

Members of the County Council

Thank you again for your consideration of this ZTA, and for agreeing to take my testimony.

I am here to speak strongly in support of ZTA 23-10. While I think it can be strengthened, and encourage the council to, for example, expand radius around metro stations where there are no parking minimums to one mile, I also support the bill in its current form, and think it is an important step not only on parking minimums, but in tackling the housing crisis in Montgomery County more broadly.

As you all know, but many others do not, eliminating parking minimums around transit does not mean eliminating *parking* around transit, it simply stops requiring an arbitrary minimum that developments must provide when building much needed housing. Parking adds thousands of dollars of cost per home to a project, and takes up space on land that could be used for homes instead. Sometimes it is enough of a tipping point to stop a project from penciling altogether, meaning nothing is built.

This isn't just an academic concept either, a recent proposal to add over 400 homes above the Ellsworth Place mall in downtown Silver Spring includes no parking, making use of the fact that parking minimums don't apply there. They know they can do this because they know Downtown Silver Spring has enough parking, as shown by parking studies that factor in even fairly robust growth and development. If they had to add parking, there would be fewer homes, full stop, as more parking would have needed to be added, either on the same spot or elsewhere, rising costs and, potentially scrapping the project altogether.

On a more personal level, my own condo building has no parking, and it's not entirely a coincidence that it's cheaper than other relatively new buildings in the immediate area. It's absolutely one of the reasons I was able to afford where I live

I don't own a car, and some other people in my building are in the same boat. Not needing to pay extra for a parking space helps keep my home affordable. That said, many in my building *do* have cars, and they get along just fine. They rent out spaces from a nearby county garage, or from the apartment building next door, which was built around the same time and *did* include parking. And that's part of my broader point here.

When there is enough parking that developers think they don't need to add more in order to get people to rent or buy in a development, they may choose not to add any, or add less than is currently required. When parking is competitive enough that developers don't think people will rent or buy without it? They'll probably propose a substantial amount of parking. Downtown Silver Spring already has similar flexibility and it's working here. More of the county should have this same opportunity.

I'm not saying no mistakes will be made, that happens now and then with parking levels and a thousand other things already, but it does make it more likely that a project will meet what the parking demands in an area are and are not than in our current system, and will help make housing more abundant and more affordable in the process

Truth be told I don't know exactly how much of a difference this will make, no one does. And it's not as if making this one change will be a panacea that will suddenly fix all our housing ills, but nothing is. Along with zoning reforms, affordable housing spending, the implementation of our recently passed rent stabilization law, and other tools, it will be another arrow in the quiver we have to make housing more affordable, and that matters

Please pass this ZTA, and then please go on and do the next things we need to do. The list never ends, but it does get smaller, and these changes build on each other. It will not only help the county now, but make it easier to do more good in the future.

Thank you

Mike English.

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