

December 11, 2023

Dear Planning Commission Members, Mayor, and Town Council,

The Washington Grove Racial and Social Equity Committee (RASEC) is writing in support of allowing and licensing Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). One of RASEC's foundational goals is to examine policies and practices (including those that are seemingly neutral) to determine whether they are contributing to racial inequity and promoting inclusivity. We believe that allowing ADUs promotes inclusivity and may help in a small way to balance the inequities promulgated by the dominance of single-family residential zones, many of which initially excluded non-white residents through restrictive covenants and prevented the transfer of intergenerational wealth.

There is a housing shortage in much of the country which is driving up prices and increasing the median age of median home buyers. Although allowing ADUs does not automatically increase racial and ethnic diversity, ADUs do provide economic diversity through affordable housing, with no land costs and options for multigenerational families to live together in separate quarters, yet have proximity to help one another. ADUs allow people to age in place with rental income to assist with increasing taxes. There also is the option to have an on-site caregiver. ADUs are limited in size which translates to less environmental strain. Young people can have the privilege of living in our "Town Within a Forest" rather than in an apartment surrounded by asphalt.

RASEC would like to commend the work of the Planning Commission and Charlie Challstrom in providing a draft ordinance detailing the parameters needed if the Town approves ADUs. Since much of the ordinance is modeled from the Montgomery County ordinance, ensuring that ADUs are licensed will be done by Montgomery County. Washington Grove already falls under the Montgomery County landlord-tenant regulations for safety, so those laws also will be enforced by Montgomery County.

The Planning Commission has taken care to customize the proposed ordinance to suit the needs and values of Washington Grove. For example, the county ordinance mandates the following parking requirements:

Parking: If there is an existing driveway, one on-site parking space is required in addition to any on-site parking space required for the principal dwelling (Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance 59.6.2.4B); however, if a new driveway must be constructed for the ADU requirement then two on-site parking spaces, total min. 320 sq. ft., shall be provided. If the property is located within one mile of any Metrorail, Purple Line or MARC Rail Station, no on-site parking space is required.

Even though Washington Grove is within one mile of public transportation, the Planning Commission has considered our narrow streets and the importance of protecting trees in terms of not allowing vehicles to park on the roots. Therefore, the proposed Washington Grove ordinance has requirements for on-site parking which will require an additional on-site space for each ADU bedroom, with a two-bedroom

maximum. The total number of vehicles remains the same which is a maximum of four vehicles per lot or contiguous lots associated with the primary dwelling owner.

There are two changes to the proposed Washington Grove ordinance we would suggest because we believe they are exclusionary. These sections are from the Montgomery County Ordinance, but we believe they should be modified.

First, the definition of “Household” is confusing. The ordinance definition is below:

A person living alone, or any one of the following groups living together as a single housekeeping unit and sharing common cooking, sanitation, and sleeping facilities:

1. any number of people related by blood, marriage, adoption, or guardianship;
2. up to five unrelated people; or
3. two unrelated people and any children, parents, siblings, or other persons related to either of them by blood, adoption, or guardianship.

Modern households come in many forms often due to economic constraints, cultural traditions, and lifestyle. To encourage and support cultural diversity, economic relief, and lifestyle preference, we suggest a simplified definition of “Household” as follows:

Household – A person living alone or any group of people living together as a housekeeping unit and sharing common cooking, sanitation, and sleeping facilities.

Second, the draft ordinance places a limit of two occupants over 18 allowed to reside in an ADU, yet two bedrooms are allowed. This eliminates many arrangements such as a couple with an adult child with a disability, a couple and an adult friend, or a couple and a caretaker. We suggest that the occupancy requirements for ADUs be defined by the definition of “Household” rather than a number limit for occupants or an age limit.

Since this ordinance creates a new paradigm, RASEC believes that periodic reviews will allow the Town to respond to new issues if they arise. RASEC is interested in participating in these reviews as refinements are made and new proposals are put forth. We are a small community with limited capacity to expand housing stock. Allowing ADUs can be our small yet vital contribution.

Thank you.

Racial and Social Equity Committee (RASEC)