

## **RE: Testimony in Support of ZTA 20-07: Missing Middle Housing**

Thank you to Council President Hucker and councilmembers for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important issue. My name is Rosie Alger and I live in downtown Silver Spring. I've been renting here for 2 years, and working in Bethesda. 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.

I moved to Montgomery county in 2018 so that I could work in the theatre education industry in Bethesda. I have loved living here, but I certainly was only able to make that happen because of my family support and privilege. The wages I was making did not support the cost of living in downtown Silver Spring, and I am fortunate to have a roommate with a salaried position who was able to cover a lot of the cost. Her work is in DC and she needed metro/ transit access. Any housing we could find within a walkable distance from the metro pushed the boundaries of our budget.

Again, I have been able to get some support from my family during particularly rough patches, such as during the pandemic, but many who do not have my level of privilege would not be able to do the same. In my first job in the county, I had co-workers that were making the same amount of money as me but were part of minority groups and did not have the same safety nets that I have. They were often forced to commute much longer distances from out of the county in order to find housing they could afford.

I work in education, and I know that many higher income families move to Montgomery County to take advantage of its world class education system. I would love to see more families of mixed income levels be able to benefit from all that Montgomery County has to offer its students, rather than being edged out of the housing market by wealthier families from out of town. When there isn't enough housing built in desirable areas, wealthier households can out-bid everyone else, leading to displacement of lower and middle income households. This includes teachers, firefighters, healthcare workers, and other essential workers. This means that without more affordable housing options, wealthier, whiter families move in, and lower income families, often people of color, get pushed out. Ultimately, schools become less and less diverse. I know that everyone's education is benefitted when our schools' populations represent people from many backgrounds and experiences, and I would hate to see Montgomery County lose that aspect of its community.

I strongly believe that the limited housing availability, as well as the limited variety of types of housing, is a huge reason that I and so many of my friends who work in Montgomery County struggle to afford to live here. Ultimately, as the pandemic affected my work and financial situation, my roommate and I have decided to move out of the county. We love living in Silver Spring, but were looking for housing that matched our budget, our desire to be close to transit, and was ideally a townhome or duplex that allowed for a more personal connection to our neighbors. As much as we tried, we could not find that in Montgomery County. I will miss the community here, but I sincerely hope that more housing options can be made available so that a more diverse population of people can benefit from all that the area has to offer.

Therefore, I urge you to take up and support bold initiatives to legalize middle housing types in Montgomery County, especially near transit and neighborhoods historically off-limits to people with lower incomes and people of color.

Thank you,

Rosie Alger  
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