

MCCF White Flint Sector Plan Oral Testimony to County Council - October 20, 2009

I am Jim Humphrey, Chair of the Planning and Land Use Committee for the Montgomery County Civic Federation, a countywide all-volunteer citizens group founded in 1925 with a mission to preserve and improve quality of life for county residents. The Federation's White Flint Sector Plan position that I am transmitting to Council this evening was approved by unanimous vote of the delegates at our October 12 meeting.

The MCCF opposes the level of density in this Plan, which is stated is 1/3rd more than the proposed transportation infrastructure can accommodate. The transportation plan assumes a level of Metro Red Line service that does not exist, and is likely unaffordable for the foreseeable future. And the plan recognizes that there will 2 major intersections in failure, even with all of the proposed road improvements.

We oppose the distribution of density, since the Plan states development should be concentrated around the existing Metro station and then doesn't follow its own advice, instead recommending highest densities from well north of Old Georgetown Rd. to Security Blvd., and 300 foot tall buildings from north of Old Georgetown Rd. to south of Executive Blvd.

We object to the staging in the Plan allowing nearly all of the redeveloped density to be in place before the conversion of Rockville Pike to a boulevard in Stage 3. Rockville Pike is a major throughput for north-south traffic in the county, and this Plan will result in a severe bottleneck in the White Flint area.

The Federation strongly opposes adoption of the implementation authority process to eliminate Local Area and Policy Area transportation reviews. Since the Plan allows 12 months after approval to determine how this process, and the financing of the Plan, will work, residents are being asked to buy into something with no way of knowing its impact.

We also oppose use of the CR mixed-use Zones in the Plan, since this zone category does not yet exist. Again, residents are being asked to buy "a pig in a poke." Also, we will not know how many housing units or how much commercial space will occur on any property using CR zoning until Planning Board approval, making long-term infrastructure planning by the County impossible.

We object to the environmental recommendation to retain the current 87% impervious surface land cover in the area, and the Plan's admission that stream quality in the area will continue to degrade, but at a slower rate. This is unacceptable.

We opposed the proposed 5-story height of new buildings adjacent to residential edge neighborhoods. A 60 foot tall building is not compatible with a 2 1/2 story single-family home next door.

And finally, we believe a responsible Plan should address the need for a new elementary school, and identify a site in safe walking distance for the hundreds of elementary students who will be moving into the new housing in the Plan area.

We trust you will read over the written position document we have submitted. Thank you.