

Testimony from Alison Gillespie

February 11, 2021

Good evening, and thanks for the chance to offer input.

I particularly wanted to speak **in support of ZTA 20-07**. I hope that the council will vote in favor of this bill.

For the last twenty years I have lived in a home that is less than a mile from the Metro. As I've told the council many times before in other testimony, I bought my home to be close to transit and consider it an extremely good amenity to be able to walk to the Forest Glen station.

That walk should not be a luxury that only a few can enjoy, however. We need to maximize our infrastructure investments, and it only makes sense to allow a lot more density and a lot more housing near all the Metro stations, but particularly near the Forest Glen station because it is one of the most underused in the entire system when COVID isn't an issue. If I was to fight anyone else having access, I would essentially be asking the county to subsidize my very short, lovely walk and commute. More people using the Metro and buses means more financial pay-off for the system and the station and that makes sense.

Our region's housing shortage is acute and needs to be addressed. This is one way to do that. And allowing more people to live near transit is a really good thing for the environment. I want us to meet our climate goals.

In addition, I support this zoning change because I believe that diversifying our housing stock is a great way to diversify our neighborhoods. Horribly restrictive zoning has built neighborhoods that are monocultures – supporting one type of family unit and often only families. Introducing more of the “missing middle” housing into neighborhoods like mine would be healthy for everyone. Single people, people of varying ages, couples without children would all be more able to live in the same neighborhoods, and I think that is a good and healthy thing. I often think that intolerance and mistrust is built upon restrictive zoning. The more we live with people that only look like us and live the exact same lifestyle we do, the less we are able to understand or empathize with anyone who is different in any way. I know others tonight will talk about how this proposal would seek to right a very awful historical racism in zoning and I agree with that idea. Our zoning is built upon racist ideals and needs to be amended and I hope such amendments will allow communities that are more racially and culturally diverse and allow more people of color and immigrant families to invest in good places to live.

I also think that this sort of zoning change would allow more young people to be able to invest in properties, and that is good for our local economy.

It is really awful how expensive it is to buy a home in our county now. This law would open up access.

My only complaint about this zoning amendment is that it does not go far enough. I wouldn't stop at the neighborhoods close to Metro. I'd like to see you rezone the entire county to allow for this sort of housing. In fact, I'd like to see the entire state rezoned, although I know you can't do anything about the other counties.

Thanks again for your time and attention to this matter and for the chance to testify.

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