



*Taking Care of
the Way People Live*

August 6, 2008

Royce Hanson, Chairman
and Members of the Planning Board
Maryland-National Capital Park and
Planning Commission
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Re: White Flint Sector Plan (the "Sector Plan")

Dear Chairman Hanson and Members of the Planning Board:

On behalf of Gables Residential, I would like to express our concerns with the White Flint Sector Plan revisions presented at the White Flint Sector Plan Advisory Group meeting on July 22nd. As you may be aware, Gables Residential ("Gables") owns the property located at 11605 Old Georgetown Road, lying at the southern corner of the intersection of Old Georgetown Road and Executive Boulevard in North Bethesda (the "Gables Property"). The Gables Property is currently being shown as a potential elementary school site within the White Flint Sector Plan boundary.

Gables has been involved with the Sector Plan process and has worked directly with Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission ("M-NCPPC") Planning Staff and the White Flint Advisory Group members on the White Flint Sector Plan revisions since acquiring the property in September 2007. As you can imagine, we were quite surprised to learn one day prior to the most recent Advisory Group meeting that Planning Staff is considering the Gables Property as a site for an elementary school. Up until this point, it has been anticipated that the Gables Property would be developed with a multi-family residential/mixed-use project at a 2.0 FAR (a very modest density given its distance to the White Flint Metro Station). Gables has been collaborating with M-NCPPC Staff on a plan that would include a structured parking facility to be shared with the adjacent Montgomery Aquatic Center site (the "Aquatic Center") and would allow the existing surface parking at the Aquatic Center to be eliminated, increasing the useable area, and allow for a significant open space amenity within the White Flint area. None of this is likely to occur if an elementary school is placed on the Gables Property.

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We believe the best use for this site is a high-quality, mixed-use project and not an elementary school. The Gables Property lies at the intersection of two very heavily traveled roads – Old Georgetown Road and Executive Boulevard. The Gables Property sits in a prime location in the White Flint area, and to use this site as an elementary school would be an under-utilization of this important resource. The factors that make this site highly desirable for mixed-use development – visible location and easy access to two major roads in the White Flint area – are exactly what make the site inappropriate for an elementary school as compared to other available sites within a residential neighborhood or immediately adjacent to a residential neighborhood. There are a number of former school sites in the White Flint area that are now either closed or in interim use; Gables urges the Planning Board and Planning Staff to fully evaluate these sites to determine whether they would be more appropriate for an elementary school.

Further, the current draft of the White Flint Sector Plan proposes that the Aquatic Center site be enhanced through the creation of an urban park with flexible, multi-purpose uses. We understand Planning Staff's vision for this park to be one that does not include ball fields or organized recreation of the type usually found at elementary schools, but rather the park and Aquatic Center would become a regional resource that promotes outdoor activity and recreation, drawing visitors from the entire area. Placing an elementary school adjacent to the Aquatic Center does not seem to support such a vision.

Based on the above, we urge the Planning Board and Planning Staff to consider whether the Gables Property is the proper location for an elementary school in the White Flint area and to remove the Gables Property from further consideration as a site suitable for an elementary school. Gables and its counsel look forward to continued discussions with Planning Staff and the White Flint Advisory Group as the Sector Plan moves toward adoption by the County Council.

Very truly yours,



Jorgen Punda
Gables Residential

cc Mr. Rollin Stanley
Mr. Nkosi Yearwood
Ms. Margaret Rifkin
Ms. Brooke Farquhar
Stephen Z. Kaufman, Esq
Heather Dlhopsky, Esq.