



CLIMATE ASSESSMENT FOR ZTA 26-06, ACCESSORY RESIDENTIAL UNITS – ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT

PURPOSE OF CLIMATE ASSESSMENTS

The purpose of Climate Assessments is to evaluate the anticipated impact of master plans and zoning text amendments (ZTAs) on the county’s contribution to addressing climate change. These assessments are required pursuant to Section 2-81D of the County Code for ZTAs and Section 33A-14 for master plans. They are intended to provide the County Council with a better understanding of the potential climate impacts and implications of proposed master plans and ZTAs at the county level. Each climate assessment includes: i) the potential positive or negative impact upon climate change; ii) quantitative or qualitative evaluations of identified effects upon greenhouse gas emissions, sequestration, and carbon drawdown; and iii) quantitative or qualitative evaluations of identified effects on community resilience and adaptive capacity. Accordingly, the scope of Climate Assessments is limited to addressing climate change, specifically the effect of land use recommendations in master plans and ZTAs on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and sequestration, and how actions proposed by master plans and ZTAs could improve the county’s adaptive capacity to climate change and increase community resilience.

While co-benefits such as health and cost savings may be discussed, the focus is on how proposed master plans and ZTAs may impact GHG emissions and community resilience.

SUMMARY

The Montgomery County Planning Board anticipates that ZTA 26-06 will have a combination of potential minor positive and minor negative impacts on the county’s goals of addressing greenhouse gas emissions, carbon sequestration, and ensuring resilience and adaptive capacity of communities. ZTA 26-06 will amend the use standards for attached and detached Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) consistent with State Law. These changes could potentially increase ADU development and impervious surface in some locations while also supporting infill development and increasing housing flexibility in established communities.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF ZTA 26-06

ZTA 26-06 was introduced on April 21, 2026, by Council President Fani-González at the request of the Planning Board. ZTA 26-06 modifies existing regulations for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) to comply with State law. The ZTA expands ADUs as a limited use into additional residential, townhouse, multi-unit, and mixed-use zoning districts where single-family dwellings are permitted. The ZTA also revises ADU size standards and modifies parking and setback requirements.

VARIABLES THAT COULD AFFECT THE ASSESSMENT

Climate-related variables considered in this assessment include the various GHG reduction, sequestration, resilience, and adaptive capacity activities in the climate assessment checklists (updates of Tables 1 and 8 contained in the *Climate Assessment Recommendations for Master Plans and Zoning Text Amendments in Montgomery County*, the “Climate Assessment Checklists”). The following climate-related variables were identified as activities that may be directly or indirectly influenced by ZTA 26-06.

CLIMATE-RELATED VARIABLES

Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sequestration

- Transportation – Vehicle miles traveled by type, number of trips, non-vehicle modes of transportation, public transportation use
- Building Embodied Emissions – Building square footage, building lifespan, pavement infrastructure, material waste produced
- Energy – Electricity usage, stationary fuel usage, electricity efficiency
- Land Cover Change & Management – Area of forest, area of non-forest tree canopy, area of green cover

Community Resilience and Adaptive Capacity

- Exposure-Related Factors – Activity in flood risk areas, activity in urban heat island
- Sensitivity-Related Factors – Change to forest cover, change to non-forest tree canopy, change to quality or quantity of other green areas, change to impacts of heat, change in perviousness, change to water quality or quantity, change to air quality
- Adaptive Capacity Factors – Change in access to transportation, change to community connectivity

ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS, CARBON SEQUESTRATION, AND DRAWDOWN

ZTA 26-06 is anticipated to have a combination of potential positive and negative impacts on greenhouse gas emissions and an indeterminate to minor negative impact on carbon sequestration.

Transportation

From a transportation perspective, ZTA 26-06 is anticipated to have minor mixed impacts. The ZTA expands ADUs as a limited use into additional residential, townhouse, multi-unit, and mixed-use zoning districts where single-family dwellings are permitted. Some of these areas may already have

greater access to transit and infrastructure for pedestrian and other non-vehicle modes of transportation. This may result in potential minor positive impacts associated with public transportation and non-vehicle transportation. However, the ZTA may also increase the number of residential units and associated trips in additional zoning districts. The extent to which this could increase vehicle miles traveled, or the total number of trips, would depend on the location of the ADUs and the travel behavior of future residents.

Building Embodied Emissions

The ZTA is anticipated to have minor mixed impacts related to embodied emissions associated with building square footage, pavement infrastructure, and material waste.

The ZTA removes the County's existing attached ADU size limit and replaces it with a standard limiting ADUs to no greater than 75% of the size of the primary dwelling unit. In some cases, this revised standard could allow larger ADUs, potentially increasing building square footage and associated embodied emissions and construction material use.

The ZTA also includes modifications to parking requirements that may reduce pavement and impervious surface impacts. Specifically, the ZTA removes the requirement to construct two parking spaces where no existing on-site parking currently exists and instead requires only one parking space for the ADU.

Energy

The ZTA is anticipated to have minor negative impacts related to energy-related emissions. By expanding ADUs into additional zoning districts and revising size standards, the ZTA could increase residential square footage and associated electricity usage over time.

Land Cover Change & Management

The ZTA is anticipated to have indeterminate to minor negative impacts related to land cover and carbon sequestration. Expanding ADUs into additional zoning districts, revising size standards and setback requirements for detached ADUs could increase lot coverage, impervious surface, and impacts to forest, tree canopy, or green cover. The extent of these impacts would depend on the existing conditions, location, and size of future ADUs.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND ADAPTIVE CAPACITY

ZTA 26-06 is anticipated to have a minor mixed impact on community resilience and adaptive capacity.

Exposure-Related Factors

The ZTA is anticipated to have minor mixed impacts related to exposure-related factors such as urban heat island effects and exposure to climate hazards. By expanding where ADUs are permitted and reducing certain setback requirements, the ZTA could incrementally increase ADU development and

impervious surface on some developed properties. Depending on the location of future ADUs, this could contribute to localized heat retention or stormwater runoff impacts. However, the impacts are anticipated to be limited because development will likely occur in existing developed residential properties. The ZTA also does not modify floodplain regulations, stormwater management requirements, and other environmental regulations.

Sensitivity-Related Factors

The ZTA is anticipated to have minor mixed impacts related to sensitivity factors such as forest cover, tree canopy, green cover, and heat impacts. The changes proposed by the ZTA discussed in previous sections could increase lot coverage, impervious surface, and impacts to forest, tree canopy, or green cover. At the same time, the revised parking requirements may reduce impervious surface impacts relative to the existing code. The extent of these impacts would depend on the existing conditions, location, and size of future ADUs.

Adaptive Capacity Factors

The ZTA is anticipated to have minor positive impacts on adaptive capacity factors. The ZTA may increase opportunities for aging in place and multigenerational living arrangements. The expansion of ADUs into additional mixed-use and transit-accessible zones may also improve access to transportation options.

RELATIONSHIP TO GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTION AND SEQUESTRATION ACTIONS CONTAINED IN THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY CLIMATE ACTION PLAN (CAP)

The Montgomery County Climate Action Plan (CAP) details the effects of a changing climate on Montgomery County and includes interagency strategies to reduce GHG gas emissions and climate-related risks to the county's residents, businesses, and the built and natural environment.

The CAP includes 86 climate actions as a pathway to meet the county's ambitious climate goals while building a healthy, equitable, and resilient community. Each county department has responsibilities for specific climate actions that are relevant to the work of that department. The following section provides a list of the CAP action items relevant to Montgomery Planning and pertains to ZTA 26-05. While it is not possible to know the rate of implementation, development funding, or other implications, each CAP action was assessed to determine whether it will have no, indeterminate, minor, moderate, major, a combination, or a range of positive or negative impacts on implementing the action.

Because the ZTA establishes a zoning and regulatory framework rather than approving site-specific development projects, many relationships to CAP actions involve a combination of positive and negative impacts depending on future project locations, transportation access, existing conditions, and site design, as discussed in the Anticipated Impacts section above.

ZTA 26-06 may have a combination of potential positive and negative impacts on implementation of the following CAP actions:

- T-1: Expand Public Transit
- T-2: Expand Active Transportation and Micromobility Network;
- T-4: Constrain Cars in Urban Areas, Limit Major New Road Construction
- S-1: Retain and Increase Forests
- S-2: Retain and Increase Tree Canopy
- S-3: Restore and Enhance Meadows and Wetlands
- S-6: Whole-System Carbon Management and Planning
- A-10: Green Infrastructure

RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS

The Climate Assessment Act requires the Planning Board to offer appropriate recommendations, such as amendments to the proposed ZTA 26-06, or other mitigating measures that could help counter any identified negative impacts through this Climate Assessment. Planning staff does not have any recommended climate-related amendments to ZTA 26-06 because it will only have minor impacts on the County's goals regarding greenhouse gas emissions and sequestration rates.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION, ASSUMPTIONS, AND METHODOLOGIES USED

The climate assessment for ZTA 26-06 was prepared using the methodology for ZTAs contained within the *Climate Assessment Recommendations for Master Plans and Zoning Text Amendments in Montgomery County, December 1, 2022*. The assessment is not a full environmental review and does not quantify project-specific impacts. Instead, it evaluates whether ZTA 26-06 may influence activities that are known to affect GHG emissions, carbon sequestration, and community resilience and adaptive capacity.