



VILLAGE OF NORTH CHEVY CHASE
PO BOX 15887, CHEVY CHASE, MD 20815

March 24, 2025

Dear County Council Members:

We appreciate the County's desire to expand housing opportunities for essential workers. The Workforce/More Housing N.O.W. proposal (ZTA 25-02) is a significant improvement over the prior Attainable Housing Strategy Initiative (AHSI) that had previously been put forward by the Planning Board. Credit to the Council for having heard and listened to the concerns that had been raised about the AHSI.

While the underlying objectives of More Housing N.O.W. proposal are laudable, unfortunately, a number of questions still remain, relating to potential adverse impacts on those communities directly affected, one of which is the Village of North Chevy Chase, which we represent, and whether it can accomplish the purposes for which it is being proposed. Specifically, it remains unclear whether the proposal's implementation will provide for increased opportunities for affordable workforce home ownership, or just provide more affordably priced workforce rental units.

Further, while there may be parts of the County where the proposal may achieve the desired results, that may not be the case elsewhere. It is difficult to assess the impacts because there is no evaluation of different infrastructure conditions that vary from one part of the County to another, including school availability, condition of adjacent roadways, sewage and storm water management capabilities, available power grid etc., each of which can impact the ability to successfully implement the proposal.

What then will most likely happen in certain parts of the County is:

- A replacement of residential home ownership by increased residential rental units managed by real estate investment firms, accompanied by a fundamental shift in the dynamics of local municipal governance away from meeting the needs of individual residential owners to dealing with absentee corporate management companies.
- A minimal increase in workforce housing accompanied by a significant expansion of market priced rental units at locations irrespective of demand.

Moreover, the full impact of the major disruptions and uncertainty arising from the Trump Administration's actions need to be considered in determining whether to pursue major changes in countywide residential housing strategy at this time.

These concerns notwithstanding, if the proposal is adopted, there are a number of specific recommendations that we believe need to be taken into account, which would make it more effective and better accepted by the community. These adjustments will help ensure balanced growth, sustainability, and better compatibility with the character of our neighborhoods.

Preserve Single-Family Neighborhood Character

To keep workforce housing developments in line with the scale of surrounding single-family homes, we recommend prohibiting the chaining of multiple lots along eligible corridors. This would help ensure that increased density along the corridors would not otherwise affect the character of the interior neighborhoods.

Environmental Impacts

We recommend the inclusion of a comprehensive environmental impact assessment as part of the development review process. This should focus on storm water management, energy efficiency, tree canopy preservation, pedestrian and public transit access, and ensuring that new developments integrate seamlessly into existing infrastructure while maintaining the environmental quality of the area.

Housing Balance and Infrastructure Impact Analysis

We propose that the County conduct a thorough infrastructure impact analysis prior to any new development, focusing on the potential effects on local traffic patterns, public transportation, schools, and emergency services.

Development Standards and Equitable Housing Options

We recommend setting a maximum square footage limit for developments and establishing lot coverage standards consistent with existing zoning, where larger lots have lower coverage percentages. To ensure fairness, we also suggest adding guidelines to make sure workforce housing units are comparable to market-rate units in size and location. Finally, regulations should be put in place to prevent workforce housing units from being used as short-term rentals, ensuring they remain available for long-term residents.

Addressing Discrepancies and Specific Concerns

We fully endorse the specific text amendments that have been separately submitted by six municipalities affected by this proposal, including the Village of North Chevy Chase, which are intended to provide greater clarity as to the scope of the proposed ZTA and to eliminate any possible ambiguities.¹ In particular, it is absolutely essential that there be a precise identification of the properties to which it would apply and the specific circumstances in which the Optional Method Workforce Housing procedures could be utilized. This is still not clear, as all we currently have is an interactive map that may or may not be completely accurate. There is also uncertainty as to whether those procedures could be utilized for properties adjacent to or abutting covered properties. Failure to provide absolute clarity on these matters will leave open

¹ These municipalities are the Village of Chevy Chase, Town of Chevy Chase, Section 3 of the Village of Chevy Chase, Section 5 of the Village of Chevy Chase, Chevy Chase View and Village of North Chevy Chase.

the opportunity for after the fact gamesmanship that could significantly expand the scope of the program beyond what I believe is intended. Finally, the ZTA should explicitly prioritize the development of truly affordable workforce housing, including protections against the development of high-end duplexes that may price out the intended workforce demographic.

One specific recommendation of direct relevance to the Village of North Chevy Chase is in regard to excluding properties that front on an access lane to Interstate 495. In the case of the Village of North Chevy Chase, a number of properties currently identified as covered properties front on the dedicated lane on Connecticut Avenue for eastbound access to I-495. Allowing any increase in residential density along that block would serve to further exacerbate an already intolerable traffic congestion situation at the Jones Bridge Road, Connecticut Avenue, Kensington Parkway intersection during morning and evening rush hours.

We believe addressing these concerns and incorporating the suggested changes, should ZTA 25-02 be adopted in some form, will make it more balanced and effective, and thereby fostering greater transparency and community trust.

Thank you for considering these points. We look forward to continuing this important conversation.

Sincerely,

Village of North Chevy Chase Council

Adrian Andreassi, Chair
Brian Hoffner, Vice Chair
Maury Mechanick, Secretary
Olga Joos, Treasurer
Jon Macy, Member