



Greater Olney Civic Association

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**Mid-County
Citizens Advisory
Board**

September 23, 2004

TO: Montgomery County Council

FROM: John Lyons
Executive Vic President
Greater Olney Civic Association

RE: MPDU Legislation

GOCA is an umbrella organization of more than two dozen local civic and homeowners associations. During its nearly 30-year history, GOCA has served to organize and lead the Greater Olney community on a wide range of planning and land use issues.

GOCA recognizes that housing affordability has become an urgent and important public policy issue in Montgomery County. All of us know that price in a free market is a straightforward function of supply and demand, and that the fundamental problem we face is that demand for housing, especially lower-priced housing, has overwhelmed the supply, driving all prices upward. It is nevertheless an extremely complex problem to solve given that much of the County is already mature or rapidly approaching full build-out. The long-term solution no doubt requires a careful and thoughtful examination of the County's business model – its growth policy – as well as a continued focus on the creation of innovative tools and programs, such as the MPDU program, that can be implemented when existing neighborhoods are redeveloped.

In the near-term, GOCA supports the goals and objectives of the MPDU program, which has been implemented extensively and successfully in Olney during the past 25 years. GOCA commends the Council for undertaking to reinvigorate the program.

GOCA believes that the single most important step the Council can take to generate MPDUs is to eliminate the loophole that enables developers to pay a fee in lieu of building otherwise required MPDUs. GOCA also believes that substantially extending the sale and rent control period for MPDUs will be a crucial element of any long-term plan to maintain a meaningful supply of MPDUs in the county.

Member Associations

Briars Acres

Brooke Manor Estates

Brookeville Knolls

Camelback Village

Cherrywood

Environ

Fairhill Farm

Hallowell

Highlands of Olney

Homeland Village

James Creek

Lake Hallowell

Norbeck Grove

Norbeck Meadows

North Creek

Oak Grove

Olney Mill

Olney Oaks

Olney Square

Olney Village

Perspective Woods

Southeast Rural Olney

Sycamore Acres

Tanterra

Towns at Environ

Victoria Springs

At the same time, GOCA wonders whether reducing or eliminating green space and public amenities requirements, and increasing lot coverage limits would produce enough benefits in terms of additional MPDUs as to justify the costs of the added flexibility. GOCA urges the Council to generate and evaluate the data that can illuminate and inform your decision.

In addition, GOCA urges the Council to examine carefully and proceed cautiously with respect to the various proposals that would permit deviations from master plan guidelines to achieve the construction of MPDUs. GOCA believes that such deviations should be permitted on a case-by-case basis only after the Planning Board has made specific findings based on record evidence that (1) MPDUs could not be achieved without the deviations, and (2) the deviations are no more extensive than necessary to achieve the proposed MPDUs.

Finally, with respect to ZTA 03-09, GOCA believes the Council should carefully consider whether placing MPDUs in large lot zones undermines the policy purposes of such zones. If after such consideration the Council concludes that the MPDU program should be applied in large lot zones, GOCA urges the Council to include language requiring the Planning Board on a case-by-case basis to make findings that a proposed development, including its MPDU component, is compatible with existing surrounding neighborhoods.

Thank you for your consideration of GOCA's views.