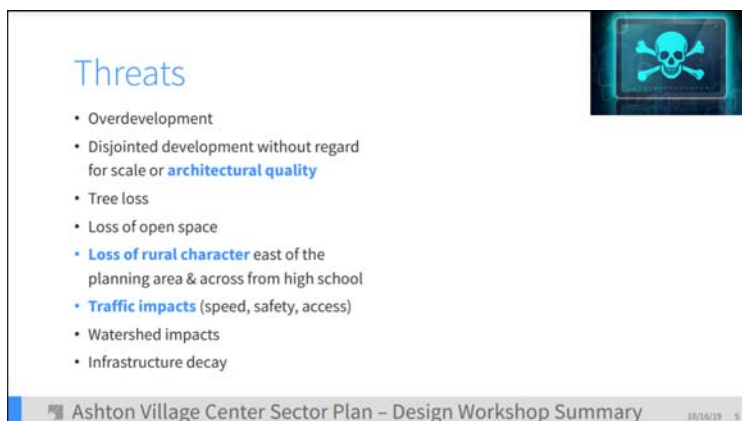


Dear County Council Members,

I am writing to voice my concern regarding the Ashton Village Center Sector Plan to be presented on March 2, 2021. I support the positions sent in by the SSCA and SSARPC, but also felt the need to voice my individual opinion. While I have many concerns on what the future development in our area will bring, I will focus on three: building heights, design guidelines and the Implementation Advisory Committee.

Building Heights in the South East Quadrant of 108/650

It is important to the community that we maintain a rural village character that embraces the heritage and uniqueness of Ashton. This came out as a key theme in the very well attended Design Workshop held by the Planning Staff in Oct 2019. Below is an output of that workshop, which highlighted overdevelopment and the loss of rural character just a few of the potential threats of the Ashton Village Center Sector Plan.¹



The SE Quadrant, where most of the proposed development is focused, is at the rural edge of 108 and the proposed zone for this area would allow for 45' high buildings. I believe it would be in the best interest of community stakeholders, and those that spend time in our area, to limit the zone in this area to heights of 40'. While 15' does not sound like a great difference, it would mean that we could see a large swath of four story buildings in Ashton, where no 4 story buildings exist today.

To illustrate this, the SSARPC commissioned a local architect, Miche Booze, to lay out the relative heights between existing buildings in Ashton and what has been shown previously by developer to the Planning Board (referred to as "potential landmark building" below). Note that a 45' high building at the mid-point of the roof can actually translate to a taller building overall. It is also much taller the surrounding buildings of that intersection (Alloway, CVS and Cricket buildings). While 45' might be fitting in Rockville or Bethesda, it is not in line with a rural village.

Implementation Advisory Committee

While the design recommendations in the Planning Draft may sound enticing to the public & may garner support from some, an Implementation Advisory Committee will be essential to ensure that community stakeholders are involved in the process. Unfortunately this specific section comprises only two paragraphs out of the 117 page Planning Draft document. Additionally, it is vague in terms of how the committee would operate.

I am concerned that the IAC will be removed from the plan or that if it is retained, that it would not be involved early enough in the planning process, rendering it ineffectual. It would be of benefit to both the community stakeholders and the developer for IAC meetings happen during the conceptual plan. This would ensure a less contentious site plan and speed the overall process. IACs have been successful in other areas of Montgomery County such as Bethesda and Olney. I ask that the County Council require the formation of an IAC, with a broad range of community stakeholders, and that it be involved early in the planning process.

The choices made now will change the landscape of Ashton forever and will impact future generations of our small town. Thank you for taking these comments into consideration.

Sincerely,

Amy Medd

Resident of the Wyndcrest neighborhood in Ashton

¹ https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/19.10.16_Design-Workshop_Summary.pdf, Slide 5

² <https://montgomeryplanningboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Ashton-Village-Center-Sector-Plan-Work-Session-3-Staff-Report-Combined.pdf>, page 82