

MMPA Statement to County Council - Roger Schlegel - January 25, 2024

Good evening, County Councilmembers,

I'm Roger Schlegel, a 22-year Takoma Park resident with two children in MCPS. I teach a high school course where students explore how human culture must evolve to harmonize with Earth's ecosystem. Many of these young people will witness the world 76 years from now, in 2100. Students reach consensus around these two basic conclusions:

(1) Economic growth on its own is not a viable path to human and ecological well being. To paraphrase Bill McKibben, "We can no longer have both More and Better – we have to choose."

(2) The path to a lasting Better for people is the same as the path to a lasting Better for our ecosystem.

How do these conclusions apply to the plan you are considering?

The MMPA draft, at its core, is about a traditional definition of More: more-developed land, more income from rental or sale, more government revenue. It's More with a dollar sign next to it. It rezones to make those parcels down the hill from here and across the two valleys worth much more.

We know this kind of More doesn't guarantee Better in terms of quality of life or equity for people, or well-being for the ecosystem. So the MMPA draft also encourages all kinds of Better: housing affordability, transportation and mobility, urban forest, energy

generation, recreation, community gathering, wayfinding, stream restoration, a greenway.

But these are mainly encouragements, not requirements – with caveats such as “where feasible,” “as a kit of parts,” “incentivized,” “explored,” and with low bars such as “no net loss.”

On behalf of my students and my children, I ask you to send this plan back to the Planning Board. Tell them that you want Better required, and achieved early, so that the path to More has to lead through Better.

Especially consider Maple Avenue’s coexistence with Brashears Run. No other County stream valley bears as heavy a burden of existing development. The plan should start with what Brashears Run needs, with what it can give in terms of ecological and human happiness. Then the plan should build outward to what trees need, then to what low-impact transportation in that valley needs, and so on. Then let the valley tell us how much more human living space it can provide. Then require that its beauty, walkability, sense of community, and other enticements remain available first to its existing residents and always to people in all sorts of occupations and stages of life.

To summarize, this plan must guarantee – not merely encourage – the creation of the kind of wealth that’s really going to matter to people 76 years from now. Wealth that’s not so much about more money. Wealth that’s about a better human ecosystem. Thank you.

