

Testimony by the North Potomac Citizens Association

at the

Montgomery County Council Hearing on the Gaithersburg West Master Plan

September 15, 2009

Good Evening. My name is Dan Drazan, and I am the president of the North Potomac Citizens Association. NPCA works on behalf of North Potomac's 25,000 residents, most of whom live within a short drive of the proposed Life Sciences Center. Many in the community are excited about the prospect of a vibrant and world-class bio-tech center in the area. We oppose various elements of the draft Master Plan because they are **NOT** based on smart growth nor reasonable development. The unprecedented density levels **WILL** dramatically worsen traffic and congestion for North Potomac and nearby areas.

However, reasonable alternatives exist that create a win-win situation for the bio-tech field, nearby communities, and you, our elected officials.

Density

First, 2/3 of Belward Farm should be preserved, and the height of buildings should not exceed 50 feet. The buildings on Belward should be concentrated in the eastern portion of the parcel, where commercial buildings already exist. This would provide a more natural transition from the I-270 corridor to the existing residential communities. Johns Hopkins should be encouraged to place its academic campus on Belward Farm.

Second, Transfer Development Rights (TDRs) should be awarded to John Hopkins, who could then use these credits in LSC Central or LSC North.

Third, move some of the density from Belward to White Flint, which is within walking distance of Metrorail. White Flint is also very close to numerous world-class biomedical institutions. Some of the proposed development should also be moved to the White Oak area, where FDA is located, and to Germantown, where budding life sciences research entities are easily accessible from I-270.

Fourth, let's maximize the space available to the bio-tech/medical field, and limit the general office space available to unrelated businesses. The master plan must

be changed to require that a very high percentage of office space -- say 75% -- be dedicated to the life sciences and related fields.

Finally, highway style ramps or interchanges are totally inconsistent with this suburban community. Density must be reduced to eliminate the need for them.

CCT/Traffic

Turning to the CCT, the CCT cannot be used to justify the density nor the traffic that would occur from this master plan. The CCT is expected to carry at best 15 percent of the thousands commuting to Science City every day. In other words, for every thousand new people that come to Science City, 850 will still travel by car. This will result in tens of thousands of additional cars to already congested roads.

This is NOT transit-oriented development!!

A solution is to tweak the placement of the two ORIGINAL CCT stations nearest Decoverly and Danac. This route is shorter and cheaper than the looping route across Belward. The original route would also enable the densest development to occur in the eastern section of the parcel, namely LSC North and LSC Central.

NPCA and a very broad spectrum of the nearby communities strongly oppose a stop on Belward Farm.

Closing:

These reasonable alternatives promote huge growth in the life sciences industry. They also protect the nearby communities from being engulfed in unprecedented traffic and congestion.

Thank you.