

Town Hall Meeting – March 9, 2010

We've heard a lot about broken government lately and I think we can start right in our own backyards. When developers are allowed to call the shots, the County Executive, the Planning Board and the County Council become implementers and the residents are simply in the way.

We expect further development in the Life Sciences Center and on Belward Farm, and we support the **sensible** expansion of the Shady Grove Adventist Hospital and the biotechs.

However, the proponents of the Gaithersburg West Master Plan have tried to create a sense of urgency that this horrible master plan must be approved or Montgomery County will not be able to provide the necessary additional jobs. That is simply not the case. There is no emergency to approve a fundamentally flawed master plan.

The current 1990 Gaithersburg Master Plan would provide space for 17,000 additional jobs. The Council has approved space for 68,000 jobs in Germantown without any staging requirements. Therefore, space for 85,000 jobs could be built in Gaithersburg and Germantown, even if the Gaithersburg West Master Plan was scrapped. **And** there currently exists a 26% commercial vacancy rate in Germantown and Gaithersburg.

Even so, the "Science City", as proposed by the Gaithersburg West Master Plan, will have 29 million square feet of commercial and residential space for 60,000 to 80,000 people in the area roughly between Shady Grove Road and Muddy Branch Road. If you added the students and patients, the number of people in the Science City would be significantly higher.

The Pentagon has 6.6 million square feet of space so the Science City, as proposed by the master plan, will be equivalent in size to four and a half Pentagons. The opposition may try to confuse the issue with lots of unrelated figures but the arithmetic is simple. 29 million divided by 6.6 million = 4.4 Pentagons. The Pentagon is massive and has a very sophisticated transportation system: two Metro lines, a location on four highways, 84 different bus routes and a heliport, and the parking lots are half the size of Belward Farm. Montgomery County cannot provide equivalent infrastructure for one Pentagon, much less four and a half Pentagons in the area between Shady Grove and Muddy Branch.

Even more dramatic are the figures for Belward Farm. Johns Hopkins Real Estate would like for you to believe that they require 6.5 million square feet of space on Belward Farm. The Pentagon if you recall has 6.6 million square feet so that would put a development the size of the Pentagon on this beautiful historic farm which is immediately adjacent to three residential neighborhoods!

Despite his support for 60,000 to 80,000 people in the Science City, David McDonough, of Johns Hopkins Real Estate, was quoted in the Johns Hopkins News-Letter (10/15/09) saying, "Everyone agrees that having too much traffic is not a good thing." He goes on to say, "With the combination of mass transit and the staging plan, [the Science City] can be built without causing adverse traffic impacts." I beg to differ, the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) will carry only about 12% to 15% of the 60,000 to 80,000 people which will leave 85% or over 50,000 cars on the roads. And the staging plan is back-loaded to allow thousands of additional cars on the roads before the first infrastructure improvement is even begun.

The Gaithersburg West Master Plan is so contrived and fundamentally flawed that the only sensible option is to send it back to the Planning Board with instructions to start with honest assumptions, accurate transportation and financial data, and develop a scaled back version without allowing the developers to call the shots. Also, and more importantly, the residents should be given a meaningful role in the development of **any** plans that will affect our communities.

We are looking to you, our elected officials to listen to the voices of the community as well as the concerns of the neighboring cities of Gaithersburg and Rockville and recognize this plan for what it...a developer boondoggle. It's not about science, it's about money. Send it back!

Donna Baron
Coordinator
The Gaithersburg - North Potomac - Rockville Coalition

Additional information as well as documents showing the comparisons of the "Science City" and the Pentagon may be found on www.scale-it-back.com .