

West Montgomery County Citizens Association

P.O. Box 59335 Potomac, Maryland 20854

Founded 1947

To: Montgomery County Council

Re: Gaithersburg West Master Plan

On behalf of the WMCCA membership, I wish to reaffirm our opposition to the scale of planned development for Belward Farm and the associated Gaithersburg West community. We believe the massive development planned to support 40,000 new residents will result in the degradation of infrastructure and environmental resources in the western county as thousands of vehicles bleed off from the new development and into the supporting network of roads, some of which are rustic and/or pass through special protection areas.

Public transit is essential to support any new development in Gaithersburg and Johns Hopkins University and County officials have said that the high density they plan is critical to securing funding for the CCT. However, we recently learned from the Maryland Department of Transportation that this is not the case and in fact the CCT will be built (if it receives funding) regardless of the final plan for Gaithersburg West. The state has investigated two additional CCT alignments that would not cross the Belward Farm and has stated that the change in alignment will not affect ridership numbers. These alignments would avoid the pedestrian and automobile challenges on Muddy Branch Road and at the corner at Great Seneca Highway. Even more importantly, far fewer homes would be destroyed if the CCT does not traverse the farm.

The proposed 'Science City' will only worsen the jobs to housing divide in Montgomery County, increase the number of vehicle trips on local roads, create pressure to build underpasses and interchanges that isolate existing neighborhoods and threaten local streams. It will lead to impossible conditions on I-270 and greater threats to those parts of the western County such as the Agricultural Reserve and the Potomac Subregion that have taken years of planning and policy to afford even the most minimal protections. We urge you to scale back this development, reduce impacts on current residents and the existing infrastructure and consider much more closely the environmental implications as you address the need to provide new jobs and a sustainable community.

Ginny Barnes

Environmental Chair

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