

Good Evening Councilmembers,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Michael Jones. I am here in my capacity as the President of the Oaks at North Bethesda Homeowners Association (“The Oaks or Oaks”). For those who might not be familiar with our community, the Oaks is located where Old Georgetown Road, the 270 spur and Lux lane meet in North Bethesda. It is a relatively small development of 30 single-family homes located on former farmland sold in 1997. I’m confident that if asked, we could get a response from all 30 of our homeowners to speak up and out about 25-02.

Admittedly, as a 30+ year resident of Montgomery County who, as an original owner, resided at the Oaks since 2006, I have a narrow focus tonight. I’m here to explore and highlight how the potential impact of 25-02 will have on our neighborhood. On a personal note, when we decided to move to this community in 2005, I never expected that I would be here 20 years later testifying about proposed development incentives that would adversely impact our community.

If you pause to consider that preparations and plans for our community began nearly thirty years ago, it has a documentable history of adhering to design standards established by Montgomery County. As part of this process there was comprehensive planning; the Oaks went through

extensive review with many requirements insisted on and overseen by Montgomery County as well as the Maryland National Park and Planning Commission.

One of the primary considerations was the design and installation of infrastructure; specifically, an extensive water and sewer system to accommodate the then new homesites constructed on farmland. As part of this system, there is a water retention pond along with a fifty-foot-wide easement for a major water main. Additionally, the Maryland State Highway Administration has easements for the large sound barrier wall parallel to the 270-access ramp.

We are concerned that the proposed development area on the interactive map depicts a potential build envelope that intersects with the front and side of the Oaks as we know it. If pursued, we believe this will become disruptive to these systems, including but not limited to a substantial increase in demand that may exceed existing capacity. The real possibility of a material change in the grading and slope might also prove disruptive to the neighboring homes as well as the water retention system.

In addition to our very large 10-foot brick 1400 linear feet sight wall, that we understand might be demolished in part to accommodate the building area, we also have several smaller retaining walls adjacent to the

homes closet to Old Georgetown Rd. that could be overwhelmed, or worse, compromised.

Our HOA is in the process of undertaking maintenance to this brick wall and have been met with sticker shock as to the exorbitant cost to repoint and repair sections. The notion that part of it could be removed to make way for new housing heightens concerns of upsetting the structural integrity of the wall. Further, since it abuts the sound wall constructed and maintained by the State Highway Administration along the edge of 270, there is also concern that any change to our wall might also compromise this extensive and lengthy structure serving a critical need.

If what we understand has been suggested and depicted near our community for additional housing is accurate, it appears that the ingress and egress in and out of our community could also be altered by the need to gain additional access points along Old Georgetown Rd. We further understand that it is this very corridor that “qualifies” our community for ZTA and 25-02 consideration. The potential impact on a heavily travelled and already confusing and notoriously backed-up major throughfare to provide access to the new dwellings parallel to the controversial bike lane would make what is often chaotic, impossible to navigate. Just when you thought the State’s bike lane debacle couldn’t get any worse – here we are.

This raises a fundamental question: without this access to this new area, does that result in the new occupants would then enter and exit via the closed street design to access their dwellings?

I close with the reminder that in posing these questions, we hope we have identified at a minimum, considerations that when combined with this unusual legislative process, identify significant challenges to this designated area. Our community represents a well-planned and executed development that has a unique design infrastructure ecosystem. We fear that by superimposing housing on top of our community, doing so would likely prove to create more problems than it is intended to address. We urge you to consider our concerns and explore going back to the drawing board with focus on areas that don't exacerbate already challenging conditions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.