

Sierra Club testimony to Montgomery County Council Re: SSP

Sept 15, 2020

Council members:

I'm Dave Sears, Land Use Chair of the Montgomery County group of Sierra Club.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed Subdivision Staging Policy (SSP).

As you may know, Sierra Club's number one priority is to address climate change. We are also interested in addressing the inequities faced by minorities and lower income persons. Good policy on housing quantity, pricing, and location can be a key part of the county's actions on both climate change and inequities.

The SSP gives the county some good opportunities to help address climate change and inequities.

I want to highlight three of these opportunities.

1. Because of the clear undersupply of housing, which forces many to endure long commutes in order to live in affordable housing, Sierra Club wants more housing built in Montgomery County; thus we favor an end to automatic housing moratoriums;
2. To reduce per capita Vehicle Miles Traveled in automobiles, Sierra Club wants most new housing to be located within walking distance of transit stations; thus we favor a lower impact tax rate in those locations than elsewhere in the county;
3. To enable more folks to live closer to their work, Sierra Club wants more affordable housing; thus we favor a progressive increase in the recordation tax, with part of the proceeds earmarked for rental assistance for low and moderate income folks. (And we're fine with part of the proceeds going to school construction.) (And we of course suggest that most of the rental assistance be provided to enable low and moderate income residents to live near transit stations.)

Thank you for giving careful consideration to these opportunities.

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