

**Council President Kate Stewart responses to
Montgomery County Communities Coalition questions on ZTA 25-02**

1. Why is the Council approaching the issues of housing availability and affordability through a ZTA, rather than through the long-established, holistic, Master Plan process?

The Council is both addressing housing availability and affordability through master plans and ZTAs. Recent master plans have required higher percentages of affordable (income limited) units. There is no one answer to addressing our housing crisis and we have a number of tools available to us including master plans and zoning text amendments.

2. Will ZTA permit applications be required to demonstrate consistency with existing area Master Plans? What takes precedence if they are not consistent?

For existing master plans, the ZTA would take precedence over the master plan. Although there might be site-specific considerations, since the Planning Board must still follow master plan conformance. Since the ZTA is consistent with Thrive 2050, that master plan takes precedence over any master plan that existed before it.

3. What safeguards are there in the ZTA to prevent displacement of low and middle income residents already living in our communities?

I share the concern about ensuring people can stay in the homes and why I have worked on [legislation such as the Homeowners Tax Credit to increase the number of people eligible for the credit](#) and have supported programs such as [HARP](#) to help with repairs for homeowners and have also supported rent stabilization for renters. Right now we face this concern regardless of the passage of this ZTA because people are purchasing single family homes that are modestly priced and building much more expensive homes. We need to look at an array of efforts to assist people in staying in their homes and being able to afford it.

Specifically when we think of naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH), the County has many ongoing efforts to acquire and preserve NOAH. The Nonprofit Preservation Fund (NPF) provides low-interest loans to nonprofit developers and local housing authorities to acquire and preserve affordable housing. The NPF restricts rental rate increases. The Right of First Refusal (ROFR) law requires an owner to offer the opportunity to buy rental housing property to the County, the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC), and any certified tenant organization, in that order. The PHP committee discussed the issue of preventing displacement during their worksession on ZTA 25-02 on 3/31/25 [here](#).

4. Will the ZTA effective date be consistent with the effective date of the proposed SRA amendment prohibiting “through lots?”

There will be an amendment discussed at full council on July 22nd.

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5. Has the Council considered policy alternatives to patchwork upzoning? If yes, what are they; if not, why aren't other paths to affordability being explored?

The Council has worked on many housing initiatives in the last couple of years. In particular, I led efforts on a FAITH ZTA to assist houses of worship to build affordable housing. I also supported efforts to advance commercial to residential conversions and we are seeing the first successes from that work. In addition, I support rent stabilization and led efforts to make our recordation tax more progressive and to have the revenue from the increases go to increase rental assistance funds.

Specifically, this Council has enacted these policies:

1. As noted above, allowing houses of worship and educational institutions to build affordable housing through FAITH ZTA 24-01
2. Ensure exploration of co-locating housing on county-owned property through Bill 33-22
3. Reduced procedural barriers to affordable housing projects through Bill 18-24
4. Established a faster review process for "Mixed Income Housing Communities" meeting affordability standards through ZTA 23-02

Increased funding:

5. \$50 million for Nonprofit Preservation Fund to preserve affordable housing in the county
6. \$100 million in revolving Housing Production Fund
7. Increased funding for the Housing Initiative Fund to a total \$32 million

6. What provisions exist within proposed ZTA 25-02 that address the challenge of storm-water management?

The issue of storm water management was discussed during both PHP committee sessions and in particular during the March committee session. Since any development under the ZTA must go through the optional method process, the stormwater management requirements we have for developments remain in place.

In addition the issue of stormwater management is one I have worked with residents on for nearly a decade and will continue to work with residents on this issue.

7. Have any of the County's utilities, including PEPCO, WSSC Water, and Washington Gas, been asked to provide input on whether their existing infrastructure

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can support the proposed additional development? If yes, what was their response; if not, why not?

Since any development allowed under this ZTA would go through optional method review of utilities and infrastructure would be part of that process.

8. Will the Council pause final action on ZTA 25-02 until the Planning Department finishes its analysis of projects in the “development pipeline,” which is expected to happen this Fall?

There are many reports and work that is ongoing to monitor and analyze housing development in the county. There is a great deal of work that needs to be done to address the housing crisis and the work is ongoing.

9. MCPS is currently in the midst of a large-scale school boundary study based upon housing and demographics as they currently exist. Have the Council and MCPS shared data with each other, including data from the Council that could inform projections of student enrollment in coming years? If not, why not?

MCPS staff have indicated that MCPS demographers incorporate many different land use and development sources of information in their projections. The Board of Education’s school boundary study process is under the purview of the Board of Education and questions about their methodology should be directed to the independently elected Board of Education and MCPS. Information on boundary studies is here:

<https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/planning/boundary/>

Through the optional method process described in ZTA 25-02, each proposed project has to go through Adequate Public Facilities (APF) review, including review of local school capacity.

10. How will ZTA 25-02 help to address challenges with the County’s current workforce housing program?

The Council has pursued a set of policies focused on housing for our public workforce, including tax credits for first responders, including police officers, fire fighters, EMTs, and emergency dispatchers. The County now also requires a study of whether new county facilities could accommodate co-located housing onsite. ZTA 25-02 provides the possibility for more options for where these essential workers would have more opportunities to live closer to and within the communities they serve every day.

Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA) staff have stated to the Council that they are working on revising the existing county workforce housing

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program. More information about that program is here:

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DHCA/housing/singlefamily/workforce/index.html>