

Thank you to Council President Hucker and councilmembers for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important issue. My name is Rebecca Mann and I live in east Silver Spring. I grew up in Gaithersburg, about a mile from the Kentlands, and lived there until going to college at UMD. After college I returned to Montgomery County to buy half of a duplex in New Hampshire Estates. I'm writing to you in strong support of building more "missing middle" housing, such as duplexes, townhomes, and small apartment buildings, in Montgomery County.

When I began to look for houses in 2019, I was looking for a location that was somewhat cycling accessible, was less than 3 miles from a metro stop, and would someday be conveniently located near a Purple Line stop. My goal was a property that would be an investment while also meeting my immediate needs, all while being within my extremely limited budget. I assumed the property would end up being in PG County but got lucky and found a smaller duplex right on the border between the two counties – having grown up in Montgomery County I jumped on it. That duplex was on the market for less than a week; from when I and another party viewed it and negotiated for it, to when I made an offer that was accepted.

This is important to me for a whole host of reasons. But primarily because if people want to live in smaller houses, in denser areas, near transit, the very last thing the county should be doing is enforcing regulation that prevents them from doing so. Discouraging further sprawl while creating a vibrant accessible urban community is good for everyone, not only the people those regulations were designed to keep out. Current landowners within a mile of metro stations could enjoy a new freedom to develop their property in small-scale ways, the county would have a growing tax base without increasing sprawl, those living in nearby areas would have access to whatever amenities the denser communities would attract, and of course, families that are not super wealthy might be able to afford a home near transit. All while making Montgomery County a more sustainable place to live, as denser communities lend themselves to better transit and less car use.

In short, I think Montgomery County should have more neighborhoods focused on density. The demand is clearly there. I saw it while bidding on my home in east Silver Spring, but also as a child watching nearby house prices in the Kentlands climb. Personally, I worry that longtime residents of neighborhoods like New Hampshire Estates will get pushed out as the Purple Lines develops. Meeting that demand in other locations where it has not previously been met is one way to combat this. Creating communities with missing middle housing will only make them more desirable to live in, pushing land values up, all while making individual living spaces more affordable.

I have benefited from growing up in Montgomery County and in returning to it to become a homeowner, but I believe we can and should do better. Our strengths lie in being a growing diverse community, not a static exclusionary community, therefore I urge you to support bold initiatives to legalize missing middle housing types in Montgomery County, particularly near transit and in the most affluent areas.

Thank you,

Rebecca Mann
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