

MONTGOMERY COUNTY STORMWATER PARTNERS NETWORK

www.stormwaterpartnersmoco.net

The Honorable Sidney Katz
President of the Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Ave
Rockville, MD 20850

February 28, 2020

Dear Council President Katz and Councilmembers,

The Montgomery County Stormwater Partners Network, formed in 2005 and with 38 organizational members, urges you to vote NO on ZTA 20-01, which proposes to place up to 1800 acres of land in Montgomery County's Agricultural Reserve into solar arrays. As co-leaders in charting Montgomery's path to climate sanity, we support placement of solar panels wherever it makes sense to do so, in accordance with Smart Growth principles and plans. Since Montgomery is in the midst of climate action planning, and renewal of our General Plan, this ZTA is premature, and we oppose it as written.

Montgomery is rich in urbanized land that is compatible with utility-scale solar. In [a study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#), researchers defined "*Compatible areas*" for utility-scale solar facilities as "*areas that are already developed.*" A key reason for locating utility-scale solar in already-developed urban places, is that transmission losses are minimized.

Examples of Smart-Growth Solar projects include: [Montgomery County's Department of General Services, Division of Facilities Management](#) which has built 7.6 MW of solar at the Public Safety Headquarters in Gaithersburg and the Montgomery County Correctional Facility in Boyds. DGS also maintains over 10 million square feet of landscaping – some of which could be retrofitted with solar arrays. These are only a few examples of County investment in smart-growth solar facilities located in already-urban places.

While small-scale solar facilities are already allowed under current zoning code in the Ag Reserve, large, utility-scale solar arrays, if not carefully located, will compete with the core purpose of the Ag Reserve, which is to produce food and fiber, and to maintain farms and forests that contribute clean water and clean air. In stepping-up these core uses through regenerative agriculture and reforestation, Montgomery's Ag Reserve plays a crucial role in climate resilience. To be in harmony with the Ag Reserve's climate response role, County zoning code must guide utility-scale solar to compatible locations. This ZTA must wait until the County's Climate Action Plan and General Plan Update (Thrive 2050) are completed. There must also be a countywide "Solar Smart-Growth" study of compatible places appropriate for utility-scale solar, and an integration of DEP's new Agricultural Reserve GIS map analysis, before proceeding with the approval of ZTA 20-01.

In summary, the Stormwater Partners Network opposes ZTA 20-01 as written.

If you have questions regarding our testimony, please contact co-chairs Eliza Cava (eliza.cava@anshome.org) or Jeanne Braha (jbaha@rockcreekconservancy.org).

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Sincerely,

Stormwater Partners Network Organizational Members:

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Eliza Cava, Director of Conservation, **Audubon Naturalist Society**

Philip Musegaas, Vice President of Programs and Litigation, **Potomac Riverkeeper Network**

Ken Bawer, Vice President, **Watts Branch Watershed Alliance**

Tracy Rouleau, President, **Muddy Branch Alliance**

Ken Bawer, President-Elect, **West Montgomery Citizens Association**

Ginny Barnes, Vice-Chair, **Conservation Montgomery**

Anne James, President, **Friends of Ten Mile Creek**

Deborah Sarabia, President, **Seneca Creek Watershed Partners**

Concerned Individuals and Other Groups:

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