

'Science City' to bring in thousands more workers, memo says

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Thousands more workers than previously predicted would pour into the controversial "Science City" development if the plan is approved, Montgomery County officials are acknowledging in documents obtained by *The Examiner*.

County planning officials based their financial and traffic analyses of the proposed biotech corporate corridor on the assumption that it would house about 60,000 workers. But in a memo to the county council, a top aide to Executive Ike Leggett says that the number will be more like 76,000.

"The employment impact does not include current employees as part of the economic benefit attributable to employment growth in

Gaithersburg West," top aide Diane Schwartz Jones says in her memo.

Resistance to the Science City project has been stiffening in recent weeks. Residents, environmentalists and "smart growth" advocates say that the effort to change sprawling suburbia into a steel-and-glass office network will throttle an already congested area with more traffic. The county's planning commission, which approved and continues to lobby for the huge corporate complex, has acknowledged that rush-hour traffic will crawl at about 9 miles per hour if the plan comes to fruition.

Supporters, which include Johns Hopkins University and the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, say the plans are vital to the continued success of the

'Science City' plans

- » 29 million square feet of development
- » At least 60,000 jobs
- » Relies on the \$1 billion Corridor Cities Transitway
- » Up to \$1.4 billion in revenues generated
- » Traffic would slow to 9 miles per hour during rush hour

county and will make Montgomery a world capital for lucrative and lifesaving scientific research.

"While it is easy to get bogged down in assumptions and details, the policy reasons for the Gaithersburg West master plan are clear," Schwartz Jones says in her memo. "We want Montgomery County to

be a leading location for bio-sciences.

"As the federal government is doubling its investment in life sciences and venture capitalists are looking for companies in which to invest, we want that to happen in Montgomery County," Schwartz Jones added.

But her jobs adjustments has further emboldened critics of the plan.

"They can't both be right," Councilman Phil Andrews, D-Gaithersburg/Rockville, said of the competing jobs estimates. "They've got a huge problem. They're trying to talk past it."

The council's development committee is scheduled to hold a hearing on the plan's traffic effect Monday.

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