

Item 5 - Correspondence

From: [Theodore Frank](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); councilmember.Friedson@montgomerycounty.md.gov
Cc: board@springfield20816.com
Subject: Affordable Housing Strategies Initiative
Date: Tuesday, May 14, 2024 8:45:30 PM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Mr. Harris, Mr. Friedson

I am writing in connection with the Planning Board's proposal to eliminate much of the single family zoning in Montgomery County, with particular concern about the proposals to designate River Road as a growth corridor -- interestingly only inside the Beltway. I am a 50+ year resident and homeowner in the Springfield subdivision of Bethesda. We have enjoyed our time here and hope that our neighborhood remains similar to the one we know.

I understand and appreciate the Planning Board's and Council's concerns about the lack of affordable housing in down-county Montgomery County. Facilitating the ability of the working class members of our society is to own their own home or to reside near where they work is a desirable goal.

However, I seriously doubt that the Affordable Housing proposal will achieve that goal. The costs of construction, whether townhouses, apartment houses or "garden apartments" are likely to force builders to price the new residential units at levels that exceed the ability of many of those the county seeks to benefit. The proposals for townhouses in the revamped Westbard Sector indicate that the price for those homes will be in the upper-six figures or more. The townhouses built adjacent to Little Falls Parkway a few years ago were, I understand, comparably priced. I question whether moderate income families can afford those prices. Although apartment houses will not require the financial wherewithal needed to purchase a home, the costs of acquiring the land the construction costs will make it difficult to price rentals at moderate levels. Thus, the prospect that the proposal increase the amount of affordable housing is limited.

On the other hand, the proposal will have a deleterious effect on the area. Increasing the housing density will undermine the quality of the neighborhoods, making them increasingly urbanized, increase the burdens on the school system -- which already has serious problems that need addressing, overburden the transportation infrastructure, and adversely affect the environment, among other downsides. Dealing with these effects will impose added and substantial costs on the county to improve the roads and sewers, construct sidewalks, upgrade the electric grid, etc. While some of those costs will be first incurred by the utilities, the costs will be borne by the county residents as a whole. Further, the proposal to allow construction without prior zoning approval is a formula effectively to turn some areas into incipient slums. Finally, the proposal will reduce the value of existing homes as

the neighborhoods deteriorate, or are perceived by buyers to deteriorate. The families buying homes in downcounty will decide to live elsewhere.

The idea to provide for more affordable homes is clearly an admirable one, but the idea that the proposal can be retrofit into an existing ecosystem is impractical. Before the Board or Counsel goes down this treacherous path, it should fully explore the facts and the experience of other counties or cities. Urban redevelopment did not work in the mid-1900s. An unthought-through affordable housing plan here will not either.

Theodore Frank
5505 Pollard Road
Bethesda, MD 20816

From: [Tina Slater](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Govoni, Lisa](#)
Subject: Support for Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative
Date: Tuesday, May 14, 2024 11:30:13 AM

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Dear Planning Commissioners:

I am very interested in the Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative.

Unless we grow our housing supply to make room for new (and current) residents, our existing communities will become more expensive, less diverse, and it will be difficult to attract and retain a skilled workforce. Aren't we having trouble attracting more teachers, more police?

Many workers cannot find an affordable home here. Housing shortages put a burden on workers, many of whom endure exceedingly long commutes, from far-out places where housing is affordable.

Building more homes, smaller homes, duplexes, triplexes, low-rise apartments can improve housing affordability. More mixed-income neighborhoods will benefit schools. Low-income students perform much better when attending schools with mixed-income population.

By building different price-point homes, we avoid a situation in which children won't be able to afford housing in the neighborhood where they grew up.

Most people understand that discriminating by race is wrong and illegal. But complaints that smaller homes will ruin the "character" of the single-family neighborhoods may well reflect discrimination by economic status.

More housing density along transit corridors and near transit stops can give people the option to live without a car, thereby saving a lot of money. (AAA says it costs \$10,728 a year to own and operate a new car in 2022).

And I think that having more homes at more price levels might even start to make a dent in our homeless population.

I look forward to the final product produced by your staff.

Sincerely,
Tina Slater
402 Mansfield Rd, Silver Spring, MD 20910

From: [Robert Lederman](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Citizen comment on small-scale attainable housing
Date: Friday, April 26, 2024 1:05:28 PM

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I strongly object to the proposal to allow multiplex units by right in the Town of Chevy Chase. And worse, to allow ancillary commercial entities !

These only benefit greedy developers. They do not benefit middle-income citizens. You know that!

This threatens our tax base. You know that!

This undermines our quality of life as longstanding tax-paying civil-servant residents of one of the oldest communities in the County. You know this!

Do not approve this re-zoning.

Robert Lederman, Chevy Chase, Maryland

From: [Mike English](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Attainable Housing Strategies Written Comments: Montgomery for All
Date: Thursday, April 11, 2024 11:21:30 AM
Attachments: [Montgomery for All Attainable Housing Recs .pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Good morning,

I have attached Montgomery for All's written comments on the Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative, and am including them in text below my signature for your convenience. The date of the public listening sessions was March 21 but we are submitting these comments in reference to the worksessions that are ongoing.

My mailing address is 8005 13th Street, unit 304, Silver Spring, MD, 20910.

Please let me know if you need any further information from me

Best,
Mike English

Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reedy Drive, 14th Floor
Wheaton, MD 20902

April 10, 2024

Additional Recommendations: Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative

Dear Commissioners of the Montgomery County Planning Board:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of the Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative on March 21, 2024. Montgomery for All was proud to offer our comments on behalf of our over 200 members who support more welcoming, inclusive, and sustainable communities in Montgomery County.

As you prepare to begin your worksessions on the initiative, we would like to ask that you consider the following recommendations:

1. Allow medium-scale attainable housing by-right in select locations instead of under the optional method of development, and expand to allow in a greater number of locations suited for transit-oriented development.

The site plan review process required under the optional method of development can add significant time and cost to projects, which runs counter to the goal of producing attainably priced homes. We recommend allowing medium-scale attainable housing

in specific transit-oriented locations by-right, rather than under an Attainable Housing Optional Method (AHOM).

In addition to the locations specified in the draft AHOM recommendations, we recommend also allowing medium-scale attainable housing in R-60 and R-90 zones in the following transit-oriented locations, where many could greatly benefit from a greater number of attainably priced housing options:

- One mile from Red Line stations
- One mile from planned Purple Line stations
- One mile from Silver Spring, Kensington, Garrett Park, and Rockville MARC stations

2. Condition by-right duplex development in R-200 zones on transit proximity.

Transit proximity is an important consideration for housing attainability. Households benefit from lower transportation costs for transit-oriented attainable housing. Transit-oriented homes are also more accessible to people of different ages, abilities and incomes who may not own a car. In contrast, households located far from transit may be burdened by high transportation costs even in attainably priced homes, and locating homes far from transit can increase vehicle trips and harmful greenhouse gas emissions.

While many R-200 zoned areas have access to public transit options including MARC stations and Ride On local routes, a select few are located in the Agricultural Reserve and have no convenient access to public transit—suggesting that new households in these locations would be by necessity largely car-dependent.

We recommend including a transit proximity measure as a condition of by-right duplex development in R-200 zones.

3. Identify a clear timeline for Pattern Book development, and consider the cost and feasibility of required design elements.

To ensure that the creation of a Pattern Book does not inadvertently delay the implementation of attainable housing recommendations, we ask that you identify a clear timeline for the creation of a Pattern Book. We also ask that you specify that decisions about any required design elements for attainable housing will take into consideration how these requirements would affect the cost and feasibility of the homes produced.

4. Be as specific as possible in recommendations to the County Council, including producing draft zoning text amendments (ZTAs).

Producing more housing at attainable prices is an urgent priority for Montgomery

County. Specific, policy-oriented guidance from Planning will facilitate the process of implementing attainable housing changes that align with existing county development and housing policies. We ask that you be as specific as possible in your policy recommendations to the Council, including producing draft ZTAs reflecting the recommendations of the Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative.

Sincerely,

Brandi Panbach
Carter Dougherty
Carolyn Lampila
Christopher Nellis
Dan Reed
Don Slater

Jane Lyons-Raeder
Martin Posthumus
Michael Larkin
Mike English
Richard Marker
Zachary Weinstein

Montgomery for All Steering Committee

Greater Colesville Citizens Association
PO Box 4087
Colesville, MD 20914
March 21, 2024

Montgomery County Planning Board
Attn: Artie Harris, Chair
2425 Reddie Drive
Wheaton, MD 20902

Re: Attainable Housing

Dear Chairman Harris:

The Greater Colesville Citizens Association (GCCA) supports the current efforts to adding more housing in the county, but adding attainable housing is not the way to achieve it. Steps need to be taken to reduce the cost to developers of going through the development process and constructing units. Some of the staff proposals in the draft Growth and Infrastructure Policy document are moving in that direction.

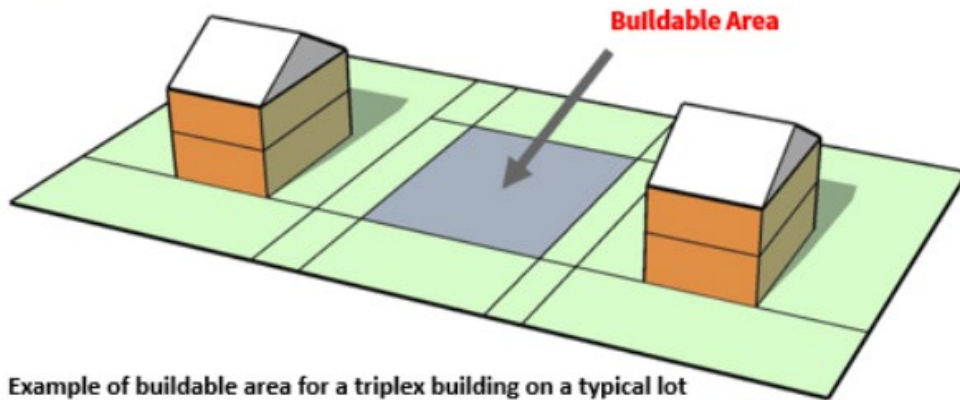
The proposed zoning changes for allowing duplexes, triplexes and quadplexes only makes sense in new developments, not in established neighborhood as in-fill. The chart on page 26 (pasted on the following page) shows the concept of adding a triplex in an established community. The report contends that the diagram in the middle showing a three-story block building that occupies the entire lot using minimal setbacks is not desired but the diagram on the bottom diagram is acceptable. From the standpoint of county citizens, the third diagram, while slightly better, is still not acceptable. It still is much larger and bulkier than the houses on either side. The fallacy with this series of diagrams is that many existing houses are one story and have a smaller footprint than illustrated in the diagram.

Another major problem with adding multiple units on a lot currently zoned for one unit concerns parking. Many streets in older neighborhoods zoned R-60 and R-90 are narrow by current standards. A number of existing roads are too narrow for vehicles to pass without one stopping and pulling to the side of the road. Even when roads are two lanes and vehicles park on the road and vehicles need to pass where a vehicle is parked, one vehicle must stop and pull over to allow the other to pass. Drivers on a good percentage of roads in R-60 and R-90 zoned areas frequently are forced to pull over. Adding more houses in these situations will just add more parked cars on the roads and make it very difficult for two cars to pass. There are already times when roads are not passable. When emergency vehicles and large vehicles, like school buses, need to pass or drive down the street – passing may not be possible.

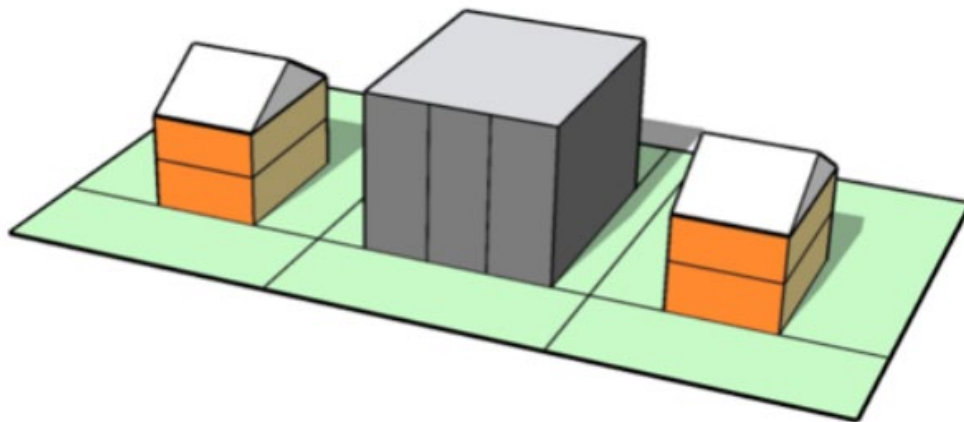
Lastly, the addition of more houses will just add more imperviousness and add more stormwater runoff, which is already a problem in many older communities.

Therefore, we oppose small and medium attainable housing in existing communities as infill.

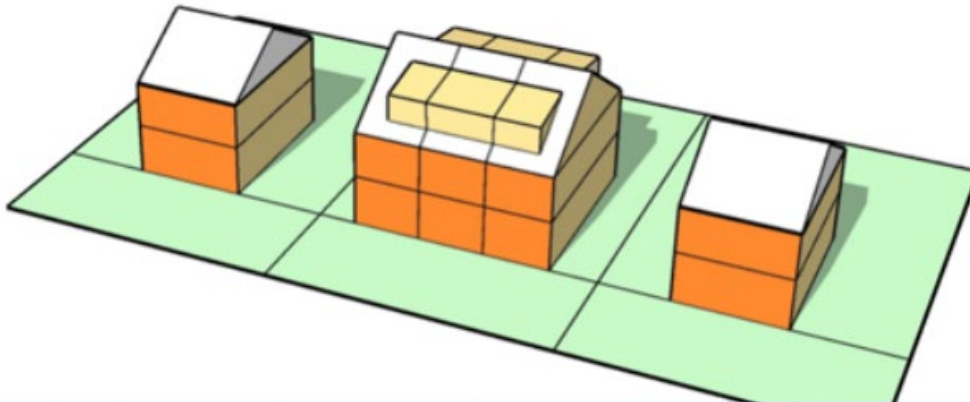
Typical Lot



Example of buildable area for a triplex building on a typical lot



Example of triplex's massing without pattern book and form-based standards



Sincerely

Daniel L. Wilhelm

GCCA President