

# Seneca Creek Watershed Partners



**To:** Montgomery County Planning Board

**From:** Seneca Creek Watershed Partners

**Date:** February 28, 2024

**Re:** Conditional Use Application for Residential Care Facility on Ruby Drive

Dear Members of the Montgomery County Planning Board,

I am writing on behalf of Seneca Creek Watershed Partners, a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting the Seneca Creek Watershed, to express our concerns and recommendations regarding the Conditional Use Application for a residential Care Facility on Ruby Drive.

We acknowledge the importance of balanced and equitable distribution of resources within our communities, including facilities for all members of our community. However, we believe that the current proposal for a residential Care Facility on half of Ruby Drive raises environmental considerations. The proposed development appears to disproportionately affect water resources adjacent to the facility.

In addition to the concerns that have been previously expressed by neighbors about altering the landscape of Ruby Drive we want to emphasize concerns regarding potential contamination of the Seneca Creek watershed that need to be considered in the approval process.

## **Water Quality**

Environmental concerns, such as soil erosion and water quality, warrant close attention. The proposed development area's proximity to Little Seneca Creek and its potential impact on water quality highlight the need for comprehensive environmental assessments and mitigation measures.

The high number of engineered structures, such as dry ponds and bioretention areas, suggests significant pre-existing drainage issues at the proposed location. These issues could potentially lead to increased stormwater runoff and contribute to water quality degradation in Little Seneca Creek if the stormwater management controls do not meet the need, or are not adequately maintained. Likewise, the close proximity of the proposed facility to existing homes utilizing well water raises concerns about potential contamination. These concerns are of concern due to the possible decline in water quality

within the adjacent little Seneca creek. The latest index of biological integrity was 3.0(fair) and no recent water quality tests have been done. *See* MBSS Site ID: 0859-02-2013, Feb. 2013, [available here](#). Phase 3 of the 1994 Clarksburg Master Plan requires water quality to be tested, improved or maintained before more development.

This highly erodible soil with limitations of drainage issues, is evident from the hydraulic work done by the developer engineers. The water table on the proposed 4.88 acres of 1/2 Ruby drive where the senior facility is proposed requires 24 dry ponds, 4 Bioretention areas, and 1 bioretention swale. Wells here are good at 100 ft. or less, and they have tested clean in the past. The Hurley ridge homes sit below the site

Ruby Drive is between two streams, on a slightly higher elevation than the streams. It sits above the “SSA Piedmont Aquifer”. The groundwater is derived from rain & snow that falls within the watershed where the wells are also located. In the piedmont, precipitation percolates downward through soil & rock until it reaches the water table. The saturated zone below the water table is called an aquifer. A water table aquifer such as this has no impermeable layer to protect it. Therefore, this type of aquifer is susceptible to contamination released from the ground surface. The water yield is provided to wells from fractures in the rock (SSA aquifer information).

We also see that the site has received a variance of 15 trees over 30”. The State water quality loss is related to the loss of trees. The Ruby drive area is located in a central space that has incredibly good piedmont soil, a strong water table, room for play, and its trees can be maintained. The small area can help reduce high water runoff temperatures from existing impervious surfaces and help mitigate the thermal effects if properly cared for with truly meaningful controls.

### **Master Plan Considerations**

We also want to highlight that the proposed development introduces a significant departure from the existing zoning and character of the area. The transition from residential properties to a senior health facility raises questions about compatibility and the preservation of the surrounding neighborhood's character. This section of the County was not part of the Clarksburg Gateway Sector Plan, raising questions about the suitability of the proposed development within the Brink Road Transition Area.

This area was excluded from the Clarksburg Gateway Sector plan which according to the video said the population increased 650%. The Census for Clarksburg population went from 1,384 in 2000 to 29,051 in 2020. That is about 2000%. Why is this relevant? The area being planned in the Gateway sector will be better suited for a senior facility than this Brink Transition Area which currently has Roads and houses with no neighboring amenity or an open space allocation. A new two-lane bridge at Md355 and abandonment of the road right of way at Brink puts more cars on the same small roads, with two intersection changes & no transit (that was originally proposed at Ruby Drive).

Given the significant population growth in Clarksburg, we believe that careful consideration should be given to locating senior facilities in areas more conducive to their operation and integration within the community.

The Brink Transition area needs designations for additional local parks according to the 1994 Master plan: the Special Protection Area & the Gateway Plan also require this. Maintain the R-200 instead of the conditional use application and variances of the Forest Plan. We encourage the Planning Board to keep to the Master Plan and limit impacts on the environment in that area.

Thank you for considering our comments and concerns regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Seneca Creek Watershed Partners