

February 2, 2021
President Tom Hucker and members of the County Council
100 Maryland Ave. 6th floor
Rockville Md. 20850
Re: ZTA 20-07

President Tom Hucker and Members of the County Council,

I would like this letter to be put into the record reflecting my opposition to ZTA 20-07 on several levels. First it is highly dubious and irregular that the County Council would or even should consider a proposal which is part of and is most likely the keystone of what should be a comprehensive Master Plan (Thrive Montgomery) before the Planning board has even put the proposed General Plan to a vote. By considering this proposal prior to the Planning Board even rendering any opinion on Thrive Montgomery is a disrespect to the nature and essence of a comprehensive process where some residents are trying to work with Staff prior to the vote from the Planning Board. This ZTA renders itself as highly duplicitous and suspect of potential conflicts of interests as it puts the Cart before the horse with respect to one of the principle elements of Thrive Montgomery.

Montgomery County has had a long standing policy and tradition of including residents in all comprehensive processes. Thrive Montgomery is a large departure from the Wedges and Corridors Plan. Many residents do not even know the process is ongoing due to Covid-19, Residents attentions are diverted away from zoning and planning reviews as a result. I among many others have requested the Planning Board delay work on Thrive Montgomery until after this Pandemic. This ZTA and the main elements of Thrive Montgomery seek to change single family neighborhoods thereby altering the character of these neighborhoods This ZTA bypasses the entire Comprehensive process and it would seem in the dead of night interject this new paradigm where single family neighborhoods will be allowed by right to convert to multi-family housing. By considering this ZTA we dissolve any semblance of a Comprehensive process where the community is involved with planning of their community.

The second level but clearly not the only reason this ZTA should be rejected as it is being proposed under a false and misleading premise that Montgomery County has a missing middle problem, and supposedly by allowing multi-family housing in single family zones housing will be more affordable. Our Zoning ordinance is filled with different types of housing single family some duplex, some townhomes, some midlevel housing and others high-rise housing. Also there is an entire realm of Planned Development zones. Where can anyone honestly say there is a missing middle with all the potential options allowed in any Comprehensive Master Plan.

Also the net consequences of this ZTA will make housing in Montgomery County more expensive and harder for young families to compete for single family homes especially in transit areas. This proposal will create a new enterprise for speculator developers to compete for the limited older single family homes with first and second time homebuyers and then these speculators will slice and dice these properties to sell and their products will be more expensive for new homebuyers because of the dynamics involved with razing older homes some with asbestos and lead creating cost to safely dispose of demolition and then develop these lots for multifamily housing. What will result is more expensive housing and fewer opportunities for young families to buy into Montgomery County Md.

In closing, I believe the introduction of ZTA 20-07 is highly suspect, it is duplicitous and rejects the nature of a comprehensive process, why should the public involve itself in any public process when the County Council by-passes the very nature of public participation and a fair analysis of what is supposed to be a comprehensive process. This action removes any semblance of a comprehensive process and replaces it with Tyranny where the County Council may circumvent the public's interest prior to the completion of developing a General Plan which is supposed to be comprehensive, unbiased and includes the public. Finally I believe this ZTA as it circumvents the Comprehensive nature of the General Plan may be not only a violation of public trust but also is a violation of the intent and spirit of the regional district act which created the land use authority and methods which the authorities work with the public.

I respectfully submit this County Council should reject ZTA 20-07 as it may create a conflict for approval of the General Plan as it bypasses public interest.

Cary Lamari

Silver Spring Md.