



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

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DISTRICT 1

CHAIRMAN
TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM

June 27, 2013

TO: Marlene Michaelson
Jacob Sesker

FROM: Roger Berliner, Councilmember
Montgomery County Council 

SUBJECT: Chevy Chase Lake Sector Plan

As the district councilmember, I am acutely aware of the concerns of the surrounding communities that will be most directly affected by adoption of the proposed Chevy Chase Lake Sector Plan. Regrettably, at this point in time, even after the PHED Committee's deliberations, in the absence of further analysis, I am not comfortable with my ability to address some of the most fundamental issues raised by the community. Accordingly, I am requesting your assistance in this regard.

Perhaps most fundamental is the set of issues surrounding the Planning Staff's draft proposal for the redevelopment of the shopping center (Phase 1). It is clear that the community believes that the Planning Staff draft more reasonably reconciles the desire for a better development with the desire to retain the character and integrity of the neighborhood than either the Planning Board proposal or the PHED Committee recommendation. They ask why that staff draft is not still the preferred outcome.

As the chart on circle 1 of the PHED Committee June 17 staff packet makes clear, the major difference between the Planning Board Majority and staff recommendations is the height – not the densities – of the Chevy Chase Lake shopping center. The staff draft would have had it at 90 feet; the Planning Minority was at 120 feet; while the Planning Majority was at 150 feet.

I have been told that the Planning Board concluded that the staff draft was not economically feasible at 90 feet, and that the Chevy Chase Land Co. would not proceed on that basis. However, I have not seen any economic analysis to date that demonstrates that the staff recommendation for 90 feet at this site is not economically feasible.

This question is central to consideration of this plan. For example, if it is indeed true that the staff draft is not economically feasible, then the choice in a sense is between the 2005 previously approved plan and the recommendations of heights of 120 feet or higher on the shopping center site. There are a series of trade offs that such a choice creates – but you don't even get to that level of analysis without first having thoroughly evaluated the merits of Planning Staff proposal.

In addition to an economic analysis of this site, we must be able to articulate the impact the various options would have on achieving the public policy objectives of the plan. These options would appear to be allowing the 2005 plan to go forward, adopting the Planning Staff draft, adopting the PHED Committee recommendation, or the Planning Board recommendation.

Finally, during my attendance at the PHED Committee work sessions, I do not recall a discussion of the full range of public amenities that are expected or desired in the plan. I would be grateful if you could provide a more detailed summary and analysis of these expected public benefits and whether you believe we have maximized what we should expect in the context of this redevelopment proposal.

I know that time is limited. The plan is scheduled to go before the Council on July 9th. Nonetheless, I would be most grateful if you can address these questions to the extent possible in order to provide me and the community I represent with a more complete analysis of the fundamental choices the Council is being asked to make.

cc: PHED Committee
Planning Board Chair Françoise Carrier