

Sayers, Margery

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Sent: Monday, September 21, 2020 5:39 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Testimony Against CB-45

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Testimony Against CB-45-2020

My entire professional life was devoted to the needs of individuals with disabilities and seniors with functional limitations. Therefore one might readily expect my support of this bill which would facilitate an affordable development for adults with disabilities, seniors, and families. However I **cannot** support this bill for numerous reasons. It clearly appears as the old saying goes "penny wise and a pound foolish."

I simply can't justify the doubling of acreage for affordable housing on non-residential properties when non-residentially zoned properties are the ones that are actually income **positive** from a tax standpoint. Why does the county continue to whittle away at the remaining acreage available for job creation, commercial and Industrial endeavors--many of which are located in the Route 1 corridor?

Regrettably some non-residential zones actually do permit the construction of residences thanks to the excessive use of Overlay Districts. There is truly no need to remove 24 additional acres every 3 years for affordable housing projects that will ultimately once again not be affordable. Because economically integrated developments are best, the number of market-rate units often equals or exceeds the affordable ones and lately the County is only requiring that such developments include affordable units for a limited number of years. This just creates another way for developers to put market rate units on land they acquire at a lower price. By the county committing to considering a PILOT as part of the application for the project which stimulated this bill it further reduces any tax income to be derived from the project. This is not a good deal for the taxpayer!

In the case of the current project put forth by the Autism Society, one has to take a look at the numbers to see that it also is not a good deal for the Autism Society! If only 25% of the 78 units are reserved for adults with disabilities, a costly changing of the zoning for ever more still only yields 19 special needs units. Given that a mix of disabilities would be the appropriate approach, the number of units for young adults *with autism* again drops significantly. If 600 students are expected to transition out of special education services in the next 5 years it becomes obvious this effort is quite a drop in the bucket in terms of providing affordable Independent Living housing.

The previous division of the Housing Commission from the county DHCD resulted in duplicate administrative costs, yet another reason we don't seem to get ahead on providing 'affordable housing'. In reality neither the public nor private sector has shown much ability to bring to the marketplace units which rent or sell at a price affordable to low-income individuals including seniors and adults with developmental disabilities. The high price of residentially zoned land is often identified as a major reason and hence cheaper non-residential land is being looked to as a solution. But what guarantee do we have?

Rather than doubling the acreage to level the playing field for the commission and the county why not divide the current 12 acres between the two groups. To rush through this ZRA at this time, while we are working on the next general plan, is unconscionable!

It gives me nightmares to think what the result would be if all 24 permitted acres were to be developed in a single area! The impacts on a community of large Texas donut apartment buildings are significant!

If this bill should go forward I would certainly hope there would be amendments to prevent heavily concentrating in one area. For example, prohibit development of additional units for 6 or 9 years in the same Council District; prohibit additional

residential construction along the Route 1 Corridor since there already exists so much non residential land that nevertheless can be changed to residential due to overlays. Ask yourself does plopping residences in the midst of a warehouse area provide an **equitable and desirable** quality of life for low income residents? Just look at the Leola Dorsey facility in Jessup that is surrounded by commercial and industrial development. There was *nothing* low-cost about that project, especially since the land was purchased at a significantly higher cost than the then current owner had recently paid for it. We need to stop playing financial games in the name of affordable housing.

I truly support the need for affordable housing for existing Howard County residents, especially for individuals with special needs and for seniors. Reducing duplicate management and reducing the number of non-profits directing affordable housing efforts in the County—coupled with the elimination of the current fee in lieu system (where developers buy their way out at a fraction of the actual cost of a unit they are selling in their new development) is the only way we can truly begin to catch up on the needed units. We can't 'ZRA' our way out of the dilemma we face.

Respectfully yours,

Susan Garber