

Testimony
Gaithersburg Zoning Text Amendment CTAM-8611-2020

November 16, 2020

The League of Women Voters of Montgomery County urges the Gaithersburg City Council and Planning Commission to join us in opposing Zoning Text Amendment CTAM-8611-2020.

- **We support government policies and programs to maintain and increase the much-needed supply of affordable and low-income housing in the community.**
- Unfortunately, this legislation takes the City in the exact opposite direction.

The public use by-right language in current City law is an example of an excellent existing policy that eases the way for the creation of government-owned affordable housing.

- It is a valuable tool that the City has used before to provide critically needed housing that seniors can afford. It is therefore ill advised to eliminate this provision, which is just what the ZTA seeks to do.

There are two separate, yet related issues involved in this legislation:

(1) First is the Montgomery County Housing Opportunities' proposal to convert the closed Gaithersburg Holiday Inn into **senior affordable housing** with 160 apartments, including a new senior center on the ground floor. HOC is seeking to create this new senior community through the public use by-right process, which is the most expeditious and cost-effective way to create affordable housing for the people who need it the most. If this ZTA passes, the ability of HOC to provide all-important affordable housing to seniors at the site becomes questionable at best.

(2) Second, the negative impacts of the ZTA are far more extensive than just the Holiday Inn site, as it eliminates a valuable tool to convert other existing, vacant buildings in commercial and industrial zones to affordable housing for City residents. In contrast, the "adaptive reuse" approach to government-owned affordable housing is a creative way to address our housing shortage and should continue to be encouraged.

If you agree that we must maintain every possible tool at our disposal to house our neediest residents, we encourage you to defeat ZTA CTAM 8611-2020.

Presenter: Diane Hibino, co-president