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3 pages by Fax to 301-495-1320

October 17, 2003

Mr. Derick Berlage
Chairman, M-NCPPC
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Mr. Berlage,

I am writing on behalf of The Olney Coalition's 1,500 member households regarding the Olney Master Plan public hearing draft published by M-NCPPC on July 24, 2003. These comments supplement the testimony that I gave on behalf of the Olney Square Citizens Association at the public hearing on September 25, 2003.

In my letter to you dated September 9, I noted that The Olney Coalition has engaged Richard D. Klein. I also noted that due to other pressing commitments, Mr. Klein could not begin his work for us until after September 25. For this reason, I requested the period for review and comment be held open past October 31 to give Mr. Klein time to complete an initial assessment of the Master Plan draft and to help us evaluate how the land uses envisioned in the Master Plan will affect our quality of life.

We appreciate the additional time you gave us even though it was less than half of what we requested.

The criteria our members use to measure their quality of life includes:

- ◆ Schools that deliver a superior education in un-crowded classrooms
- ◆ Transportation facilities including local roads and intersections that deliver good to excellent levels of service 7 days a week, 24 hours a day
- ◆ Preservation of the natural environment and green space that characterize our community and contribute to the health of the Upper Rock Creek watershed where we live
- ◆ Exemplary fire, rescue, EMS, and law enforcement services
- ◆ Peaceful, quiet, and safe surroundings associated with low density semi-rural and suburban neighborhoods

These are the reasons that our members chose to live in Olney.

The Olney Master Plan draft provides a lot of useful information and many recommendations we support. However, it does not give us the information we need to evaluate how future land uses will affect our quality of life. Specifically, the Master Plan draft does not:

- ◆ Examine the adequacy of existing public facilities or planned (and funded) improvements
- ◆ Describe the conditions that characterize our current quality of life
- ◆ Define the criteria that must be met to preserve and enhance this quality of life
- ◆ Analyze how various growth scenarios could affect this quality of life
- ◆ Explain why the growth scenario associated with recommended land uses is the best option for preserving and enhancing the quality of life elements that we care about.

The Master Plan draft paints a picture of full build-out with maximum densities on every parcel of undeveloped land. The plan provides no justification for this scenario. The Olney Coalition supports Smart Growth aligned with the values held by current and future residents of Olney. We do not support over-development that will adversely affect every element of our quality of life.

Therefore we want the Master Plan re-written to address the following issues.

TRAFFIC

- ◆ Document current levels of service for all primary residential roads, arterial roads, and critical intersections.
- ◆ Describe how the 20,000 additional vehicle trips per day associated with the recommended growth from 12,000 to 14,800 households (a 23% increase) will be accommodated without causing deteriorating levels of service.

SCHOOLS

- ◆ Document current actual school enrollments and class sizes.
- ◆ Describe how Sherwood / Macgruder High Schools and the other 4 clusters that serve this area will accommodate the 1,500 additional students produced by 2,800 new households without compromising the quality of education. We are particularly interested in how class sizes will be reduced to achieve the benefits found in studies of smaller class size.

32-ACRE SCHOOL SITE

- ◆ Document the justification for transferring the 32-acre school site from the Board of Education to the County.
- ◆ Describe the alternative uses for this site (undeveloped open space, park land for recreation/trails, housing, etc.) and the criteria used to evaluate each alternative.
- ◆ Justify the recommended use and show how it contributes to preserving / enhancing the quality of life for residents who's property adjoins this land as well as for all of Olney.

WATER QUALITY

- ◆ Document the current quality of area streams and wetlands.

- ◆ Describe how these environmental resources will be preserved and enhanced. For example, within the Williamsburg Run area how will we know that the streams are safe for our children? Is this area near a critical threshold due to recent developments? What role does the 32-acre county-owned property on Bowie Mill Road play in protecting water quality?
- ◆ Describe how storm water runoff from 2,800 new households will be managed in light of the fact that we lack the technology to reliably duplicate the water absorption and filtration capacity of open green space.

Finally, the current Master Plan was completed in 1980. Presumably, the next update will take another 20 years. Therefore projected needs with respect to the adequacy of public facilities must extend out to 2023.

We know that the Planning Board like the County Council cares about citizen concerns. We are confident that Park and Planning will eliminate the above shortfalls in the Olney Master Plan draft before it is submitted to the County Council for approval next year.

The Olney Coalition appreciates this opportunity to provide input to the process.

Respectfully,

Nancy Wendt
On behalf of The Olney Coalition