



The Town of Washington Grove  
P. O. Box 216  
300 Grove Avenue  
Washington Grove, MD 20880  
voice: 301-926-22566  
email: washgrove@comcast.net

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## **Testimony before the County Council on the Shady Grove Minor Master Plan Amendment**

**John Compton, Mayor of Washington Grove**

The Town of Washington Grove, like Montgomery County, is a strong advocate for climate action. We are updating the Town's Comprehensive Plan with a commitment to sustainability, including transitioning to 100% renewable energy sources and encouraging and aiding residents to do the same. As a key part of this effort, we are hoping to develop, in partnership with the County, a Community Solar Project on a vacant Parks Department property adjacent to Washington Grove and the ICC cloverleaf. We believe it would contribute in a big way to achieve our shared community and County climate goals while benefiting neighboring county communities. Washington Grove stands ready to promote, facilitate, and lead the development of this solar collection system.

As the Council and its PHED Committee considers the Shady Grove Master Plan Amendment in the coming weeks, **we ask that you support this innovative win-win project by adding an explicit recommendation that a Community Solar use be thoroughly considered (in the Land Use and Zoning section addressing the Shady Grove Station area) including exploring the leasing of the vacant Montgomery Parks Department property to the Town of Washington Grove. Suggested language for revision to the draft Amendment before the Council is provided below.**

This proposed project would:

- deliver 1.24 megawatts (DC) of carbon-free solar electricity to the electric grid to serve up to 200 neighboring homes at a lower cost than current Pepco residential rates,
- contribute to meeting the Montgomery County draft Climate Action Plan's goals of delivering 100% of electricity from renewable sources to County residents by 2030 and of reducing carbon emissions in the County 100% by 2035,
- improve racial and social equity in the county by earmarking at least 20% of the electricity for neighboring low and moderate income residents at a 20% discount from current Pepco rates,
- improve the resilience of electric supply in the immediate area by providing a new source of solar electric generation close to neighboring consumers,

- serve as a model to demonstrate that solar can coexist effectively with the planting of native species and pollinator-friendly flowers, and
- provide a highly visible and compelling real-world community solar project in a relatively urbanized portion of Montgomery County that is based on a strong community and county government partnership.

The County's review process needs to be completed in this calendar year, as the window of opportunity for both the Maryland Community Solar program and the federal solar tax credit both close in less than three years. A change in zoning is not needed since a solar collection system is permitted as a limited use by the current R-90 zoning of the site.

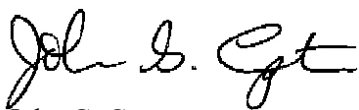
The near-term solar use can be compatible with the eventual development of an active recreation park on this property. We also suggest that the longstanding recommendation (circa 2007) for an extension of Crabbs Branch Way to Amity Drive be reevaluated in light of its potential adverse air pollution and noise impacts on any recreational uses and on nearby residences, its high cost (\$2.25 million), and its potential adverse impacts on traffic congestion in the sector area resulting from expanded "cut-through" traffic from Mid-county Highway to Crabbs Branch Way and the metro.

Council action to highlight the potential Community Solar Project would:

- demonstrate how the County can translate its admirable climate and energy goals into concrete local actions that benefit its citizens and foster social equity and partnerships, and
- deliver on the vision of Thrive Montgomery 2050 to evaluate land use decisions through a climate policy lens that emphasizes the importance of Montgomery Planning's goal of striving to achieve net zero carbon emissions in all development and redevelopment.

We thank the Council for the opportunity to testify today and for your consideration of our recommendations. We stand ready to respond to questions and/or provide advice, as you consider needed amendments to the Shady Grove Minor Master Plan Amendment. We have attached some recommended amendment language to the Master Plan draft for your consideration.

Thank you for entertaining this recommendation to enable consideration of installation of a Community Solar Project that will benefit communities within and adjacent to the Shady Grove Master Plan area. Proposed language follows.



John G. Compton  
Mayor, Washington Grove  
[johncompton@me.com](mailto:johncompton@me.com)  
240-432-5700

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**Proposed language recommended in Shady Grove Minor Master Plan Amendment 12-17-20, as referred to testimony of the Mayor of Washington Grove before the County Council Public Hearing on the Shady Grove Minor Master Plan Amendment.**

**Purpose:** To modify the draft Sector Master Plan Amendment to recommend an alternative use be considered for the unforested portion of the vacant Parks Department property located between the Washington Grove Conservation Park and the ICC cloverleaf/Metro Access as a site for a Community Solar Project under Maryland's Community Solar Program, and lease of the site to the Town of Washington Grove. Use for this purpose for an interim period would be prioritized should re-evaluation support deferral of the road connection necessary to access the site.

**Language recommended:**

Section 4, Land Use and Zoning, Shady Grove Crossing:

On page 52, amend the following section:

The Parks Department has acquired approximately 9.77 acres of this property that is adjacent to the intercounty Connector (MD 200) for a future local park. However, there is not vehicular or pedestrian access to this future park. Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) is currently conducting a feasibility study to extend the current roadway terminus of Crabbs Branch Way to Amity Drive.

This plan recommends:

- Confirm the R-90 Zone for properties in this area, including Shady Grove Crossing, the historic meadow, and the vacant Parks Department property.
- **Recommend leasing of the unforested portion of the vacant Parks Department property to the Town of Washington Grove to enable implementation of a solar collection system under the Maryland Community Solar Program.**
- **Re-evaluate the air pollution, noise, and traffic congestion impacts and the cost/benefit of the extension of the current road terminus of Crabbs Branch Way to Amity Drive as a public street.**
- Provide a bike trail connection to the Town of Washington Grove, and
- Develop a local park with active recreation on the vacant Parks Department property.

