

## RESIDENTS FOR REASONABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Contact:

Jan R. Fine,

Residents for Reasonable Development

(301) 921-0038

[janrandyfine@gmail.com](mailto:janrandyfine@gmail.com)

Pamela Lindstrom

(301) 869-7139

[Pamela.lindstrom@gmail.com](mailto:Pamela.lindstrom@gmail.com)

### **Citizens Group Responds to Montgomery County Parks and Planning staff presentation of draft Plan for Gaithersburg West Master Plan before the Planning Board on February 12, 2009**

Gaithersburg, Md., February 16, 2009 – Residents for Reasonable Development (RRD), a group of citizens, civic associations and environmentalists, met prior to the presentation of the draft plan to go over our initial reactions to the draft as a group. Though the draft was presented live on February 12, 2009 it was made available on line on February 7 and we were able to access it over the weekend. *This statement represents the initial reaction of this group prior to the live presentation.*

In October, November and December of 2008 Montgomery County Parks and Planning presented 4 Community Meetings on the Gaithersburg West Master Plan. These meetings were presented to offer the community an opportunity to listen to the planners as they formulated their draft plan and as a forum for input and feedback. As RRD and others have pointed out before, *there was no Citizens Advisory Committee appointed* for the review of the Gaithersburg West Master Plan. The community meetings were offered instead.

The draft Plan sets to create the *largest urban center in the county* – a Science City - without rationalization for the scope. There is no doubt that the building of a Life Sciences Center in Gaithersburg West is going to be realized. However, RRD has an Alternative Plan that allows for *all of the goals to be achieved with considerably less density than is proposed.*

The draft Plan also seeks to change zoning on the Belward Farm property, now referred to as LSC Belward, from R & D to LSC. This change would allow for mixed use including retail and housing. This change in zoning would be a violation of the deed and agreement between Elizabeth Banks and Johns Hopkins University. Mrs. Banks signed that deed with the understanding that her land be used for research and education, not housing, offices, and retail. Though her vision of what would be built was through the eyes of the time, her goal was for a campus environment – not an urban center.

Though RRD look forward to the next phase of this process – testifying at the public hearings on March 26 - we are anxious for an opportunity to present our Alternative Plan to the planning Staff and Board. RRD hopes to be able to schedule a time to present our Alternative Plan in the coming weeks. We are grateful that Mr. Hanson acknowledged correspondence from the

community at the February 12 board presentation. Community input is very important to this process and should not be overlooked or dismissed.