

My name is Lezlie Crosswhite. My family and I have been Montgomery County residents and taxpayers for 18 years and residents of North Potomac for 11.

The wishful thinking that comprises Johns Hopkins Vision 2030 and the proposed Gaithersburg West Master Plan for the LSC boggles the mind. Instead of Life Science Center, it should be called Science Fiction Center – or perhaps simply fantasy.

Fantasy #1: JHU reassures us that the LSC expansion will happen gradually because it is subject to “staged development” that requires improved roads and interchanges. But the Plan’s staged development allows 7.7 million square feet of commercial space to be built before any intersections are improved or lanes added.

7.7 million square feet translates into 22,000 workers. The proposed Plan says that 30% of these 22,000 workers are going to carpool, walk, or take the bus or CCT to the Science Fiction Center. This is Fantasy #2. Studies show that barely 4% of commuters carpool, bus service in the area is scarce, and the CCT isn’t even funded, let alone built.

Even if we assume that 30% of these 22,000 workers find some other way to the LSC, that still leaves 70% commuting by car -- 15,400 cars. Under the proposed Plan’s staged development, 15,400 additional cars will be driving on already crowded neighborhood streets – BEFORE ONE SINGLE INTERSECTION IS IMPROVED!

Let me emphasize, the proposed Plan will allow the most congested intersection in this County, at Great Seneca and Muddy Branch, to stay exactly as it is – but with 15,400 additional cars added. Not one thing must be changed about that intersection – or any other intersection -- before 15,400 cars are already traveling on those roads.

JHU’s Vision 2030 could perhaps be the promised “vibrant urban center” – if the LSC were adjacent to an existing metro station. Since JHU doesn’t own land near metro, they are attempting to shoe horn their project into an existing community that is not in any way adequate or appropriate for this size and type of development – and to convince us neighbors that we won’t even notice. That’s Fantasy #3.

The 10 million dollars JHU says its “Vision” will bring annually to the County sounds great – if we just overlook the enormous cost required to turn fantasy into reality. Squeezing the vast project into this community would require County and state taxpayers to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on road improvements, public transport and other facilities. JHU has received free land from the County already – and bought Belward Farm at a bargain basement price. How much more must be given to feed their vision?

Council members, please don’t be sucked into this fantasy. Rewrite the Gaithersburg West Master Plan realistically to reflect actual conditions of the area and significantly toughen the staged development requirements. Most of all, rewrite the Plan to permit development on a reasonable scale with the existing neighborhoods.