

November 17, 2011

Letters to the Editor  
The Washington Post

To the Editor:

Concerning your November 15 editorial on Montgomery County economic development, the fact is that Montgomery County jobs (counting the self-employed, which are not included in the Bureau of Labor Statistics cited by the Post) increased by 44,000 – or 8 percent – between 2001 and 2010. That's 60 percent higher than the national job growth average over that same period. Fairfax County did a little better – 12 percent.

The editorial compares Montgomery to Fairfax. Fair enough, but the truth is that both counties are great places to live and do business. Saying Montgomery County has “lost its edge” compared to Fairfax is like saying Lou Gehrig was a lousy baseball player because he wasn't Babe Ruth. Truth was they were both among the best players in the game, just as Montgomery and Fairfax are among the top counties in the nation. Most of America would trade places with either of us in a heartbeat.

Montgomery County continues to have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the nation. The County remains one of the most important centers of biotechnology and life sciences in the world – with MedImmune, Human Genome Sciences and with an expanded Johns Hopkins University.

Montgomery County's economic strategy, during this period of economic downturn, centers on keeping the companies we have, supporting small business, and attracting new investment and jobs from elsewhere in the United States and abroad, especially in the life sciences.

Thousands of new jobs added in the County over the past several years have come from the likes of Microsoft, Qiagen, and United Therapeutics. Retentions and expansions include Choice Hotels, Boeing/DRT – not to mention over 13,000 jobs in federal institutions in the County.

Beyond these, the County is laying the groundwork to move forward once the downturn passes by making visionary investments in the Greater Seneca Science Corridor, in transforming the White Flint and Shady Grove areas with transit-oriented development, and in a future East County life sciences center.

Are there ways Montgomery County can improve what we do? You bet. But it's not a “horse race” with Fairfax.

Fairfax is successful. That's great. Montgomery County has its own formula for success – where we balance economic growth with preserving our quality of life and where we can decide, as just one example, to preserve one-third of our County in a 90,000-acre Agricultural Reserve. That balance is our interest. That's our “edge.”

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Montgomery County