

I write to add my opposition to this proposed amendment. As long as there is an Agricultural Reserve in Montgomery County, developers and real estate interests will push to erode it to allow for new profit-making projects at the expense of agriculture. This will be an endless battle, and we need leaders who will resist the profit-driven urge to develop, develop, develop.

If this ZTA were really about allowing camping on farms, there would be little or no opposition. But it is not. The ZTA would allow small motels and short-term rentals. Next, developers would push for restaurants and fast-food stores to feed the people staying in the new structures. Then developers would call for housing for employees who work in all the new buildings. Once unleashed, the compulsion to develop--and make more money--never ends until agriculture disappears.

You can find examples of this in many parts of the country, such as California, where the nation's finest agricultural lands are being buried under structures of all types. Does anyone recall when Los Angelenos took tourist tours of the "Citrus Belt" that extended throughout the eastern Los Angeles Basin and produced daily trainloads of produce for Eastern and Midwestern markets? The Citrus Belt today is buried under cement Distribution Centers, hotels, deteriorating shopping malls, and housing projects. Agriculture died there.

There is simply no need for tourists to reside in the Agricultural Reserve. Plenty of motels and hotels line Interstate 270 and would gladly provide rooms for visitors.

All over the United States, attractive agricultural areas are being converted to houses, commercial real estate, and other look-alike buildings, destroying farmland. Please stop this avaricious process in Montgomery County here and now. I call on you to discard ZTA 23-09.

John Michael Hemmer