

Testimony of the County Executive

County Council Public Hearing on the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan

February 17, 2022

Meredith Wellington, testifying on behalf of the County Executive. The County Executive and departments will be sending detailed comments on the Plan in advance of the PHED Committee work sessions. Tonight, I will mention only a few of the many important issues raised by this Plan.

- 1. The County Executive supports the addition of new, smaller housing types through master plan review of entire neighborhoods, not segments of neighborhoods. Each master plan will identify appropriate sites for new market rate housing types that comply with enhanced environmental requirements and provide adequate public facilities.**
- 2. The decision to include Adjacent Communities has distracted the County from the significant issues facing the Silver Spring Downtown.¹ The CE does not support the unprecedented addition of small fragments of neighborhoods to the boundary of the Silver Spring Downtown Plan. The Council should roll back the boundary change and return the fractured segments called Adjacent Communities to the master plans that they are in now. Any rezoning of these neighborhoods would take place in the context of the appropriate master plan.**
- 3. The Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Master Plan should be sent to OLO for a RESJ report.** Like Thrive, the SS plan focuses on past discrimination, and, like Thrive, it fails to identify current forms of discrimination that perpetuate inequality.
- 4. Residents are confused that the SS Plan is moving forward when the Plan clearly states that it is based on assumptions about Thrive and the Attainable Housing Initiative, neither of which is in final form nor adopted. Until this confusion is resolved, the Plan should not move forward, and the scheduled PHED work sessions should be postponed.**

¹ There is little, if any, discussion of the needs of the Adjacent Communities. Rather, they are treated only as a subject for rezoning under the Attainable Housing Initiative, rather than a living, breathing part of Silver Spring with their own strengths and needs. The delineation may be based on a walking distance from transit, but in terms of any other marker that is used to develop a master plan, the delineation is arbitrary and a disturbing precedent for future master plans.

5. Housing—The Plan says, “Promote a diverse mix of housing types throughout the Plan area.” P. 76

But the Plan does not promote a diverse mix of housing. It promotes 11,000 multifamily units, most planned for high-rises, judging by the recommended up-zoning of the CR zoned properties in the Downtown. There is no estimate of the number of Missing Middle housing types that could be built either in the Downtown or in the Adjacent Communities.

These housing numbers need much more detail to be meaningful. The Plan needs to discuss how it assesses the likelihood that the 11,000 units will be built over the next 20 years; as compared to the risk that nothing will be built until the market allows the developers to use the whole building envelope that the Plan awards them. It also needs to explain how the Plan provides housing for those with the greatest need in Silver Spring. **The County Executive does not agree with the “trickle-down” theory that more housing, no matter the affordability level, will solve the problem.**

Thank you for your consideration.