

# GARRETT PARK ESTATES - WHITE FLINT PARK CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION

March 24, 2008

Margaret K. Rifkin RLA, AICP  
Community Based Planning  
Montgomery County Planning Board  
8787 Georgia Ave.  
Silver Spring, Md. 20910-3760

Dear Margaret:

I am writing on behalf of the Garrett Park Estates – White Flint Park Citizens' Association in reference to the January 24, 2008 White Flint Sector Plan Status Report. This report was presented to the Montgomery County Planning Board on January 31, 2008. I listened to the presentation via download on the Planning Board's web site. The Garrett Park Estates – White Flint Park Citizens' Association held a Board meeting on March 12, 2008 to discuss the report and hearing.

We agree with the staff's preliminary recommendation on Land Use to focus the highest intensity near the White Flint Metro station. We believe this is the right approach. Concentrating development within a 1/2 mile radius of the Metro encourages the transit oriented development that we believe is so important in this area. The attachments to the January 24 presentation suggest a lower FAR near our community; however, the devil is in the details. For example, Chairman Royce Hanson discussed "FAR averaging". We would like to understand how the FAR would be implemented so that we would have a clear understanding how our community will be impacted. Additionally, we look for the increase in dwelling units and other uses to be matched by an increase in infrastructure to accommodate the growth.

With respect to pedestrian safety, we believe the plan should address this topic specifically under the Circulation section. On the proposal to widen Rockville Pike north of Nicholson Lane by acquiring 16 feet of right-of-way on the west side of the Pike, it appears from the Planning Board discussion that the staff is contemplating shifting the center line of Rockville Pike. We are concerned that shifting the center line at Nicholson Lane would have profound impacts on traffic flow south of Nicholson Lane. We would certainly want to see more details on this proposal. Moreover, we recognize the need to expand the network of north/south streets, but are concerned about maintaining a traffic flow on Rockville Pike.

*Officers*

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Also mentioned in the Open Space, Public Realm, and Community Facilities section is the transformation of Rockville Pike into a boulevard. 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 would appreciate a detailed discussion, including implications for current homeowners, on Implementation, bullet five, "Create public/private funding strategies that use ideas from tax increment financing." We can assure you now that we will vigorously oppose any increased assessments on our homes.

We were surprised to see that the staff report did not include any language on addressing the White Flint Sector Plan's compatibility with existing neighborhoods. In fact, we would urge you to consider adding "compatibility with existing neighborhoods" as a 5<sup>th</sup> discrete section in the staff report. "Compatibility with existing neighborhoods" is a critical performance measure from our community's perspective and we strongly believe there should be a number of outcomes identified in the staff draft that we can all embrace. Examples include, buffering and access between the urban village and our community, minimizing light, noise, and shade impacts, and mitigating environmental impacts such as storm-water runoff.

In addition, "Compatibility with existing neighborhoods" could identify community amenities such as adequate police protection, sufficient firefighting capabilities, public education and library infrastructure to support and protect the proposed 14,000 dwelling units. On traffic, we agree with the staff draft and Board discussion that circulation is critical, but the impacts on Rockville Pike south of the White Flint Sector Plan area, and especially on Strathmore Avenue are also critical.

We agree with the staff report about the importance of open spaces including both an urban park and neighborhood parks. We encourage use of the neighborhood park as a buffer between new development and existing neighborhoods. We support the placement of green space adjacent to neighborhood boundaries. Again, this could be referenced in the "Compatibility with existing communities" section.

Lastly, the Garrett Park Estates and White Flint Park communities have unique issues which we would like to see addressed during the planning and zoning process. We realize our issues may be too specific for this document to address. Examples include the

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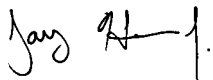
dangerous intersection at Flanders Avenue and Rockville Pike, increased through-traffic in our community, and impacts from the two medical buildings and White Flint Mall. All these issues will certainly be addressed in greater detail later in the process. In the meantime, we strongly recommend the final staff draft include language that the White Flint Plan be implemented in such a way as to respect the livability of existing communities directly contiguous to the White Flint Sector Plan area.

There is currently a great deal of skepticism within the community that the White Flint Sector Plan, the biggest development plan to be undertaken by Montgomery County according to the Chairman Hanson at the hearing, will be implemented fairly by government agencies. Listening to the hearing, it appears the most important issue is creating a high enough density to create a financial incentive for landowners to redevelop their property in a slumping economy.

The perception within our community is that these incentives will be maximized without regard to our children in overcrowded schools, as well as the traffic implications within and surrounding the sector boundaries. We respectfully request that the staff draft acknowledge all participants in this process by addressing these concerns. If these concerns are acknowledged and addressed, the resulting report could present a more balanced plan that provides a truly successful urban village while at the same time, improving the livability of impacted nearby communities.

I hope these comments are helpful. We appreciate all the hard work you have put into this and at the end of the day would like to support the final product. If you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay Hansen".

Jay Hansen  
President

C/ GPE-WFP Board of Directors  
GPE-WFP Community