



HOLMES RUN ACRES CIVIC ASSOCIATION

January 25, 2021

Dear Chairman Murphy and Members of the Planning Commission, Dear Chairman McKay and Members of the Board of Supervisors,

The neighborhood of Holmes Run Acres (HRA) was listed to the National Register of Historic Places in 2007. For 70 years it has been a remarkable example of a stable, established, single family neighborhood. It embodies what has long been held by Fairfax County as a goal and character of our County, protected in our comprehensive plan. zMOD threatens it, threatens established, stable, neighborhoods throughout Fairfax County, and by doing so threatens the very character of Fairfax County.

The Holmes Run Acres Civic Association (HRACA) is an all-volunteer organization that enjoys a membership of 75% of our neighborhood of 351 homes. It has met regularly since it was formed in 1952, just one year after our neighborhood began. The Board of our HRA Civic Association consists of 18 elected Civic Association members who serve two-year terms.

The following is a sample list of general concerns the Board of the HRA Civic Association has with zMOD:

- The Board of the HRACA is against attempts by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to hold further hearings on zMOD that do not include fair and open discussions by representative residents. The pandemic has upset everyone's lives and priorities, and is a climate in which we residents cannot engage. These types of Land Use changes should not be considered essential business using emergency procedures that circumvent regular procedures for resident input and streamline approval.
- The Board of the HRACA is against zMOD's shifting of the monitoring of offenses and infractions away from the Fairfax County professionals and onto the residents, especially in light of unenforceable zoning codes.
- The Board of the HRACA is against zMOD changes that do not adequately consider infrastructure such as schools, parks, utilities, and roads; and do not protect the environment, from watershed to flora and fauna.

There are four areas of concern for our neighborhood, specifically:

1. **Accessory Living Units** – The Board of the HRACA opposes the zMOD option to abolish the public hearing process for accessory apartments in single family dwellings. The abolition of public hearings, replaced by a streamlined administrative process, short-circuits resident engagement, and precludes any mitigation of impacts on the neighbors and the local infrastructure.
2. **Home Based Business** – The Board of the HRACA opposes the zMOD proposal to abolish the public hearing process for home businesses. The HRACA opposes the zMOD proposal to allow up to two home businesses on every single-family lot (homeowner and rental unit). This commercialization changes the character of single-family residential neighborhoods, especially with the absence of definitions, and threshold limits for things like chemicals, traffic, visitors, etc.
3. **Enforcement** – The Board of the HRACA opposes the unrealistic and unenforceable caps on both the occupancy of accessory apartments and number of customers visiting the homebased businesses. By rendering these uses By Right, these ineffective caps must rely on the honor system and are insufficient to protect neighbors.
4. **Signage** – The Board of the HRACA opposes the current signage proposal in zMOD. The ordinance adopted in May 2019 combined with the signage proposal in zMOD would allow every property to erect up to 12 square feet of signage in a front yard. Residents should not be allowed to put 12 square feet of signage in their yard for any purpose. This is excessive, will cause visual clutter, and further negatively impact the character of our single-family neighborhood. Signage should also not be allowed to be permanent. zMOD should return to the pre-Mar 2019 condition for signs wherein residential uses are allowed signs only for limited periods of time, e.g., 30 or 60 or 90 days out of the year. The limitation would apply to all signs on a residential lot, whether political, advertising for local clubs, or advertising for home-based businesses.

We respectfully ask the Planning Commissioners and Board of Supervisors to hit the pause button on zMOD, until there can be better engagement by all residents now that we know zMOD is much more than a ‘modernization’ effort, and until the ripple effect of the changes can be better thought out.

Respectfully,

Mitch Toda
President
Holmes Run Acres Civic Association