



of the Anacostia River

May 15, 2019

The Honorable Todd Turner
Chair of the Prince George's County Council

Subject: Opposition to Council Resolution 17-2019 – Minor Amendment to the Gateway Arts District Development Overlay Zone—as written

Dear Council Chair Turner and Council,

I am writing on behalf of the Neighbors of the Northwest Branch of the Anacostia River, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit volunteer watershed organization with members in Montgomery and Prince Georges counties. We have been working since 2003 to restore the health of the 19-mile long Northwest Branch of the Anacostia River. We want to see this urban treasure safely enjoyed by wildlife, our families, and generations to come.

On behalf of our organization, I respectfully request that the County Council disapprove Council Resolution 17-2019 as written. We understand that the primary intent of CR 17-2019 is to enable urban farming in the Gateway Arts District. However, as written it can, in conjunction with CB 97-2018, allow construction of houses and townhouses as well as farms on what is currently zoned Open Space in Mr. Rainier, Hyattsville, North Brentwood, and Brentwood.

As an environmental organization, we favor urban farms if they contribute to the health of the soil and absorb water that otherwise would run off into the Northwest Branch. The Northwest Branch suffers greatly from roof and road runoff, so every bit of infiltration area is important. For the same reason, as well as for the mental health of residents, open space needs to be preserved. At present there is not a lot left in the Gateway Arts District; yet as population increases, the demands on open space increase. We urge that you not sacrifice this remaining open space to potentially more rooftops, especially since there are other ways to enable urban farming.

We see no urgency or compelling public need to move now to approve CR 17-2019 as written, with its risk for misuse. In the interest of the broader public, we respectfully ask the Council to disapprove CR 17-2019 and to further the cause of urban farming via a legislative vehicle tailored to avoid the risks that this one poses. As an alternative, the Council could amend CR 17-2019 to allow urban farming, but specifically to disallow construction of houses and townhouses on currently designated Open Space.

Thank you for considering our request and thank you for working toward a healthy Prince George's County. Please ensure that this letter is entered into the public record and that the Neighbors of the Northwest Branch is registered as a Party of Record. Finally, please let us know what actions you take or plan to take.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anne Ambler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anne Ambler
Chair for Advocacy