

April 6, 2010

Royce Hanson, Chairman
Montgomery County Planning Board
The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
8788 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Re: Gaithersburg West Master Plan

Dear Chairman Hanson:

Thank you for your visit to Rockville on March 12, 2010 to discuss the draft Gaithersburg West Master Plan, which the Montgomery County Council is now considering; and please extend my appreciation to your staff. From our perspective, the meeting was very illuminating. I trust that you now have a better understanding of Rockville's concerns. We appreciated the opportunity to understand better the Montgomery County Planning Board's point of view.

Our conversation centered mostly on the traffic impacts that buildout of the plan would entail. Various approaches were discussed, such as additional components of the staging plan or a memorandum of understanding that would require interaction between the jurisdictions when specific development proposals are being reviewed that could have impacts across jurisdictional boundaries. We are reviewing the concepts carefully.

At minimum, there must be an agreement reached between Montgomery County and both Rockville and Gaithersburg regarding how the traffic impacts of specific development projects within the Gaithersburg West sector will be assessed. Impacts within Rockville and Gaithersburg must be taken into account, and mitigation must be part of any development project that would otherwise produce impacts beyond City and County standards. The City would also like to have confidence that government and institutional projects, which are likely to predominate in the Gaithersburg West sector, will be subject to traffic review and mitigation and that the Planning Board would be committed to applying and enforcing the conditions. If not, it is likely that the Plan's approach to staging and infrastructure would need amending.

Our difficulty in requesting specific new transportation infrastructure requirements to be added to the staging plan comes from the fact that such requirements should stem from analysis that has not yet been undertaken. The time frame that was presented to us on March 12 makes conducting analysis and producing resulting recommendations difficult.

Our frustration in that regard stems from the fact that our concerns are not changed in any significant way since the March 30, 2009 letter from then-Mayor Hoffmann to you during the Planning Board's Public Hearing process. That letter stated the following: "We do

not believe, however, that the Draft Plan adequately accounts for and manages the negative impacts of the large amount of new automobile traffic in and out of the planning area. Even the most aggressive of the Draft Plan's targets for alternative modes still anticipates at least 70% of new employees and residents using automobiles. Considering the large number of new employment and homes, we anticipate both major arterials and secondary roads to be heavily impacted. Arterials of greatest concern to Rockville include Darnestown Road, Key West Avenue, West Montgomery Avenue (MD 28), and the I-270 ramps, in addition to the potential impact on I-270. Secondary roads that must be studied and then managed include Wootton Parkway, Falls Grove Boulevard, Blackwell Road, Watts Branch Parkway and other Rockville streets."

Had these concerns been heeded one year ago, when we first expressed them, we could now all have a better understanding of the interaction of Gaithersburg West's development densities, traffic, and infrastructure investments, as they affect Rockville and Gaithersburg; and Rockville may not have felt the need to request that the Plan be referred back to the Planning Board.

It so happens that, subsequent to our meeting, we did receive analysis on one portion of our concern from the Montgomery County Department of Transportation. For an entirely different purpose, a study was done that included assessing the performance of the intersection of Rt. 28 and I-270. The result was that, *right now*, before the planned massive building increase in the Gaithersburg West sector, the PM peak at that intersection has a Volume/Capacity (V/C) ratio of **1.42** by Montgomery County's standard. As you know, a V/C ratio of greater than 1.00 is considered to be failing. The AM peak V/C was also found to be above 1.00 at this time.

In our view, a plan of this magnitude that does not take into account this key access point to the Gaithersburg West area, as well as to the Montgomery County government complex and Rockville Town Center, is not a complete plan. The plan must be adjusted to produce results that do not fail either the County's or the City's standards. We restate our point from last year that positive outcomes can only come from a broader view of the system of access routes that connect I-270 and Gaithersburg West, without leaving out key locations within Rockville and Gaithersburg; and that success will only come from a combination of options that may include both reduction of densities and, within the Rockville city limits, improvements to the 270/28 intersection and along Gude Drive (at 270 and 355).

Other topics were not discussed at the meeting, but are also important to Rockville, as outlined in the March 9, 2010 Resolution by the Mayor and Council.

I would like to reiterate that Rockville supports the long-term economic benefits of the Life Sciences Center (LSC). We believe in taking a strong and forward-looking approach by leveraging key regional assets that distinguish this portion of Montgomery County from other regions of the country and the world. Those assets include NIH, NIST, FDA, Johns Hopkins University, Universities of Maryland at Shady Grove, Montgomery College, and Adventist Healthcare.

We do not believe, however, that a strong link has ever been made in the plan between the goals of the Life Sciences Center and the total amount of development that would be permitted under this draft plan. Therefore, we believe that the impacts can be mitigated through reduced development totals, strong staging; and infrastructure investments; while still reaching the goals of moving Montgomery County forward as a cutting-edge science-oriented location.

Sincerely,

Phyllis Marcuccio, Mayor
City of Rockville

cc: Councilmember John Britton
Councilmember Piotr Gajewski
Councilmember Mark Pierzchala
Councilmember Bridget Donnell Newton
Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett
Montgomery County Council
City of Rockville Planning Commission
Scott Ullery, City Manager
Susan Swift, Director, CPDS
David Levy, Chief of Long Planning and Redevelopment
Manisha Tewari, Planner II
Craig Simoneau, Director of Public Works
Emad Elshafei, Chief of Traffic and Transportation
Sally Sternbach, Executive Director, REDI
Burt Hall, Director of Recreation and Parks
Rollin Stanley, MNCPPC
Nancy Sturgeon, MNCPPC
Sue Edwards, MNCPPC
Glenn Kreger, MNCPPC
Dan Hardy, MNCPPC
Eric Graye, MNCPPC