



Montgomery County Sierra Club Testimony on Gaithersburg West Master Plan before the Montgomery County Council

September 17, 2009

My name is David Hauck and I am testifying today as Chair of the Sierra Club's Montgomery County Group. My approach is going to be different from that of most of the testimony you have heard so far. Rather than focus on the specifics of the Gaithersburg West master plan and its impact on the immediate area, I want to take a look at how the proposed development at Gaithersburg West is likely to undermine two of the county's smart growth goals. The first goal is to direct development to Metro station areas. The second is to direct more job growth to the eastern part of the county as a way to correct the current jobs/housing imbalance—more jobs than housing in the west and more people than jobs in the east county.

I'll be comparing the Planning Department's Round 7.1 job growth forecast for 2030 to its Round 7.2 in this analysis—something that, to the best of my knowledge, has not been done before. Round 7.1 came out in 2006 and Round 7.2 in 2009. New things that affected the Round 7.2 forecast that were not included in Round 7.1 include the new master plans for White Flint, Twinbrook, Gaithersburg West and Germantown and the new transportation options that would be provided by the ICC, the Corridor Cities Transitway and the Purple Line.

So, what does a comparison of these two Rounds reveal?

Projected growth in new jobs around most Metro station areas goes down. Employment growth in the new Round 7.2 forecast for the Bethesda and Silver Spring CBDs is cut in half (compared to the earlier Round 7.1 forecast). Projected job growth also declines in these other Metro station areas: Wheaton, Twinbrook, Rockville and Shady Grove.

Projected job growth goes up in the I-270 corridor and declines in the east county and the urban ring inside the beltway. The new forecasts contained in Round 7.2 reinforce the dominance of the I-270 Corridor as the location of employment in the County. Estimates of future job growth have been revised sharply upwards for R&D Village (aka Life Sciences Center) and Gaithersburg City. Conversely, estimates of future job growth were revised downward for areas along the Purple Line (Bethesda and Silver Spring CBDs, East Silver Spring and Takoma Park) and along Georgia Ave. and Route 29.

Employment - 2030

Major Subdivision	2005	Round 7.1 Forecast	Round 7.2 Forecast	change
I270 corridor	282,294	404,729	422,069	17,339
urban ring	134,343	155,945	147,011	(8,934)
Georgia Ave.	35,792	40,074	37,392	(2,682)
Rt 29	29,572	46,881	42,932	(3,949)
Total East County*	65,364	86,955	80,324	(6,631)

- Georgia Ave. plus Route 29 Corridors

Is this the direction we want to go in? It may be that the potential benefits of the Gaithersburg West master plan outweigh the negative impact it appears to have on the County's smart growth goals. But I would urge you to at least factor them in as you consider whether to approve or amend the proposed Gaithersburg West master plan. The Sierra Club has looked at the Reasonable Plan proposed by the Residents for Reasonable Development and, even though we feel it still may be too large for the site, we believe it would not have as serious an impact on job growth around Metro stations and in the east county as does the current Gaithersburg West master plan.