

MoCo Sierra Club Testimony on Accessory Dwelling Units

February 26, 2019

I'm Tina Slater and I'm here tonight testifying on behalf of Montgomery County Sierra Club in favor of ZTA 19-01 – Accessory Dwelling Units. The public workshop held by Councilmember Riemer was very helpful in providing information, answering questions, and addressing the concerns of residents.

An ADU is a second dwelling unit (with its own entrance, full kitchen and bathroom) on the same lot as a single dwelling unit. It might be a converted basement or an apartment over a garage. The primary property must be owner-occupied and have at least 2 off-street parking spaces, unless a waiver is granted.

- The demand for housing in our county has outpaced supply, causing two problems – (first) many folks who would like to live in MoCo can't find a housing unit, and (second) for those who do find a place the cost may be quite high. ADUS will expand the supply of housing.
- Most ADUs will be modest in both size and amenities, and affordable to rent. Creating ADUs is a low-cost means to increase affordable housing.
- ADUs will expand the supply of housing near transit. A 2018 report commissioned by the Council, found that ~ 70% of ADU applications were in Silver Spring, Bethesda, Rockville, or Gaithersburg – communities with convenient access to public transit.

The ADU approach to expanding affordable housing has two practical advantages over many other approaches to achieve these objectives.

Advantage #1 – Expanding ADUs has no impact on the County budget (unlike, say, increasing affordable housing by funding HOC housing)

Advantage #2 – Expanding ADUs does not ask developers for anything (unlike, say, the MPDU program, which requires developers to provide these units)

The ADU proposal ***supplements*** those approaches (HOC, MPDU) by increasing the number of affordable units, and does not require new infrastructure of roads, water/sewer. Finally, the proposed ZTA also simplifies the approval process.

Some other benefits:

- ADUs allow adult children or grandchildren to live nearby, but in separate quarters. Seniors can stay in their homes and rent an ADU to supplement their retirement income.
- In the past, we've given neighbors extraordinary veto power over housing. However, this ADU legislation can provide geographic equity – ADUs could be built in wealthy, middle-income, or lower-income neighborhoods. The incremental use of existing roads, water, sewer means there is no additional infrastructure cost to the county.
- Finally, parking frequently comes up as an issue, but most of the existing ADUs are located in communities served by transit, and future ADUs can be built along the county's BRT lines ---

MoCo SC position? We support expansion of opportunities for ADUs in MoCo.