



GARRETT PARK ESTATES - WHITE FLINT PARK CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION

5015 Aurora Drive
Kensington, Md. 20895
August 1, 2008

Ms. Piera Weiss,
Community Based Planning
Maryland National Capital Park & Planning Commission
8787 Georgia Ave.
Silver Spring, Md. 20910-3760

Dear Piera:

Garrett Park Estates - White Flint Park Citizens' Association offers these comments in response to the July 22nd presentation to the White Flint Planning Advisory Committee. Many residents of our community were in attendance at this briefing. We have reviewed the written material and offer the following comments and suggestions:

We agree with the staff's recommendation to focus the highest intensity near the White Flint Metro station and believe that the 3.0 FAR is a reasonable density immediately around the Metro. We urge concentration of development within the 1/2 mile radius of Metro, even along Rockville Pike, to encourage the transit oriented development that we believe is so important in this area. But, we believe that density even along the Pike should decrease as the distance from Metro increases. We do not support a "canyon" effect of buildings along the Pike.

We recognize the importance of open spaces including urban parks, neighborhood parks, and pocket parks. We encourage use of the expanded neighborhood park as a buffer between new development and existing neighborhoods. We support the placement of green space adjacent to neighborhood boundaries. Specifically, we want to see a greenway boundary (including a preservation of the older trees) between White Flint Mall and our neighborhood.

We would be delighted to see Rockville Pike transformed into a boulevard with a green median; however, there are several aspects under consideration that concern the community. For example, we cannot envision parking along Rockville Pike while, at the same time, maintaining traffic flow.

We are extremely concerned with mobility issues and believe that the traffic analysis needs to go beyond the sector plan boundaries to include Strathmore Avenue because of its east-west orientation and access from the Kensington/Wheaton area. Additionally, we do not agree with the comment from Transportation Planning Staff that the entire area should be considered a Metro Station Policy Area, with a congestion standard supporting more congestion. The 1/2 mile walkable radius extends to Security Lane on the southern side of the sector and we believe that beyond this point, traffic standards should reflect those of North Bethesda. We are especially concerned about maintaining a non-urban atmosphere between the Grosvenor and White Flint Policy areas. If Edson Lane were to become part of the Metro Station Policy area, all signalized

intersections between the Beltway and Randolph Road would fall within a Metro Station area, increasing gridlock and forcing urbanization upon our existing residential neighborhood and the other communities near us.

We continue to emphasize compatibility with our neighborhood. We have asked for a discreet section in the plan titled, "Preserving Existing Neighborhoods." Included would be: addressing the compatibility with existing neighborhoods, cut thru traffic, minimizing light and shade impacts, and mitigating environmental impacts such as storm-water runoff and noise.

Specific comments based upon the pages in the presentation as follows:

Page 9: Intensity Principles. The increased development along Rockville Pike continuing to the sector plan boundary is not consistent with a transition to existing communities. Areas below Security Lane should be decreased in intensity. Areas south of Edson Lane, well beyond the 1/2 mile walking distance, should be at the minimum density. The Land Use Concept shown on Page 8 seems to reflect this concept, but the Page 9 chart does not. Plus, the high density shown along the Pike marks this as a "canyon wall of tall buildings."

Pages 10 and 11: Intensity Principles and Proposed Land Use. We assume that the greenish yellow on Page 10 reflects residential as shown as the yellow on Page 11. However, the area along the Pike between the existing Medical Office Buildings and Edson Lane is shown in greenish yellow whereas the proposed land use shows it as mixed use. We would support either use for this area as long as the density and height are low. Our major concern is the transition to existing residential. We have supported a greenway along this boundary since it is adjacent to our houses. We also note that along White Flint Local Park, the chart on Page 11 shows an area where mixed use comes up to the park boundary. The same area on Page 10 is greenish yellow. We would prefer a green buffer between our community and mixed use low development. Minimally, there should be a continuum of residential and green buffer along the sector plan boundary, especially if the White Flint site is chosen as a school site. Additionally, there are a considerable number of mature trees along the edge of White Flint Local Park and care should be taken to preserve them.

Page 12 and 13: Public Facilities. There appear to be no green spaces or public facilities south of Executive Blvd. Especially, there is nothing shown for White Flint Mall/Plaza area. This is also true in the design guideline section until we get to page 45 of the Design Guideline which appears to show pockets of green. We hope that these pockets of greenery will in fact be open space designated as parks and available to the public. We note that the Fire/EMS is at the extreme north of the site. It is assumed that this is relocated from Rollins Avenue. A police sub-station appears to be at the Pre-Release Center site. A better location would be at Nicholson Court.

Page 14: Public Facilities. We have no objection to the proposed school site at White Flint Mall and the Plaza, but the site does not appear to be 5 acres in size and would lack play areas. There is a steep slope on the site which might cause problems with construction and create runoff problems for our neighborhood. We urge that these issues be thoroughly investigated before this site is proposed for a school. We also question vehicular access to the site. We

assume such access would be via Nicholson Lane and the ring road, not from our community. Another school site consideration should be the existing "holding" school for a re-use building. The name "Gables" to denote a school site near Wall Park, should be changed to Executive to reflect its location on Executive Boulevard

Page 21: White Flint Mall District. We are in support of a Promenade (Metro right-of-way) along MD 355 but wonder why it begins south of Nicholson Lane. The promenade should be a continuous feature along the eastern side of Rockville Pike from the Grosvenor Station to the White Flint Metro Station.

Page 23: Nebel and Nicholson Court Districts. We support the retention of industrial properties and urge that the MARC station site be at the northern location as close to the Metro site and high density development as possible. We envision the MARC station as connecting White Flint to Silver Spring, serving commuters going to and from jobs in both locations. It is suggested that a Nicholson Court site be considered for a police sub-station or the Police District 2 station relocation.

Page 24: Level of Development. It is recommended that another column be added to include estimated population and job projections

Page 25: Mobility. While we understand the reasons for avoiding a grade separated interchange at Nicholson Lane and 355, we believe there needs to be some intersection improvement designated at that point. The intersection currently causes backups both northbound and southbound, and will become an increasing bottleneck unless either turning movement is limited, or one street goes under the other. Also, we had recommended a second Metro entrance at the west side of 355. It is showing on the east side in the map.

Page 27: Mobility. We assume the legend "Potential Metro Station" is actually the two potential MARC stations since the location is along the railroad tracks and not 355. See our comments above on Page 23.

Page 28: Transportation Capacity. We are concerned with the change in road capacity at Edson Lane and Rockville Pike and believe that unless this issue is addressed there will be serious backups across Flanders Ave. (our exit onto Rockville Pike) and down to Strathmore. We would like to discuss the options for this intersection including reducing turning movement, disallowing thru traffic across the Pike on Edson Lane, creating one way east-west streets, or other approaches staff can suggest. We believe any transportation analysis should include Rockville Pike and Strathmore Avenue.

Page 29: Transportation Capacity. For us the appropriate comparison on this chart is not the changes during the iterative process, but rather the comparison between buildout under the 1992 plan and the current scenario. We notice that both employee work trips and other local trips increase. These trip increases should be a much smaller percentage increase than the increase in development shown on Page 24. Without the exact numbers we cannot do the evaluation.

Page 34: Design Guidelines - Heights. Heights of 150 feet along Rockville Pike, south of Security Lane are too high. Our community does not want to see bright lights and canyon walls of development from our yards. Additionally, this chart is inconsistent with the picture on Page 49 that appears to show green space between Edson Lane and the location of the medical office building. We believe there should be a transition in height as there should be in density, with 35 feet south of Edson, eventually transitioning to 65 feet. Even the 65 feet on part of the White Flint Mall, Plaza and Nicholson Court areas are too high and could provide towering buildings over our homes.

Page 35: Design Guidelines - Gateways and Landmarks. We fail to understand the need for landmark building beyond the density and height itself. We note that the 24 story point tower at White Flint Crossing was designed to "create a landmark gateway for the southern edge of the White Flint Area." It is appropriate to retain this concept at this site. There does not need to be a landmark on the eastern side of 355 at the White Flint Mall or medical building sites. Anything here will overshadow our single-family houses and is not necessary.

Page 45: Design Guidelines - Green. We note that there are increments of green building throughout the design guidelines and we regret that we do not remember the audio presentation explaining the different types of green space. We did not see this green on Pages 12 and 13, as mentioned above. We urge that the spaces on this page be available for public use.

Page 46: Design Guidelines - Retail. We support the retail activity fronting Rockville Pike as shown on this page. We would also support retail between Nicholson and Executive Blvd on the western side of the Pike, believing that it makes sense to have a continuum of retail from Metro Center outward.

Page 49: Implementation. We note the design concept as pictured has a ring of high rise buildings on the White Flint Mall site next to our neighborhood. This does not present the low density or greenway transition that we have consistently talked about. We have said that we support the increased density at the north side of the property but not adjacent to our houses.

In conclusion, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the July 22nd presentation and we hope that our comments will merit careful consideration. We look forward to continuing the dialogue on this important project.

Sincerely,



Jeff Derogatis, Acting President
Garrett Park Estates/White Flint Park Citizen Association

Cc: Nkosi Yearwood, Community Based Planning
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