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April 1, 2024

Mayor, City of Gaithersburg
Gaithersburg City Council
Gaithersburg Planning Commission

RE: Written Testimony for April 15, 2024 Public Hearing on Retool Gaithersburg

Dear Mayor, Council Members and Planning Commissioners:

As the institutional owner of a property that has residential split zoning (R-A and RP-T), I would like to express support for the recommended technical changes to these zones. As developed, these revised standards will help pave the way to create a more affordable supply of housing within the City of Gaithersburg. As noted in the Zoning Diagnostic Report, the current requirements of the R-A zone are concerning (page 16). These constricting standards do not aid in fulfilling the City's zoning goals of "not creating barriers to achieving the vision" and "centering equity."

I would also like to respectfully request that the "split zoning" issue within the City be reviewed, analyzed and modified, particularly in zones which could help support Gaithersburg's affordable housing objective. Developing these dual-zoned types of parcels, many of which I am assuming have institutional owners, is extremely difficult due to the onerous process associated with converting a split-zoned site into a single-zoned site. Institutional owners simply do not have the time or resources to embark on this process, but I believe would be willing to have housing -- or other development objectives sought by the City -- on their respective properties if there was an easier way to overcome the challenges of developing a split-zoned property. One solution could be to allow institutional owners in certain zones to have the ability to use one zone or the other on a site (rather than actually having the zoning changed to one uniform zone) if the development meets City objectives.

I unfortunately will not be able to attend the April 15th public hearing on Retool Gaithersburg but would be happy to work with you on the above concept. Thank you for the opportunity to present these views, and for your consideration of these thoughts.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:
Tina Benjamin
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Christine R. Benjamin
Real Estate Development Administrator
Development Ombudsman