

My name is Nadine Mort and I am a member of the Ashton Alliance and the Sandy Spring Ashton Rural Preservation Consortium (SSARPC). Thank you so much for the opportunity to exercise my citizen right to participate in this process during a time when the pandemic has made that procedure much more difficult than it usually is.

I wish to express the following concerns about development that the proposed Sector Plan would allow on the southeast corner of the Ashton Village crossroads.

The Ashton Alliance and the SSARPC is NOT against smart development; we are in total support of construction that supports the mission of the county's Missing Middle effort. We want to be the model for what a vibrant rural village crossroads can bring to a community. However we continue to be very apprehensive about this Sector Plan because even with its detailed design guidelines and nice photos, our analysis shows it would permit development that clearly does not reflect or respect the rural character and historic significance of Ashton. Our group's professional architects studied in detail what could result under the proposed zoning densities and heights,

and we are more alarmed than ever at how out of scale and character it would be. I have participated in the Planning Board's community workshops, meetings and Zooms and was shocked to see that the opinions expressed by the majority of the area residents regarding mass and density is not reflected in the proposed plan.

First the maximum heights shown in this plan (45' possible) and lengths of buildings are problematic, as they do not complement the surrounding rural character or follow the guidelines presented in Ashton Sandy Spring Master Plan. Currently, most of the area structures are not higher than twenty-five feet with the exception of one (the Alloway Building) that is thirty feet high.

Second while we support the County's Missing Middle program the massing and the proposed zoning allows a great number of towering townhouses, apartments and mixed use structures that will overwhelm this site turning a rural village crossroads into a suburban complex of brick and mortar leaving no green space. Why can't we have appropriately scaled missing middle housing here?

Third we are very concerned about how the overbuilding will impact safety for pedestrians and drivers. I am sure you know the Ashton crossroads is a dangerous intersection. It is located ¼ mile from Sherwood High School, which is currently 57 students shy of capacity, and Sherwood Elementary School, a short walk further up the Route 108 is at full capacity. This plan will exacerbate the current traffic nightmare for residents and commuters contrary to the County's Vision Zero program to reduce pedestrian deaths that were a shocking 18 in 2020!

Lastly, I am requesting that the Implementation Advisory Committee supported by the Planning Board be approved. An IAC, composed of multiple community stakeholders, would need to be involved early on and throughout the planning and development process. We ask that you direct the Planning Board to require any developer proposals to be presented to the IAC early in the conceptual design phase of the projects, not just as a formality right before submittal of the site plans to the Planning Department. Based on our experience with Thomas Village in Sandy Spring and Ashton Market in Ashton, we know first-hand

that the potential developer makes design changes, hopes they are ignored, and then asks forgiveness later. Thus, you can certainly understand why we have serious doubts that the design guidelines will be enforceable since no one has been held accountable in the past.

Similar committees in other areas, e.g. Bethesda, Olney, are effective because of such a protocol, which allows all stakeholders to influence the shaping of development well before the applicant has spent money on refined drawings. Please note that the population of Ashton Sandy Spring is much more diverse than Bethesda and Olney. Many of its residents are descendants of Montgomery County's largest black community going back to the 1700s. The IAC is a clear opportunity to give equal voice to all stakeholders, which is imperative in today's tenuous social justice climate.

Thank you very much for your kind time and attention.

Nadine Masone Mort
Ashton, Maryland 20861