

Montgomery Planning

CLIMATE ASSESSMENT FOR 23-06, FENTON VILLAGE

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 addressing climate change, specifically the effect of land use recommendations in master plans and ZTAs on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and sequestration, 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

Montgomery Planning anticipates that ZTA 23-06, Fenton Village Overlay Zone will result in very slight and indeterminate impacts on the county's goals of addressing greenhouse gas emissions, carbon sequestration, and the resilience and adaptive capacity to our communities. ZTA 23-06 will remove site plan submittal requirements for projects under 1,000 square feet within the Fenton Village Overlay Zone located within the boundaries of the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan. Due to the large size of most existing buildings and lot sizes, this submittal exemption would apply to only a few properties within the overlay zone. Carbon impacts associated with 1,000 square feet of new construction will be slight in relation to the local and county's overall carbon footprint and sequestration rates. There will be an indeterminate yet slightly positive benefit on several community adaptive capacity-related variables. It is unknown but likely that there will be improved building energy efficiency, enhanced commercial and community vibrancy, and increased economic development in underdeveloped portions of the Plan area.

The focus of this assessment is on how the ZTA may impact GHG emissions and community resilience.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF ZTA 23-06

Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 23-06, Fenton Village (FV) Overlay Zone – site plan, was introduced by Council President Glass and co-sponsored by Councilmember Stewart on October 17, 2023. The Fenton Village overlay zone was established as a recommendation of the 2000 Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan which wanted to allow more flexibility in the development standards and range of permitted uses, while ensuring compatibility of new uses through limits on height and design elements. Requiring all sites developed or modified in Fenton Village to go through site plan was one mechanism enacted to ensure this. Recently there have been a few properties in Fenton Village that have wanted to do small expansions to existing structures to accommodate expanded restaurant and entertainment uses. These requests have been very small in scale, but because of the existing overlay zone language, would still require a site plan review to proceed. This ZTA was introduced to address the burden the site plan process places on small modifications and expansions.

VARIABLES THAT COULD AFFECT THE ASSESSMENT

CLIMATE-RELATED VARIABLES

The following variables were identified in Tables 1 and 8 of the *Climate Assessment Recommendations for Master Plans and Zoning Text Amendments in Montgomery County*.

GHG Emissions and Sequestration Checklist of Variables.

Greenhouse Gas:

- Building embodied emissions: New additions will incur embodied emissions from new construction and/or deconstruction of existing buildings.
- Pavement infrastructure: It is ‘possible’ that new construction will increase impervious cover if the additions are placed in areas that are now in green cover.
- Material waste produced: New construction may require the deconstruction of existing build materials.

Energy Related.

- Electricity usage: New buildings will require energy use.
- Stationary fuel usage: New buildings will require energy use.

Land Coverage Change.

- Area of non-forest tree canopy: It’s possible that a few trees will be lost during new construction as the properties within the Fenton Village Overlay Zone impacted by this ZTA would likely qualify for a Forest Conservation Exemption under Chapter 22A-5(t) of the Forest Conservation Law. This exemption provides protection for areas of forest cover but does not include protection or mitigation for impact to individual trees.
- Area of green cover: It’s possible to have loss in lawn cover.

Community Resilience and Adaptive Capacity Checklist of Variables.

Exposure-Related Factors.

- Activity in Urban Heat: New buildings could contribute to urban heat if they replace green cover or have darker surfaces than existing impervious surfaces.

Sensitivity-Related Factors

- Change to non-forest tree canopy: Its possible individual trees will need to be removed for construction.
- Change to quality or quantity of other green areas: Its possible lawn will be lost due to construction.
- Change to impacts of heat: Its possible new buildings will increase urban heat island.
- Change in perviousness: Its possible new construction will increase impervious cover.

ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS, CARBON SEQUESTRATION, AND DRAWDOWN

Montgomery Planning anticipates ZTA 23-06 will result slight and indeterminant negative greenhouse gas emissions and sequestration rates. These increases are far below what would otherwise be allowed under the existing zoning within the master plan and all exclusions to site plan submittal must still meet underlying zoning requirements and energy efficient building standards. Relative to what is allowed under the current zone, the ZTA carbon and sequestration impacts for building construction less than 1,000 square feet is minimal. There will be slight embodied carbon emissions from material use, waste, and disposal during construction, and slight carbon emissions associated with energy demands for heating and cooling of new buildings.

It is possible that new construction may result in the loss of green lawns and trees which will have slight and limited impacts on Silver Springs sequestration and drawdown capacities.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND ADAPTIVE CAPACITY

Montgomery County Planning anticipates ZTA 23-06 to result in slightly positive impact on community resilience and adaptive capacity factors. If amended this ZTA will allow small business owners to avert the arduous and expensive site plan submittal process. It would encourage small business expansion in downtown Silver Spring resulting in increased community resources and benefits, reduced transportation demand, local jobs and enhance economic opportunities.

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

ZTA 23-06 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

Planning staff does not have any recommended climate-related amendments to ZTA 23-06 because it will likely result in unpredictable minor to insignificant impacts on the County’s greenhouse gas emissions and sequestration goals. It does not offer additional opportunities for enhancing positive climate change impacts as it will not have to implement Green Cover recommendations in the master plan, protect individual trees, or provide replacement plantings per the applicable requirements of the Forest Conservation Laws. However, as noted, there will be slightly positive community adaptive benefits by increasing local business expansion, resources, jobs, reduced travel demands, and social gatherings opportunities.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION, ASSUMPTIONS, AND METHODOLOGIES USED

The climate assessment for ZTA 23-06 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*](#).