

I have one very specific request to make. There is no persuasive argument for expanding the downtown master plan boundary north of Spring Street into Woodside. Without changing a single word of the plan document, I urge you to simply remove the expansion into Woodside from the master plan drawing.

In the draft plan, staff states “The Council should take action on Affordable Housing Strategies and adopt a county-wide ZTA...for the Adjacent Communities”, but Chair Anderson asserted at the December 23 hearing “... the recommendations we make in this plan do not depend in any legal sense on Thrive.... the recommendations we’re making in the [master] plan are not dependent on any new laws or General Plan.” [1:59].

That’s precisely the problem. Allowing an expansion of the downtown master plan into Woodside sets a dangerous precedent for neighborhoods all across the County. There is no reason for removing a portion of an historically designated neighborhood from its greater context solely so that untested zoning theories, with unproven claims of equity, can be implemented at a faster timeline than would be the case if the communities were left in their current masterplans and subject to coming general plan regulations. These blocks are not on a transit line or a traffic corridor- they’re in the interior of one of the oldest neighborhoods in Silver Spring, one that is still designated as historic on the Planning Board’s own locational atlas.

The objectives first outlined by Commissioner Verma for exploring an expanded boundary of the downtown are admirable and will be addressed county-wide by Thrive 2050 and the Affordable Housing Strategies Initiative, just as staff identified in their report. A portion of Woodside has already been redistributed to the Montgomery Hills master plan and rezoned as a CRT parcel. Our Civic Association submitted a Resolution to the Council supporting density and affordable housing in this quadrant, as well as at the Woodside Purple Line station. But I can’t support this incursion into the core of the neighborhood.

Happily there is a very simple solution. Maintain the current downtown boundary. Maintain the many positive aspects of this plan for that downtown. Just leave Woodside and the adjacent communities in their current master plans. I’m pretty certain not a word of the document needs to be revised to achieve that; just revise the plan drawing.

Ellen Sands