

Calverton Citizens Association

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September 25, 2023

Evan Glass, President
Montgomery County Council
Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue, 6th Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

RE: Fairland and Briggs Chaney Master Plan Hearing 972023

Honorable Evan Glass,

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Fairland Briggs Chaney Master Plan.

The Fairland and Briggs Chaney Master Plan is an interesting read. It seems from the historical portion of the Plan that this area has always suffered from missteps, changes in plans, and putting other projects in this area that not only negatively impacted the Plan area but also the Study area.

1955 - the realignment of US 29. An African American cemetery was destroyed. Then things started looking up when Black ownership exceeded the rate of white homeownership. This is an amazing historical fact.

The 1964 Plan, when Calverton was developed, brought the County to concentrate development along transportation corridors, corridor city, alternating with low density residential housing and open space wedges. Great idea if there is a plan for infrastructure.

1968 Fairland-Beltsville Plan refined the concepts outlined in the 1964 Plan. Then the 1969 General Plan revised the 1964 Plan. This Plan gave the East County high-rise and garden apartments that resulted in inadequate sewer provisions and moratorium on new sewer construction in 1970. It was not until 1978 that new development began again in the area. What? There was no plan for infrastructure.

The 1981 Master Plan for Eastern Montgomery County recommended a variety of housing types and densities with a focus on transit serviceability encouraging development that is not dependent on the car. The Plan also included MPDU (Moderately Priced Dwelling Units) and TDR (Transferable Development Rights). The East County is now a receiving area for all the MPDUs and TDRs that other areas in the county don't want. The Plan also did away with the corridor city concept. So, what is going to happen with more houses and no road improvements or no good bus service? Are the schools ready for more students?

In 1983 the Montgomery County Council was angry with Prince George's County. Montgomery County had a responsibility to do something with its waste from the WSSC Blue Plains Plant in DC. Montgomery County designated East County as the receiving area for Site 2, the sludge composting facility. Site 2 caused many residents to suffer with allergies, asthma, and other breathing problems. The odors and

the stench of Site 2 also caused many businesses to decide not to locate to the East County or to not renew a lease.

By 1986, the Fairland/White Oak Policy Area was in another development moratorium due to the lack of road capacity. There was no thought of infrastructure, amenities, school populations, or anything when it came to planning and approving developments in Fairland Briggs Chaney/East County area. It was all about build it and people will come. Well, people came and their lives were not happy lives because of traffic, no amenities, and overcrowded schools.

Other policies in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s were intended to address community needs like schools, parks, and transportation facilities. US 29 was widened from MD 198 to New Hampshire Avenue. There was no widening at New Hampshire across the bridge, so the widening of US 29 did not improve traffic flow. Traffic continues to back up on southbound US29 at New Hampshire 'til this day. At some point northbound US 29 did get another lane. Why southbound did not get another lane is the million-dollar question? Another question is what transportation facilities came to the area?

The 1990 Plan Trip Reduction Amendment to the 1981 Plan was to reduce potential growth until there was a comprehensive master plan addressing transportation infrastructure. Development peaked in the 1980s and slowed after 1990. Maybe Site 2 and the traffic problems in the area had something to do with the slowdown of development. No one wanted to come to East County. It was not welcoming.

The 1993 Refinement Plan that disregarded and removed growth corridor along US 29 in the East County. Montgomery County directed public and private investment away from East County and forwarded the established urban ring and I-270 corridor. Not only has the I-270 corridor benefited from "successive cycles of investments and reinvestments." I-270 flourished and so did other corridors like the Georgia Avenue Metro Rail corridor. "This recurring pattern aggravated the racial and economic disparities between the eastern and western parts of the county that remain today." Many people had voiced an option of a monorail or some kind of above ground rail system, but the County never listened to the East County and concentrated many, many dollars on other parts of the county. Montgomery County did not do anything good for the East County. The East County was ignored and neglected for many, many years.

The 1997 Fairland Master Plan focused on safe and attractive transportation improvements, community facilities, environmental protection, improved connections, and amenities for low-density neighborhoods. Somewhere between the late 1990s and the early 2000s Montgomery County gave the East County a water tower. A water tower that provided water for the Colesville/Cloverly area and did not benefit the area where it was located. West Farm Technology Park opened in 1997. West Farm Tech Park was a sprawling, attractive office park and not a warehouse office park. The construction workers and new tenants had to suffer with all the fumes and odors of Site 2. After 16 years of complaining to the County, WSSC and the State of Maryland about the obnoxious and noxious Site 2, Montgomery finally closed Site 2 in 1999. Again, the Plan area and the Study area suffered at the hands of the County.

In 1998 the County did build a new high school and the East County Recreation Center with no pool. Not to sound ungrateful. The new high school was too little too late. All the schools in the East County were still near capacity or over capacity even after the new school was built. Why wasn't a pool built in the East County? This could have been a great community addition, a great amenity, for the Fairland Briggs

Chaney area. Yes, there is a pool at Martin Luther King and at Fairland Aquatics Center. But how do you get there? There was no quick way or good way for residents to get to a pool.

2007 brought a change to the way traffic and transportation adequacy is measured. It didn't work because traffic is still not moving in 2023. The County in 2023 now assumes that everyone or almost everyone will use the BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) system that opened in 2020. The County is saying that people do not need a vehicle and are now putting in fewer parking spaces in the proposed multi use or multifamily projects. This hypothesis is flawed because people still need a car for certain trips since there is no good transit system in the East County and no good transit system connecting the whole county. You can't get there from here and if you do get there it takes too long. It is going to be years and years down the road before everyone or almost everyone does not need a vehicle. The BRT will always bog down in traffic on southbound US 29 unless the widening at New Hampshire Avenue and the dedicated BRT lanes are built early in the Plan, not later and not spread out over years.

The 2023 Fairland Briggs Chaney Master Plan is focusing on rezoning areas in the area to allow for more compact construction in development in the area. The Master Plan will allow developments like Nova Randolph at the corner of Randolph Road and Old Columbia Pike to get approved without talking to the neighbors and not having to go through the Hearing Examiner for rezoning. The Hearing Examiner did not approve rezoning the corner land and asked the developer to meet with the communities. Well, the developer won't have to meet with communities now because Montgomery County is just giving the developer the zoning change needed to build on the property. The new focus is now taking every little nook and cranny and every corner and turning these areas into multi-use developments. The focus has changed back to corridor cities, "Activity Centers" and Community Gateways. Remember, with increased multi-use development and multifamily housing will come more cars. Cars parked on both sides of a street do narrow the path for other vehicles, especially emergency vehicles. At least the Plan has sidewalks to make for walkable communities because in older communities there is no safe place to walk with cars parked on both sides of a street.

It is great that there are plans to connect communities with the Activity Centers and connect communities with other communities and amenities. Cul-de-sacs are not bad for communities because there is no cut through to encourage vehicles to speed through communities. Connect communities with paths and bridges for walking and biking.

There is a problem with the tributaries in the Plan area and the Study area. The Galway Tributary is the worst one. It is great that construction will use modern environmental guidelines to prevent further problems. Are there plans to clean and redesign the tributaries to help with improving the environment and water flow in the Anacostia Watershed? Will these tributaries be improved and cleaned to help keep pollution out of the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers. Will these tributaries be cleaned to keep pollutants out of the communities, out of residential yards and out of parks.

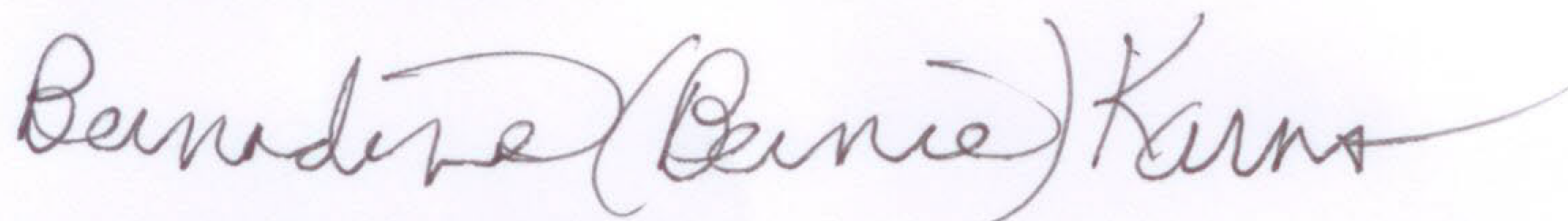
Many residents in the area are disappointed and discouraged with Montgomery County. The County has not given the East County any indication that the County cares about us like the County cares about other parts of the county. Over the years Montgomery County has relaxed building and zoning codes. Older neighborhoods have seen the problems that come with multifamily housing. Problems like too many cars, schools are overcrowded, not being able to park in front of their house and not being able to walk down the street. Yet, the county gives residents who have lived in the county for many years a

homestead tax break. But this doesn't make the older person happy because all they want to do is to be able to park in front of their house and walk down the street safely. We need more help from the County for this area to have communities that residents want and communities where the older resident want to live. The Fairland Briggs Chaney Master Plan and Study area need more investment from Montgomery County to give residents what other parts of the county have. We want to see the interest and effort that the County has shown while bending over backwards to invest in other parts of the county. Where is equality when it comes to all residents and all communities in Montgomery County?

The County needs to invest equally in all areas of the county and to divide MPDUs and TDRs equally in all parts of the county. Montgomery County needs to come up with programs that spread all incomes across all parts of the county. For instance, schools in certain areas are not even close to being aligned with other schools in Montgomery County. Yet studies show that if people of different incomes or different backgrounds work together, live together, and go to school together then everyone benefits. You cannot make equitable communities if you don't treat everyone and every community and every area in the county equitably. What about us?

It is just too bad that it has taken all these years for a plan to develop that might save the Fairland Briggs Chaney area and the Study area. The new Fairland Briggs Chaney Master Plan looks to be the best laid-out plan for years to come. The Fairland Briggs Chaney Study area is really hoping that this plan is seen through because too many times the plans have been changed, dropped, or not completed for one reason or another. It is time to spend money in the Fairland Briggs Chaney Master Plan and Study area. It is time to deliberately concentrate and focus on the communities to fix the challenges that the residents and businesses have faced for years. It is finally our time to receive all the benefits that other parts of the county have received for years. Will this be the one. Will this be The Plan? We sure hope so.

Respectfully submitted,



Bernadine (Bernie) Karns, President
Calverton Citizens Association

