

To the Editor:

With regard to your article (Sunday, Metro Section) on the many firefighters who are moving out of Montgomery County because of skyrocketing housing costs. I'm continually bemused at the ability of the Duncan administration (and its surrogates on the County Council) to - with great fanfare - identify a problem for which they are in large part responsible and then propose a "solution" that either does nothing to resolve the problem or in fact exacerbates it. Who can forget the catchy "Go Montgomery" promise to end gridlock? Not only has gridlock not been ended, does anyone think it has been reduced? Now the County government expresses concern about critical elements of our community who cannot afford to live in the County. Did the uncontrolled growth in our county over the last decade have nothing to do with the housing shortage? Did the failure to regulate such trends as "mansionization" have nothing to do with rising housing costs? Recognizing the need for more affordable housing is fine, but allowing developers to buy out of construction of the meagre numbers of mandated MPDUs does nothing to actually help solve the problem. Come to Wheaton and see the ongoing effects of Wheaton Revitalization - supported so strongly by the County government. Ask how many housing units have been constructed, how many have been affordable (MPDU, workforce, or other), and what the cost of the average new unit is. The cost of housing (and the relative lack of affordable housing) in Montgomery County is largely the result of "public" policies that allow growth at excessive rates, without assuring that the development machine pay for the infrastructure costs that are associated with that growth. Provide enough people who have "earned" high incomes by demanding a high fee for their services (and a governmental structure that supports them) and they will drive the cost of everything, including housing, through the roof. Is it sad that our true public servants cannot afford to live in the County they serve? Yes. Is it surprising? No. Don't hold your breath waiting for the Duncan administration or its County Council to help solve these problems.

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