

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

Thank you to the Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of ZTA 20-07. Additional thanks to Councilmember Jawando, for initiating action to address the exclusionary zoning that currently limits the number and type of new residences that can be built in transit-accessible neighborhoods of Montgomery County.

My name is Amy Bernath, and I live on Philadelphia Avenue in Silver Spring. My husband and I are fortunate to own our home, which is located within the area impacted by the proposed ZTA. When looking for a place to live long-term and raise a family, we were pleasantly surprised to discover the mix of entertainment, food, outdoor space, and community available in downtown Silver Spring.

Since moving to Montgomery County in 2015, we've enjoyed a car-free commute to work in DC while spending many of our free evenings and weekends in Silver Spring and Takoma Park. On countless occasions, we've walked with our daughters to the Farmer's Market on Saturday morning before spending time in Ellsworth Park or stopping by the library to pick up a new book and play on the wooden structures in the children's area. Our family has sat on Georgia Avenue in November, hot chocolate in hands, waiting for dogs in sweaters, cheering large balloons, and waving to the many members of our Council who walk in the annual Thanksgiving parade.

I want more people, and more families, to have these benefits that I enjoy as a resident of downtown Silver Spring. Currently, the cost and availability of housing in Montgomery County limits these opportunities. I fear that, without action, we are on a course that makes a life in Montgomery County increasingly unattainable for families like mine, and for others who haven't had the combination of privilege, good fortune, and luck that opened this opportunity to me.

While the ZTA alone will not address the need for more transit-accessible, "missing middle" housing (ie duplexes, triplexes, small apartment buildings) in Montgomery County, I believe it is an important step in the right direction. For these reasons, I urge the Council to support the ZTA, and to urgently consider additional steps to create more housing in our communities.

Thank you,

Amy Bernath
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