

# MAYOR & COUNCIL AGENDA COVER SHEET

**MEETING DATE:**

September 8, 2009

**CALL TO PODIUM:**

**Fred Felton**  
**Assistant City Manager**

**RESPONSIBLE STAFF:**

**Greg Ossont**  
**Lauren Pruss**  
**Rob Robinson**

**AGENDA ITEM:**  
 (please check one)

|                                     |                              |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Presentation                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Proclamation/Certificate     |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Appointment                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Public Hearing               |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Historic District            |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Consent Item                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Ordinance                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Resolution                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Policy Discussion            |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Work Session Discussion Item |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Other: <b>From Staff</b>     |

**PUBLIC HEARING HISTORY:**

(Please complete this section if agenda item is a public hearing)

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| Introduced        |  |
| Advertised        |  |
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| Hearing Date      |  |
| Record Held Open  |  |
| Policy Discussion |  |

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| <b>TITLE:</b>  |
| Guidance on a Memorandum Dated September 1, 2009 Concerning the City's Position on the Draft Gaithersburg West Master Plan |

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| <b>SUPPORTING BACKGROUND:</b>                              |
| Staff will be seeking guidance on the attached memorandum. |

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| <b>DESIRED OUTCOME:</b>    |
| Provide guidance to staff. |

MEMORANDUM TO: Mayor and City Council

VIA: Angel L. Jones, City Manager

FROM: Frederick J. Felton, Assistant City Manager

DATE: September 1, 2009

SUBJECT: Gaithersburg West Master Plan

As you know, the County Council will be holding a public hearing on the Montgomery County Planning Board's recommended Gaithersburg West Master Plan on September 15, 2009.

Staff has been following this draft plan very closely for several years, and has provided a series of policy and technical suggestions. While the plan covers the unincorporated areas west of Gaithersburg, the primary focus of effort and public discussion has been the Life Sciences Center (LSC)

The draft plan provides a blueprint for the LSC that includes an expanded first class medical center, research facilities, academic institutions, and an array of services and amenities. The mixed use community envisioned for the LSC is transit oriented, and is based on the assumption that the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) will approve the Alternative Alignment for the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) that would serve the LSC with four transit stations.

The plan for the LSC is seen as a long term concept that could take as many as 45 years to implement. While staff believes it is generally a good plan, we are extremely concerned about the impact of some of the traffic improvements necessary to support the proposed densities. Further, we are concerned that the proposed LSC plan could move forward with higher traffic congestion impacts (1600 CLV) than other projects in the City of Gaithersburg or the Gaithersburg West Planning Area (1450 CLV).

The Draft Gaithersburg West Master Plan calls for very limited additional County densities outside of the LSC. In fact, the plan is generally supportive of annexation by the City of Gaithersburg of the McGowan Tract and several enclaves.

In preparation for the City's testimony before the County Council and our participation in the work sessions, staff is recommending that the Mayor and City Council adopt the following key positions:

1. The City is generally supportive of the concept of the LSC, but is concerned about the conceptual traffic improvements necessary to accommodate the proposed density. Of particular concern are the proposed grade separated interchanges at the following locations: Sam Eig Highway at Great Seneca Highway, Sam Eig Highway at Diamondback Drive, Great Seneca Highway at Muddy Branch Road, and Great Seneca Highway at Quince Orchard Road.

Based on the conceptual improvements provided to date, the City believes that these grade separated interchanges could require the taking of both residential and commercial properties, would harm pedestrian and bicycle conductivity, and would adversely affect the character of existing neighborhoods. Further, a number of these grade separated interchanges would adversely affect the current and proposed alternative alignment of the CCT.

2. Given that the Gaithersburg West Master Plan will be reviewed again in six years, the City would request that the proposed 4.5 million square feet of LSC Stage 4 density not be approved at this time. Prior to the next Master Plan review, the County and the various stakeholders could attempt to develop alternative traffic improvements and trip mitigation measures that would not have the adverse impacts outlined in item #1 above.
3. The City is extremely supportive of the concept of staging the approved density of the LSC based on transportation milestones; however, as noted above, we are not supportive of the proposed grade separated interchanges. Accordingly, we request that the Stage 3 provision requiring funding of two interchanges be modified with alternative transportation projects.
4. The City is concerned about the proposal to establish a higher traffic congestion standard for the LSC than the standard that is applied in the City of Gaithersburg and the remainder of the Gaithersburg West Planning Area.
5. In the event MTA approves an alternate alignment of the CCT to accommodate the LSC, the County should take immediate steps to acquire the necessary right-of-way and the land for the transit stations. Failure to do so could result in delays in construction of the CCT given that most of the other necessary land is already available.
6. The City is pleased that the plan envisions the annexation of the McGowan Tract, and will coordinate our efforts closely with Park and Planning and the County. A key goal of this proposed annexation will be the acquisition of the land for the remaining quadrant of the Watkins Mill Road Interchange.
7. The City is very pleased about the County's recent restoration of the Deer Park/Humpback bridge, and concurs with the Planning Board's recommendation concerning the need for ongoing assessment of the bridge's condition to address safety, mobility, and historic preservation issues.

Staff will be seeking guidance on this matter during the September 8, 2009 Mayor and City Council meeting. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or want to discuss.

FJF/ms

cc: Greg Ossont, Director of Planning and Code Administration  
 Lauren Pruss, Planning Director  
 Rob Robinson, Planner