

To: MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL

From: Aspen Hill Community Organization

For: County Council Public Hearing on February 11, 2021

Re: Written testimony on ZTA 20-07, R-60 Zone – Uses and Standards

As members of the Aspen Hill Community Organization (AHCO), we strongly disagree with the speed and lack of community outreach as this Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA 20-07) is being pushed through the hearing process. Given the impact of the coronavirus and COVID-19 on our communities, the ensuing communication difficulties, and our residents' and vendors' justifiable preoccupation with financial and physical survival, your tactics rank of political opportunism and are deplorable and unreasonable.

During the Montgomery County Civic Federation's meeting on February 8, 2021, it was reported that every civic and community organization/association in the immediate and surrounding geographic areas impacted by the referenced amendment oppose or have significant questions and concerns regarding this proposal. Given that Thrive Montgomery County 2050 is the General Plan under consideration at this time, this ill-timed, destructive and illogical approval of ZTA 20-07 will permanently and drastically alter the single-family culture, demographics, traffic, parking and population density of the R-60 and R-90 residential zones. Certainly, a General Plan should be completed, published, discussed, communicated and ultimately, with community consent, approved prior to the initiation and implementation of ZTA 20-07. Putting the cart before the proverbial horse will get Montgomery County no where and will cause incalculable damage to the quality of life of the residents and businesses in these areas.

As you know, ZTA 20-07 will amend the Zoning Code to allow duplexes, townhouses, and small multi-family structures to be built as a Limited Use standard method development on R-60 and R-90 zoned lots within a mile of a Metro station entrance. Missing Middle Housing is typically two-to-four story, multi-unit, clustered housing such as smaller townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, quadraplexes, detached courtyard cottages, attached courtyard apartments, or smaller apartment buildings (with fewer than 20 units) that are typically in walkable, transit-accessible neighborhoods. This policy will NOT likely generate much development/investment interest because land costs are too high near Metro stations and properties close to the Metro are in high demand. Missing Middle Housing will forever compromise the single-family neighborhoods in the proposed communities.

Community members completely understand the immediate crisis regarding Montgomery County's projected shortage of affordable housing, however, most residents and even Park and Planning staff do not believe this ZTA will result in an appreciable increase in the quantity of affordable housing. One need only look to this policy's failure in Minnesota to recognize its lack of success and severely negative impact on the affected communities. There are many issues related to Missing Middle

Housing that need to be addressed through a comprehensive and coordinated strategy. Unequivocally, policy changes like those proposed in ZTA 20-07 will not be effective in producing the desired housing outcomes, however even moderate implementation will completely compromise existing neighborhoods. The County must avoid a rush to judgement on this issue and ensure Planning Board and County Council's good intentions do not destroy the immediate and surrounding neighborhoods.

It is evident other solutions to the affordable housing crisis in Montgomery County must be researched, considered, publicized and communicated to the residents and vendors to successfully achieve this ZTA's desired impact. Clearly, ZTA 20-07 is NOT the answer to this critical housing issue.

Thank you for your consideration,

Joan Beerweiler, President
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