

February 27, 2022

Montgomery County Council  
Rockville, Maryland

Re: Planning Board Draft of the Downtown Silver Spring and Adjacent Communities Plan.

Written testimony of by Maria Schmit, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910, on the draft Downtown Silver Spring and Adjacent Communities Plan.

I have lived in my home in the Seven Oaks-Evanswood neighborhood of Silver Spring, which is within the boundaries of the proposed Downtown Silver Spring (DTSS) and Adjacent Communities Plan, for more than 22 years. I urge you to remove adjacent communities from the plan.

**Reasons to remove the adjacent communities from the plan.**

As drafted, this plan makes adjacent communities surrounding DTSS up for grabs for denser development. However, there is a clear delineation between DTSS and the adjacent communities, and this delineation should be respected by the County Council.

When the Central Business District of DTSS was being re-developed, it was never suggested that this would lead to or be used as justification for higher-density development within the surrounding residential areas, i.e., the adjacent communities. Residents of the adjacent communities supported the re-development in DTSS, with an understanding that the higher density would be limited to DTSS. Notably, the Purple Line Functional Master Plan stated that there was no intent to change the zoning in the single-family residential neighborhoods in and around the Dale Drive/Wayne Avenue intersection if a station established at this location in the future. We now know that this was a bait and switch by our own local government.

If this plan is approved in its current version, the increased density within the adjacent communities will lead to the destruction of tree canopy and many large trees, and permanently harm the environment. We have already lost many large trees to make way for the Purple Line, especially along Wayne Avenue. An environmental study of this plan would reveal the harm already caused by this loss, and the additional harm that would come from losing even more large trees to development. However, the Planning Board no longer has a division Director for the Environment and does not consider it important to protect our environment. The County Council, whose members proudly proclaim themselves to be environmentalists, must take action to protect our environment because the Planning Board has failed to do so.

Ironically, the plan is being promoted in the name of equity, although there is nothing equitable about it. Any new denser development will not be affordable, and there is no reason to believe that it will increase diversity in the adjacent communities that, like mine, are already diverse. In fact, this is a developer land grab, a land grab that cynically co-opted the principle of equity to justify itself. The true

inequity is the painfully obvious and unjust influence that developers (and their unregistered lobbyists) wield over the Montgomery County Planning Board and their policy decisions.

Fortunately, there remains great opportunity for additional, denser development within DTSS that without would provide additional housing opportunities without encroaching upon the adjacent communities. For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to remove the adjacent communities from the Planning Board Draft of the Downtown Silver Spring and Adjacent Communities Plan.

Sincerely,

Maria Schmit