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September 8, 2023

Via Email

The Honorable Evan Glass, Council President,
And Members of the County Council
Stella B. Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue, 4th Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists' Headquarters Property, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring – Written Testimony for September 27, 2023 County Council Public Hearing on Planning Board Draft Fairland and Briggs Chaney Master Plan (the “Master Plan”)

Dear Council President Glass and Councilmembers:

On behalf of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (the “General Conference”), the owner of the property located at 12501 Old Columbia Pike in Silver Spring (the “Property”), we are submitting this written testimony for the September 27th County Council public hearing on the Master Plan. As described in greater detail below, the General Conference supports the vision, goals and objectives set forth in the Master Plan as recommended by the Planning Board.

The General Conference has maintained its headquarters in Montgomery County for over 100 years and has operated its worldwide headquarters at the Property since the late 1980’s. The Property is located to the south of the intersection of US 29 and East Randolph Road and adjoins the Tech Road Park and Ride lot located to the south. A copy of the tax map with the Property’s boundaries outlined in yellow is attached. The Property includes office space, ancillary surface parking and storage space, and a variety of green space and amenities. The Property continues to serve the General Conference very well and aids it in furthering its various philanthropic and charitable missions. Significantly, the Master Plan identifies the General Conference as one of the major employers in the plan boundaries. (Master Plan, p. 11).

While the General Conference has no defined plans for the Property and the headquarters continues to further its organizational goals and mission, the initiation of the Master Plan presented a unique opportunity for the General Conference to undertake strategic planning for its future at the Property. In recognition that the Master Plan will establish key land use and zoning recommendations for the Property for the next 20-30 years, the General Conference determined it to be prudent to evaluate various future scenarios for its headquarters in the context of the Master Plan process.

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Notwithstanding that the Property continues to serve the General Conference well and that it has no plans to redevelop or otherwise change the Property in the near-term, the General Conference supports the Master Plan recommendation to rezone the Property from its current EOF zone to CR-2.0 C-1.5 R-1.5 H-120. (Master Plan, pp. 91-92). The Master Plan recommended CR zoning for the Property provides the necessary flexibility for the General Conference to respond to its future organizational needs and market demands. This CR zoning maximizes the opportunity for the addition of ancillary uses to the General Conference’s headquarters as well for more comprehensive redevelopment of the Property that supports the Master Plan recommendation for “pedestrian-friendly street frontages and building design, active ground-floor uses, publicly accessible open space, and a mix of uses that allows living, working, shopping, and gathering near transit” and related goals established by Thrive Montgomery 2050. (Master Plan, p. 87).

In addition to the Master Plan recommendations for the Property, the General Conference strongly supports the recommendation that “[i]n the event of future development on the property at 12501 Old Columbia Pike, MCDOT should partner with the property owner to develop the Tech Road Park and Ride lot as an extension of mixed-use development at this high-frequency transit station area.” (Master Plan, pp. 87-88). The majority of the adjoining Tech Road Park and Ride Lot was dedicated by the General Conference when its headquarters was developed in the late 1980’s. Significantly, the General Conference still owns a small portion of the Park and Ride lot. Therefore, the General Conference has a vested interest in any future re-use or redevelopment of the Tech Road Park and Ride lot, and desires to have a seat at the table should MCDOT/SHA pursue redevelopment of this site.

In closing, the General Conference supports the Planning Board draft’s Master Plan vision for the Property and surrounding vicinity. The Master Plan recommendations will provide the General Conference with the needed flexibility as it continues to study its long-range plans for the Property and will also further many important land use, housing, environmental, and economic development goals of the County. We respectfully request that the County Council incorporate and confirm the Planning Board’s recommendations for the Property as part of the Council’s adopted Master Plan.

Very truly yours,

SELZER GURVITCH RABIN WERTHEIMER &
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Matthew M. Gordon

By:

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Attachment: Copy of Tax Map

cc: Paul Douglas, GCSDA
Josue Pierre, GCSDA
Pam Dunn
Livhu Ndou
Tanya Stern
Robert Kronenberg
Patrick Butler
Donnell Zeigler
Clark Larson
Molline Jackson



OF

PARCEL C

BRANCH

PARCEL A

P188

P300

P366

N581

PARCEL E

MONTGOMERY

INDUSTRIAL

SEE MAP GRID KQ33-N360)
PARCEL E

29

COLUMBIA PIKE

PROPERTY DRIVE

N581

(05-01)

N582

N701

N580

PARCEL F711

(05-001)

PT. PARCEL B

E Randolph Rd

EAST RANDOLPH ROAD

COLUMBIA PIKE

CHERRY HILL

(05-001)

ROAD

Treelop Dr

Featherwood Dr

Featherwood Ct

Old Columbia Pike

PROPERTY DRIVE

PROPERTY DRIVE

PROPERTY DRIVE

PARCEL D

ROLLING ACRES

Treelop Ln

Featherwood Dr

Featherwood Ct

Old Columbia Pike

PROPERTY DRIVE

PROPERTY DRIVE

PROPERTY DRIVE

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