

Alliance of Montgomery County Civic Organizations

Opposes

The Draft Gaithersburg West Master Plan

October 19, 2009

We oppose the draft Gaithersburg West Master Plan because it:

1. Provides extraordinary density that will dramatically worsen traffic and congestion for tens of thousands of residents.
2. Promotes development on Belward Farm that is incompatible with its historic setting, and with surrounding residential communities.
3. Permits unprecedented construction that will create pressure on rural areas to absorb additional development and density.
4. Lacks effective staging requirements. Existing loopholes allow a great deal of commercial and residential construction to be built prior to the completion of necessary infrastructure.

We urge the County Council to scale it back and support these reasonable alternatives:

1. Reduce Overall Density and Preserve Most of Belward Farm.

- Two-thirds of Belward Farm should be preserved, and the height of buildings should range between 3-5 stories. Concentrate the buildings on Belward in the eastern portion of the parcel, where commercial buildings already exist. Buildings adjacent to the farmstead and historical buildings should be limited to three stories in height.
- Ten- and twelve-story high-rise office buildings would dwarf any well-meaning efforts to preserve the character and history of the farmstead.
- Encourage Johns Hopkins to place its academic campus on Belward Farm. In exchange, John Hopkins should be allowed to transfer excessive density from Belward Farm to the LSC Central or LSC North districts.
- Decrease the density by moving some of the planned jobs from Life Science Center to other locations in the County, including White Flint, the new technology center at Montgomery College in Germantown, and to the East County Center for Science and Technology near White Oak.
- Maximize the space available to the bio-tech/medical field, by limiting the amount of space allowed for retail or general office space available to unrelated businesses. At least 75% of the available space should be dedicated to the life sciences and related fields on LSC Central and Belward.

2. Rely on Transportation/CCT Modeling that Provides Traffic Relief.

- The CCT is expected to carry at most only 15 percent of the thousands commuting to Science City every day. For every thousand new workers that come to Science City, 850 will still travel by car, which will add tens of thousands of additional cars to already congested roads.
- Slightly alter the two original CCT stations near Decoverly and Danac to concentrate the densest development along Key West Avenue in LSC North and LSC Central.

- Eliminate the proposed CCT stop on Belward Farm. A CCT stop on Belward encourages massive development that would cause traffic gridlock for the nearby communities
 - Highway-style ramps or grade-separated interchanges are totally inconsistent with the neighboring suburban community. Density must be reduced to eliminate the need for them. They will make the area dangerous for pedestrians, and work against the Plan's stated goal to replace auto trips with walking and biking.
- 3. Maintain Protections for Nearby Rural Areas and Agricultural Reserve.**
- The construction of 20 million square feet of space for 40,000 jobs would push development and density further into rural areas.
 - The massive development proposed for Belward Farm and other parcels increases the pressure for another Potomac River bridge crossing. A bridge crossing would ruin the character and vitality of Potomac, North Potomac, the Agricultural Reserve, or other possible crossing locations.
- 4. Tighten the Staging Requirements.**
- Too much development could be completed before the supporting infrastructure is built.
 - The staging requirements must be linked to enforceable milestones that promote growth in a responsible manner. The staging requirements must ensure that as development moves forward our schools, roads, and other necessary infrastructure are not overwhelmed beyond capacity.

**Organizations that Support Scaling Back Science City
and Oppose the Draft Gaithersburg West Master Plan:**

North Potomac Citizens Association

Montgomery Countryside Alliance

Residents for Reasonable Development

West Montgomery County Citizens Association

Gaithersburg - North Potomac - Rockville Coalition

Darnestown Civic Association

Montgomery Preservation, Inc.