

ZTA 24-01
FAITH (Facilitating Affordable Inclusive Transformational Housing) ZTA
Co-Leads: Councilmember Kate Stewart and Councilmember Andrew Friedson

Fact Sheet - January 16, 2024

Why do we need ZTA 24-01 and what does it do?

Across our country and here in Montgomery County, we have an ever-increasing affordable housing crisis. At the same time, countless houses of worship¹ find themselves with an oversupply of land and a lack of ability to best utilize it to support their mission and our broader community. These mission-driven institutions are often at the forefront of supporting our County's affordable housing challenges, and yet, are currently limited in their ability to put their land to best use to support those shared values.

ZTA 24-01 provides opportunities for the creation of affordable housing by removing obstacles to such development in certain areas of the County and assisting faith-based and private educational institutions to continue their work in serving and supporting the community. By removing the current map amendment requirement and replacing it with a less cumbersome conditional use process,² we can reduce the burdens and increase the opportunities for new renters and even first-time home buyers to live in an area that would be unaffordable otherwise. ZTA 24-01 will contribute to Montgomery County's equity goals, benefitting residents with increased affordable housing and housing stability. The overall goal is to help facilitate a quicker, less cumbersome process to increase affordable housing throughout our community.³

How does ZTA 24-01 add to affordable housing in the County?

ZTA 24-01 lays out specific affordability requirements similar to other recent housing initiatives, including our [Mixed-Income Community ZTA-23-02](#), [Nonprofit PILOT Bill 26-21](#), and the [\\$100 Million Housing Production Fund](#). Projects must meet one of the four affordability thresholds listed in the ZTA text.

How would this change housing in neighborhoods around houses of worship?

ZTA 24-01 would remove barriers to the creation of affordable housing in single-family zones by providing reasonable flexibility in the development standards, such as in height and setback requirements. For example, the maximum height in an R-60 zone for a structure applied for under the optional method of development would be permitted to be up to 60 feet. A common height for building stories is 14 feet, so these low-rise apartments would be no more than 4-5 stories. However, all these decisions would be required to go before the hearing examiner which offers significant opportunities for stakeholder input and would follow the Planning Department's development review process, which you can find out more about [here](#).

How is ZTA 24-01 good for the environment?

As stated by the Brookings Institution in 2021, "We must prioritize development in the kinds of neighborhoods that permanently reduce total driving and consume less energy [to reach our

¹ For reference, here is a map of places of worship in the County:

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/439e2549d72f4a08bbc29d5147d76969/?draft=true>

² A conditional use means a pre-identified use, in this case affordable housing on property used by a religious assembly or private educational institution, that is permitted upon satisfaction of specified conditions set forth in the Zoning Ordinance.

³ This article provides some background on the work being done in our region and across the country:

<https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Society/2023/0512/New-ground-Churches-transform-land-into-affordable-housing>

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GHG reduction targets],” (Tomer, Kane, Schuetz, George, 2021). Heating and cooling indoor spaces is widely acknowledged as one of the least energy efficient daily energy uses, and the economies of scale associated with multi-unit dwellings translates to lower energy costs for residents of each individual unit.

How is ZTA 24-01 good for the workforce?

Many houses of worship are located on key transit corridors and/or state highways – [see map](#). Adding housing near transit means residents will have shorter commutes, which reduces congestion, and are able to spend more time with their families, friends, and neighbors. Living in proximity to child care programs often found at houses of worship can enable more members of a household to earn income.

What type of review would these projects go through, and what opportunities would there be for public input under ZTA 24-01?

Since ZTA 24-01 would establish multifamily housing as a “conditional use” of spaces adjacent to houses of worship, every application for a project under this ZTA would come before the Office of Zoning and Administrative Hearings (OZAH).

OZAH is an office in the legislative branch of county government whose mission is to “conduct quasi-judicial trial-type hearings that are fair, understandable, and accessible to all participants regardless of race, ethnicity, disability, and financial income.” Members of the public would have input throughout the planning process, including at OZAH hearings.

After paying a filing fee, an entity applying for conditional use pays to post signage at the site of the proposed project and notification of nearby residents of OZAH’s public hearing on the proposal is required.

How does ZTA 24-01 help increase access to affordable housing and help address past housing policies and practices?

Historically, across the country, and here in Montgomery County, our government had a role in creating and maintaining inequality in housing through formal policies such as segregation, redlining, and lack of investment in communities of color. This ZTA creates housing opportunities and allows for affordable housing options and expanded housing in general across neighborhoods, including those that specifically implemented formal exclusionary policies of discrimination. To understand the data and background, the [OLO report](#) on Mixed-Income Community ZTA-23-02 describes the role of housing segregation in fostering housing inequities in the County and local data on housing security by race and ethnicity.