

## Reflect City Values in T-Zone Debate

Editor,

In your April 27, 2023, editorial titled “NIMBYs & F.C.’s T-Zones”, you apply the derogatory label “Not in My Backyard (NIMBY)” to the hundreds of citizens who have studied, commented on, and sought to improve the City Council’s proposed changes to the 58 diverse parcels in transition zones within Falls Church’s 2.2 square miles. While not reporting their recommendations or covering this issue with any thoroughness, you characterize these citizens as “a noisy opposition...to the plan to modify transitional zone statutes to permit a handful of less expensive housing options” and accuse residents of defining “developers and development as inherently bad.”

Citizens have spent countless hours over the last several months digging into the planned changes and made comprehensive suggestions for improving them to City staff, the Planning Commission, and the City Council. Specifically, regarding the need for more diverse housing, one group – City Residents for Responsible Development – has publicly urged Council to approve building duplex, triplex, and quadplex residential homes by-right, townhouses with appropriate setbacks and Council approval, and affordable units at a rate of at least 20% in residential developments of 15 units or more, with possible special incentives for developers of smaller structures who will dedicate one or more units as affordable or workforce housing. *(For more information, contact City Residents for Responsible Development at [fcctzonepetition@gmail.com](mailto:fcctzonepetition@gmail.com).)*

Concerned citizens questioned the City Council’s initial proposal not because of its stated goal of creating more diverse and affordable housing, as your editorial contends, but rather because its first draft would *not* have achieved this objective with its expansive by-right commercial provisions and all residential uses subject to Council approval.

In addition to housing, citizens focused on the scale of development Council’s proposal would allow by-right or with limited City review on lots designated as transition zones precisely because they serve as buffers between commercial and residential uses. Residents also emphasized the proposal’s failure to address such long-held City climate-related values as the preservation of mature trees, continued maintenance and further enhancement of the tree canopy, and management of serious stormwater issues.

The surprising unwillingness to further strengthen the proposed ordinance regarding scale, environment, and housing coupled with your editorial disparaging as NIMBYs those who are advocating for a better statute suggest that developers are the dominant voice in this and other debates in Falls Church regarding land use and development. If those concerned about changes to T-Zones “have been speaking up so loudly,” it is because every elected and appointed official, the City manager and staff, developers, and this newspaper need to hear and respond constructively to *all* the values we collectively espouse and reflect those values in the final ordinance.

Edith Holmes Snyder