



CLIMATE ASSESSMENT FOR ZTA 23-02, REGULATORY APPROVALS – MIXED-USE HOUSING COMMUNITIES

PURPOSE OF CLIMATE ASSESSMENTS

The purpose of the climate assessments is to evaluate the anticipated impact of master plans and zoning text amendments (ZTAs) on the county's contribution to addressing climate change. These assessments will provide the County Council with a better understanding of the potential climate impacts and implications of proposed master plans and ZTAs at the county level. The scope of the climate assessments is limited to the county's contribution to addressing climate change, specifically upon the county's contribution to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and how actions proposed by master plans and ZTAs could improve the county's adaptive capacity to climate change and increase community resilience.

While co-benefits such as health and cost savings may be discussed, the focus is on how proposed master plans and ZTAs may impact GHG emissions and community resilience.

SUMMARY

ZTA 23-02 defines a Mixed-Use Housing Community and creates an expedited plan approval process for Mixed-Use Housing Community projects. The ZTA establishes a new development review process that expedites the review process for certain mixed-use projects. It does not change current zoning or zoning densities, and any development under this use would still have to meet underlying zoning requirements including allowed uses and any applicable development and building standards. As a result, Montgomery Planning anticipates that ZTA 23-02, as written, will have insignificant to no impact on the county's goals regarding greenhouse gas emissions and sequestration and on community resilience and adaptive capacity. As it is currently unknown if, where, and to what extent any development under this use will occur, any potential minor positive impacts to greenhouse gas emissions and community adaptive capacity that may result from the co-location of residential and commercial uses are also indeterminate.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF ZTA 23-01

The ZTA was introduced on March 28, 2023, with a companion Subdivision Regulation Amendment (SRA). The purpose of ZTA 23-01 is to incentivize the development of more affordable housing, affordable to more people with lower incomes, and to provide more commercial opportunities to communities that may lack commercial spaces. The ZTA establishes a new use type called the Mixed Use Housing Community, which is a development with 150,000 square feet or more of new development that meets specified affordability thresholds, and provides for two or more new commercial uses. A new regulatory review plan type, the Mixed Use Housing Community Plan, is also established to provide for an expedited review and approval process for Mixed Use Housing Communities.

VARIABLES THAT COULD AFFECT THE ASSESSMENT

CLIMATE-RELATED VARIABLES

Greenhouse Gas-related Variables:

Transportation-related: Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT); Number of Trips; and Non-vehicle Modes of Transportation

Adaptive Capacity-Related Variables:

Change to Accessibility or Prevalence of Local Food Sources and Other Goods; Change to Community Connectivity; and Change in Distribution of Resources and Support

OTHER VARIABLES

Other variables include the number, location, and extent of future development approvals issued pursuant to the ZTA.

ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS, CARBON SEQUESTRATION, AND DRAWDOWN

The ZTA provides for a combination of existing allowed uses to benefit from an expedited development review process. It does not change current zoning or zoning densities, and any development under this use would still have to meet underlying zoning requirements and all applicable development and building standards. As a result, Montgomery Planning anticipates that ZTA 23-02, as written, will have insignificant to no impact on the county's goals regarding greenhouse gas emissions and sequestration. If the ZTA is amended to allow commercial uses that are not currently allowed in residential multi-unit zones, it could provide small local positive impacts on

greenhouse gas emissions. These positive impacts could result from small decreases in vehicle miles traveled and number of trips, and minor increases in non-vehicle modes of transportation in such areas. But as it is currently unknown if, where, and to what extent any development under this use will occur, any potential minor positive impacts to greenhouse gas emissions that may result, even if the ZTA is amended, are also indeterminate.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND ADAPTIVE CAPACITY

Montgomery Planning anticipates that ZTA 23-02 will result in insignificant to no impact on community resilience.

Montgomery Planning anticipates that ZTA 23-02, as written, will have insignificant to no impact on the county's goals regarding greenhouse gas emissions and sequestration. If the ZTA is amended to allow commercial uses to occur in residential zones where they are not currently allowed, small local positive impacts on the adaptive capacity of these communities could result. These positive impacts could result from small increases to accessibility or prevalence of local food sources and other goods, community connectivity, and distribution of resources and support in such areas. But as it is currently unknown if, where, and to what extent any development under this use will occur, any potential minor positive impacts to community adaptive capacity that may result, even if the ZTA is amended, are also indeterminate.

RELATIONSHIP TO GHG REDUCTION AND SEQUESTRATION ACTIONS CONTAINED IN THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY CLIMATE ACTION PLAN (CAP)

ZTA 23-02 does not involve any GHG or sequestration activities that relate to the GHG reduction and sequestration actions from the county's Climate Action Plan.

RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS

One potential way the ZTA could be amended to provide potential small positive climate-related impacts would be to allow new commercial uses to occur under the Mixed-Use Housing Community use in residential multi-unit zones (where they are not allowed under current zoning). This amendment would make it possible to realize at least some small positive local impacts on the county's goals regarding greenhouse gas emissions and sequestration and on community resilience if future development under this use occurs in these zones. Planning staff recommends this approach unless achieving these slight benefits are held by the Planning Board to be outweighed by other considerations and potential amendments regarding this ZTA.

The ZTA does not offer obvious additional opportunities for enhancing positive climate change-related impacts beyond these potential minor benefits.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION, ASSUMPTIONS, AND METHODOLOGIES USED

The climate assessment for ZTA 23-02 was prepared using the methodology (tables 1, 2, and 8, in particular) for ZTAs contained within the [*Climate Assessment Recommendations for Master Plans and Zoning Text Amendments in Montgomery County, December 1, 2022*](#).