

Testimony for the Montgomery County Council

On the Gaithersburg West Master Plan

September 15, 2009

My name is Cynthia Fain. I serve on the Board of Directors of the West Montgomery County Citizens Association, but my testimony reflects my personal views. The Gaithersburg West Master Plan that has been approved by the Montgomery County Planning Board needs to be scaled back to a much lower level of density. Many of us feel that we were largely ignored in the planning process that lead up to this County Council hearing. In Montgomery County's quest to find an economic boost – you have failed to include important issues of quality of life and environmental impacts.

I am not at all impressed or swayed by Johns Hopkins University officials who try and convince us that a mega science city is the only way we can hope to find cures for cancer and other human diseases. Common sense tells me that we would all be far healthier if this county learned when to limit growth and retain vitally needed green space. I find it offensive when it is suggested that the legitimate concerns of the existing North Potomac communities are somehow trivial. Our concerns go right to the heart of what constitutes quality of life and true health. We all support advancements in science and medical research. There must be a way for JHU to accomplish their goals of scientific advancement, with a research center of lower density and more environmental sensitivity.

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It was my understanding that Mrs. Banks wanted the character of her historic Belward Farm to remain largely green space. And that she wanted a reasonably sized academic center. The development that is proposed on the Belward Farm looks more like Tyson's Corner then it does a farm with an academic center on it.

I find it incomprehensible that Montgomery County would approve a development plan that brings 60,000 jobs and thousands of cars to an area that is largely residential. There is nothing that will effectively mitigate the amount of traffic that will snarl our roads. The rural rustic roads of Potomac will inevitably be used as cut through streets for the thousands of people trying to avoid the highway traffic. .

Building the Corridor Cities Transitway will not mitigate the amount of traffic that is generated from the Gaithersburg West development. If the CCT is projected to carry only 15 percent of the people who work at the Science City, that leaves thousands of additional cars on the road.

And let's not forget that the Crown Farm which sits just a few miles from the Belward Farm. The Crown Farm will host another mega development. This two hundred acre Farm is proposed to have two thousand homes, a commercial district and a high school.

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How does Montgomery County plan on paying for this entire transportation infrastructure?

I think it is time for this county to stop putting developers and their interests above the interests of the citizens who pay taxes and then have to put up with all the destructive consequences. Please revise this master plan to a level of density that is compatible with existing communities, and that will not generate such severe traffic complications.