. For 25% of senior homeowners, housing costs exceed 30% of their income; 51% of senior renters spend more than 30% of their income on rent.

Department of Health and Human Services

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Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) can provide older adults with viable options to downsize, control costs or generate income (i.e., by either moving into or renting out the ADU), and remain in a familiar neighborhood. In so doing, ADUs can also help seniors who would otherwise be living alone, avoid social isolation. And, they can provide a unique configuration for multigenerational households, which can be of particular value to members of our diverse communities.

The Commission on Aging was established in 1974 to advise County government on the needs, interests, and issues of older adult residents, and to advocate on their behalf. We continue to prioritize the need for more affordable housing options for older adults. We therefore offer our support for ZTA 19-01 as one avenue for meeting this need.

Thank you for considering the position of the Commission on Aging.

Sincerely
Jean M. Dinwiddie, Chair

cc: County Executive Marc Elrich
County Council members