

From: J. J. Ulbrecht

Date: Fri, Mar 19, 2010 at 9:37 AM

Subject: Re: Gaithersburg West Master Plan

To: "Elrich's Office, Councilmember" <[Councilmember.Elrich@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:Councilmember.Elrich@montgomerycountymd.gov)>

Dear Council member Elrich,

Many thanks for your letter of March 18, 2010.

I would like to elaborate on your very fitting observation that the Gaithersburg West Plan attempts to build a "Science City on an area of a postage stamp". I share your view that it would be preferable to build a "Science County" with biotechnology enterprises distributed over a wider area.

For all my professional life, I've been a scientist, professor and a university administrator. In this capacity, I visited a great deal of universities in this country and I must say that what JHU proposes has no parallel anywhere in the US. In particular, I want to comment on two aspects of the plan: on the coexistence of a university campus with the surrounding residential areas, and on the cooperation between a university campus and the world of business.

With the exception of old universities built in the 18th and 19th centuries, consisting of low rise brick buildings, no modern university campuses have been built in close proximity with residential neighborhoods. The reason is simple. The university needs free additional space to grow, to expand laboratories, to build student dormitories, and to allow for the birth of spin-offs. The JHU plan for West Gaithersburg does not allow for either.

A modern university, specifically its science and engineering schools, is unthinkable without a close cooperation with the world of business. To this end, universities build incubators where pre-commercial ideas get the space and the support, financial and logistical, to develop to maturity and to move out of the incubator, or to wither on the vine. Such an incubator will play host not only to spin-offs generated by faculty members and their graduate students, but also to innovators from outside the academic sphere. This is in sharp contrast to the plans for the "Science City" of Gaithersburg West where the existence of income producing enterprises is envisaged. Unlike the spin-offs and other research-based small companies that often rely on personal union with faculty members, large income producing enterprises depend on the cooperation with universities (and I emphasize the plural) only tangentially. They certainly do not require geographical proximity with just one school. I know of only one such conglomerate that bears some similarity to the JHU plan and that is the Silicon Valley in California. However, Silicon Valley is spread over hundreds of square miles from Stanford University. This would be closer to your concept of a "Science County".

In conclusion, it seems to me that JHU strives not for a "Science City" but for a "Dollar City".

I want to congratulate you on your excellent work and wish you an ultimate success.

With my best regards,

J.J. Ulbrecht