

To: The Honorable Members of the Montgomery County Council  
County Executive Marc Elrich

From: Donna McDowell



### **Testimony Against ZTA-23-09**

My name is Donna McDowell. I have lived with my husband, a Montgomery County native, in the Ag Reserve for 38 years.

We live in an area of small and large farms. People here are passionate about farming; they grow corn, soybeans, and every kind of vegetable and fruit. They raise cattle and train horses. My neighbors have chickens, pigs and rabbits. We have fruit trees and a bluebird trail.

We are vehemently opposed to ZTA 23-09 and ask that it be withdrawn. Frankly, I am shocked that anyone on this Council would sponsor such a consequential and problematic zoning change, and without stakeholder consultation.

Those of us with the broad vision of having lived in the Ag Reserve for decades know that ZTA 29-03 goes against purpose, provisions, and spirit of the visionary Master Plan of 1980, eloquently crafted by Royce Hanson and colleagues.

The Master Plan of 1980 noted the “importance of the preservation of farmland” not only at that time but also into the future. This ZTA will surely decrease the acreage in farming, raise prices for farmland, and make farming much more difficult if not impossible. Is that what the Council wants?

The Master Plan of 1980 sought to change the mindset by farmers that farming was impermanent and doomed into a new view that farming was permanent and supported by the County. This ZTA, which is not supported by any of the farming organizations in the County, tells farmers, “We don’t respect what you do.”

The Master Plan of 1980 emphasized the importance of “keeping sensitive headwaters from the deleterious effects of development.”

This ZTA would lead to water degradation and stream and ground water debasement. It would endanger our well water and septic fields.

The Master Plan of 1980 fostered agriculture as an “economically viable industry.” This ZTA would cause farmers to become motel operators.

The Master Plan of 1980 protected the “rural environment, especially sensitive headwater areas, conservation areas, wildlife habitats, and floodplains from the impact of development.” This ZTA would foster development by turning the Ag Reserve into a series of Four Seasons Motel Parks.

The Master Plan of 1980 sought to “develop supportive County policies and programs that strengthen agriculture itself.” The proposed ZTA does the opposite; at the behest of a few investors, it would establish a new industry - the motel industry - hindering the conduct of farming, especially access to affordable farm acreage, and thereby contributing to the Reserve’s eventual demise.

The ZTA would irrevocably alter the purpose, the provisions, and the spirit of The Master Plan of 1980.

I ask the Council: Please engage in stewardship, perspective, the long range view, the broader vision. Make the commitment to foster and protect the Ag Reserve as required by The Master Plan.

Withdraw ZTA 23-09 now.

Thank you.

*\*\* Quotes taken from the Master Plan of 1980*