



September 11, 2018

The Honorable Hans Riemer
President, Montgomery County Council
Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Council President Riemer:

On behalf of Montgomery Housing Partnership (MHP), please allow me to take this opportunity to provide our thoughts on Zoning Text Amendments (ZTAs) 18-06 and 18-07.

First, I want to take a moment to thank the Council for the passage of Bills 34-17 and 38-17, which further the County's ability to promote the development of affordable housing throughout the County. These two ZTAs continue on that path of incentivizing the inclusion of affordable housing.

I'd like to first address ZTA 18-07. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are a key tool to increasing the supply of affordable housing in the County. They provide one of the most cost-effective ways to create affordable housing across the county. ADUs serve as a great way for older residents living on a fixed income to bring in additional funds, and an extra set of eyes to make sure everything is okay. The best way to encourage ADUs and do it in a way that the county can monitor, is to limit the barriers to establishing an ADU. The current county restrictions on parking and minimum distance between ADUs limits the number of ADUs that can be built and permitted. Two years ago, California loosened their regulations on ADUs and applications increased from 90 in 2015 to over 2,000 in 2017. These are affordable units that don't require subsidy, but now provide almost 2,000 households with an affordable place to live. We have the opportunity to do the same here. This ZTA is the first step in the right direction, and we fully support its passage.

Now to ZTA 18-06, MPDU Density Bonus. With the passage of the aforementioned Bills relating to the MPDU program, it is important to ensure the zoning code aligns with the intent of the program. As initially introduced there are some discrepancies between the two. However, with the clarifications, and amendments that Councilmember Floreen has introduced, the Bill now aligns with the language of Chapter 25A, and also with the intent of incentivizing developers to build above the minimum requirement. We ask the Council to support the amended version of 18-06.



Our housing crisis is severe. Planning Board Chair, Casey Anderson, recently published on his blog that over the next five years. Montgomery County needs another 1,892 housing permits issued to keep pace with the overall expected demand. With 45 percent of renters spending more than 35 percent of the income on housing we need to find a way to build more and build more affordably. We will only reach that goal if the full development community builds more than the base requirement. The changes to the ZTA clarify the bonus densities and provide encouragement to developers.

We do want to remind the Council of an important issue. Providing density bonuses and relaxing height restrictions only work when there are not multiple other impeding restrictions. However, restrictions on set-backs, lot sizes, and other components of the zoning code will prevent many developers from going above the minimum requirement. If we truly want developers to build 15 percent, 20 percent, or more MPDUs, then we need to remove all of the obstacles.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss these thoughts with you further. Please feel free to reach me at rgoldman@mhpartners.org or 301-812-4114.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert A. Goldman".

Robert A. Goldman, Esq.
President