

Economic Impact Statement

Montgomery County, Maryland

Bill 18-23 Structure of County Government – Community Zoning and Land Use Resource Office

SUMMARY

The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) anticipates enacting Bill 18-23 would have an insignificant, direct impact on economic conditions in the County in terms of the Council's priority indicators.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF BILL 18-23

The purpose of Bill 18-23 is to replace the Office of the People's Counsel with a Community Zoning and Land Use Resource Office. The County Council created the Office of the People's Counsel in 1990 but it was not funded until 1999. The Office of the People's Counsel was last funded in Fiscal Year 2010 and thus has been inactive for the past 12 years.¹

Under current law, the People's Counsel is empowered to:

- Participate in administrative proceedings and court appeals;
- Obtain experts to provide technical assistance and testimony;
- Represent residents in administrative proceedings as an advocate and as an expert witness;
- File complaints alleging failure to comply with a special exception grant; and
- Seek modification or revocation of special exceptions when such actions are necessary.

Generally, the People's Counsel is designed to act as an independent lawyer that advocates for the collective interest of County residents in local zoning matters, such as map amendments, conditional uses, site plans, and preliminary plans.²

Bill 18-23 would replace the Office of the People's Counsel with a Community Zoning and Land Use Office to serve as a community resource and to facilitate community participation in the land use process without directly participating as an advocate for the public's interest in that process. The Bill would remove the requirement that an attorney staff the Office and prohibit the Office from participating in administrative proceedings with the County Council, Board of Appeals, Planning Board, Hearing Examiner, and Court of Appeals.³

Bill 18-23 was introduced on March 28, 2023.

¹ [Introduction Staff Report for Bill 18-23](#).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

INFORMATION SOURCES, METHODOLOGIES, AND ASSUMPTIONS

Per Section 2-81B of the Montgomery County Code, the purpose of this Economic Impact Statement is to assess the impacts of Bill 18-23 on County-based private organizations and residents in terms of the Council's priority economic indicators and whether the Bill would likely result in a net positive or negative impact on overall economic conditions in the County.⁴ The Bill could affect the influence residents would have over the County's land use process. While greater or less resident influence in this area could have indirect economic impacts, OLO is unable to anticipate these potential impacts. Therefore, OLO concludes the Bill would have an insignificant, direct impact on private organizations, residents, and overall economic conditions in the County in terms of the indicators prioritized by the Council.

VARIABLES

Not applicable

IMPACTS

WORKFORCE ▪ TAXATION POLICY ▪ PROPERTY VALUES ▪ INCOMES ▪ OPERATING COSTS ▪ PRIVATE SECTOR CAPITAL INVESTMENT ▪ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ▪ COMPETITIVENESS

Not applicable

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Not applicable

WORKS CITED

Montgomery County Code. [Sec. 2-81B, Economic Impact Statements](#).

Montgomery County Council. [Introduction Staff Report for Bill 18-23, Structure of County Government – Community Zoning and Land Use Resource Office](#). Introduced on March 28, 2023.

CAVEATS

Two caveats to the economic analysis performed here should be noted. First, predicting the economic impacts of legislation is a challenging analytical endeavor due to data limitations, the multitude of causes of economic outcomes, economic shocks, uncertainty, and other factors. Second, the analysis performed here is intended to *inform* the legislative process, not determine whether the Council should enact legislation. Thus, any conclusion made in this statement does not represent OLO's endorsement of, or objection to, the Bill under consideration.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Stephen Roblin (OLO) prepared this report.

⁴ Montgomery County Code, [Sec. 2-81B](#).