

## Potential Amendments to the Washington Grove Zoning Code

The current debate surrounding changes to single-family residential zoning has become politically polarized, like every other issue. More affordable housing is needed but because there is a housing affordability problem, single-family housing has suddenly been declared “racist” by some groups as a convenient yet inflammatory and erroneous way to justify a radical, top down, across the board redefinition of our residential land use patterns.

Redlining and discriminatory covenants affected many single-family neighborhoods in the past, but that does NOT mean single-family neighborhoods are inherently discriminatory today. Some neighborhoods were discriminatory because of shameful, racist, private business practices related to sales, covenants, and mortgages – not because of zoning laws. If past inequities are to be addressed, it makes sense to develop proactive programs to assist disadvantaged groups make up for past discrimination and have more housing options, including ownership, rather than the elimination of the entire category of single-family housing for everyone.

Single family housing is discriminatory only in an economic sense – as it is generally more expensive than multifamily housing. On that basis, everything with a price is discriminatory. Single family housing is more expensive because it has more open space and vegetation, more living space, more peace and quiet, and more stable populations of long-term neighbors who know each other ---- all the reasons why people pay more to live in single family neighborhoods.

Denser housing will not lead to more affordable housing. Many larger towns/cities are much denser than Washington Grove, yet their housing costs are substantially higher. Increasing density does not lead to greater public transit use nor does it help with the environment. “Rent” of these DADUs will not be more affordable than the prevailing rental rates and will stress the Town’s infrastructure.

Expanding the current zoning to include (DADU) detached additional dwelling units will adversely and irreparably affect the character of Washington Grove and become the first step in other zoning/use/setbacks/exceptions to come. (Just look at MOCO’s ever expanding zoning text amendments {primarily driven by Hans Reimer} that are all designed to remove and/or loosen barriers to creating/building these ADUs, DADUs, apartment buildings and other multi family style housing in or next to currently zoned single-family neighborhoods).

Approximately 8 – 10 years ago information was provided to the mayor and planning commission expressing concern regarding the federal government’s intent to outlaw single family zoning and withhold federal funds from states and other jurisdictions that failed to adopt this attack on property rights. The mayor and PC, at that time, expressed strong support to never encroach upon the single-family zoning classifications of the Town. Although it was removed from federal legislation at that time, the state of Maryland as well as Montgomery County MD began to incrementally introduce legislation that whittled away at the single-family zoning text.

As part of the \$2.3 trillion infrastructure plan, the current administration (federal government) is again pushing local governments to allow multi-family structures and apartment buildings into neighborhoods currently restricted to single family homes – “to ease a national affordable housing shortage and combat racial injustice in the housing market”. Local governments would be incentivized to get rid of exclusionary zoning by awarding grants and tax credits to cities/towns that change their zoning regulations (i.e., ban single family zones). This federal government plan would radically change the landscape/character of towns and cities across the country, destroy suburban neighborhoods and torpedo the American dream. Now the Town of Washington Grove is following this misplaced ideology. It subtly changed the ordinances to open the door to ADU’s and DADUs by eliminating the number of unrelated household occupants, then introducing “support for rental/accessory dwelling units” into the master plan and now this elimination of single-family zoning.

Codifying ADUs and DADUs would effectively eliminate single family zoning in the Town of Washington Grove and cause unpredictable effects upon the character of the neighborhood and the value of its homes The Town must choose the path that is best for its residents and not become just another extension of the federal/state/county policies that are

based upon a flawed ideology. This Washington Grove Ordinance change proposal to end single family zoning in the Town under the guise of "allowing accessory dwelling units" must be rejected.

Respectfully,

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"The further a society drifts from the truth the more it will hate those who proclaim it" – George Orwell

...and truth is considered hate speech from those who hate the truth.