

May 6, 2019

Clerk of the County Council
Room 2198, County Administration Building
14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

Re: MINOR AMENDMENT TO THE 2004 GATEWAY ARTS DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT
DISTRICT OVERLAY ZONE (CR-17-2019)

County Council:

As a resident of Mount Rainier, which is located in the Gateway Arts Development District Overlay Zone, I am writing this letter in support of needed changes to the county's zoning requirements to permit the reasonable use of urban farming in Prince George's County put forward in Council Resolution CR-17-2019.

I have worked with Doug Adams for several years on the Mount Rainier Green Team and have always been impressed with his commitment to sustainability, business acumen, and marketing abilities. He has a great idea for a local sustainable business opportunity in Mount Rainier and I want to see his dream of opening an urban farm in our fair city become reality. Doug was born and raised in Mount Rainier, and has returned to the city as an entrepreneur in hopes of opening an urban farm, New Brooklyn Farms, in our community.

I have heard that county zoning regulations represent a significant hurdle in allowing Doug to move forward on this important project for our community. Most notably, regulations prohibit the construction of a 30' x 40' high tunnel hoophouse for which Doug has secured funding via a USDA grant. This hoophouse would allow New Brooklyn Farms to significantly scale up production of fresh and local herbs, flowers, and produce in its growing space.

The current prohibition represents zoning that is mired in the 20th century, preventing the county from accommodating needed urban farming practices that were recommended by M-NCPPC staff in 2012¹ and will be needed to become a sustainable county in the 21st century.

This project is important for several reasons, including:

- It meets many of the goals outlined in Prince George's County Strategic Program for Agricultural Development²;
- It will beautify a formerly blighted vacant space that attracted loitering and criminal activity;
- It has already developed relationships with nearby grocery stores and restaurants to allow these entities to source their produce from a local farm, increasing the availability of fresh and local produce to county residents;
- It will represent an additional needed green space along Route 1;

¹ The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission - Prince George's County Planning Department. "[Urban Agriculture: A Tool for Creating Economic Development and Healthy Communities in Prince George's County, MD.](#)" September 2012.

² ACDS, LLC. "Prince George's County Strategic Program for Agricultural Development." December 2009.

- With a planned educational component, it will give local children the chance to learn about farming in a way that is currently unavailable to them, as well as see first-hand how a person of color can grow up in the county and build a business right here at home;
- It aligns with goals of the Sustainable Maryland program, of which Mount Rainier is a founding member; and
- It will create green jobs for the county, and serve as a case study for future urban farm use in the larger Washington metropolitan region.

This project will be an asset to the community, make Prince George's County a leader in urban agricultural programs, and bring good sustainable jobs to Prince George's County. This is a project that we need and the necessary zoning amendments put forward in CR-17-2019 should be adopted.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Joseph Jakuta". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Joseph Jakuta
Mount Rainier Resident
4113 29th Street