

**Testimony Submitted by: Matthew Herrmann**  
**Chairman of the White Flint Downtown Advisory Committee (WFDAC)**  
**Representing the Outside the Sector Position**  
**16 November 2021**

**Testimony in Opposition to Current County Councilmanic Redistricting Plan**

President Hucker and Members of the County Council thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the proposed redistricting plan that was submitted on November 3, 2021 by the Commission on Redistricting. On behalf of the White Flint Downtown Advisory Committee (WFDAC), I stand in opposition to the current proposed redistricting plan and urge the Council to make a better map that addresses the concerns of the North Bethesda area.

As a matter of background, the White Flint Downtown Advisory Committee (WFDAC) was established by the County Council to advise County departments on public services in the White Flint area as well as coordinate community activities that promote business interests and a sense of community within that area. WFDAC has worked to increase maintenance of the streetscape and its amenities; create additional public amenities such as plantings, seating, shelters, and works of art; promote the commercial and residential interests of the community; and program cultural and community activities. Our group consists of property owners; business owners; residents and an outside the sector resident. We meet regularly to discuss a range of issues impacting the North Bethesda area. The current redistricting plan is of great concern to our Committee and hence our position and testimony today.

The Commission's own ground rules indicated a new map must meet the following 3 criteria – compactness; contiguity and preservation of community interests. We will grant that the new district is contiguous we do not believe it meets the goals of compactness and certainly not of preservation of community interests. Indeed, North Bethesda's economic and political sensibilities have, and will continue to lie in the Route 355 corridor between Rockville and Bethesda. North Bethesda has historically been included in a council district that spans this 355 corridor. North Bethesda's economic future is more tied to this corridor than Silver Spring or Takoma Park as the new district is currently drawn.

To put it bluntly, the new district that includes North Bethesda is gerrymandered and done so because of decisions made before the Census released district level data. North Bethesda is key to the economic future of Montgomery County. We have appreciated the support of the County Executive and County Council for resources to support the infrastructure in North Bethesda as well as the long-term vision for economic development that will hopefully bring the White Flint sector plan to reality. However, we are concerned that the new councilmanic redistricting plan puts that momentum at risk. We have benefited from strong advocacy at the Council and putting North Bethesda in the same district as Silver Spring and Takoma Park will make that advocacy potentially more difficult.

At its most basic level we fundamentally disagree with the Commission's decision, one of its very earliest decisions, to ensure that Rockville and Gaithersburg remain in the same councilmanic district. This significant decision hamstrung the Commission out of the gate and led to the challenges with the current map. This fundamental decision ultimately precipitated a map that gerrymanders into a new district that does not meet the Commission's own guidelines.

To be clear, WFDAC greatly appreciates the time and effort of the Commissioners on the Commission on Redistricting. A redistricting process is never easy nor are you likely to make everyone happy. Moreover, the Commissioners are volunteers like the members of WFDAC so we appreciate their work but we have great concerns about their proposal.

We urge the Council to reject the current map and redraft it where North Bethesda is either included in the same district as Bethesda or the same district as Rockville. It is important that North Bethesda be included in a district that is more consistent with the Commission's own guidelines. The current map does not achieve those goals.