

Testimony of Barry Wides
President, North White Oak Civic Association
Before the Montgomery County Council
in the matter of
Resolution to approve the Creation of Development District and Tax Increment
Financing District - White Oak
June 10, 2025

Good afternoon. I am Barry Wides, representing the North White Oak Civic Association, a community association in Silver Spring operating continuously over the past 51 years and incorporated in 1974. NWOCA represents about 500 families living in the area bounded by US 29, New Hampshire Avenue, Jackson Road, and the Paint Branch Park. I also served on the County's Friends of White Oak committee from 2017 to 2021.

The closest boundary of our civic association and the south eastern boundary of Viva White Oak on Industrial Boulevard is about a half mile. Given our neighbors' proximity to the proposed Viva White Oak development, we are particularly impacted by traffic at this project which could contain 4,700 units and 2.6 million square feet of nonresidential space.

Our association supports the creation of the White Oak Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and Development Districts. However, we would like to see the resolution amended so as to expand these Districts to include nearby arterial roads thus allowing for funds to be used for roadway expansion on US 29, Old Columbia Pike, and Cherry Hill Road.

Why is this so important? It should be noted that that Viva White Oak is landlocked on the south and southwest by FDA and the Paint Branch, respectively. Because of those geographic limitations, the only ingress and egress to Viva White Oak would either be from Industrial Boulevard or Tech Road to Old Columbia Pike/US 29 or FDA Boulevard (and possibly new streets) onto Cherry Hill Road. And rush hour traffic along US 29 currently is notorious for being among the worst in the County. A southbound two-mile trip on US 29 from Industrial Boulevard/Tech Road, where southbound driving Viva White Oak residents would exit their development, to the Beltway during rush hour currently takes 25-30 minutes. The recent proposal to create Flash bus dedicated lanes on US 29 could potentially facilitate access to the Silver Spring metro for some commuters. However, for

commuters unable to use mass transit, the loss of a traffic lane and the increased development at Viva White Oak would further worsen a bad situation.

The 2014 White Oak Master Plan identifies a number of road projects on US 29, Old Columbia Pike, Powder Mill Road, and other major roadways near Viva White Oak to address these problems. However, besides the Flash Bus, no significant transportation improvements have been made in more than a decade since the plan was approved. Many of the proposed projects identified in the Master Plan on this US 29 have been languishing on the books since the 1990s. Unfortunately, we are still working with a traffic study that has not been updated to reflect the Viva White Oak development.

We would note that comparable large planned communities in Montgomery County, such as Kentlands and King Farm, do not suffer from inadequate peripheral road access. Kentlands, with 4,400 residential housing units and a million square feet of commercial space has four major roadways on all sides of the community and benefits from proximity to I-370 and I-270. King Farm, with about 3,000 housing units, also has good peripheral road access on all sides with almost direct access to I-270 from Shady Grove Road and Redland Road.

Our neighbors would like to see the Percontee and WSSC Site 2 property be developed, but in a manner that occurs concurrent with peripheral road improvements. We are hoping that funds borrowed through the TIF/Development District could be used to fund such projects as widening of Old Columbia Pike (and rebuilding the bridge over the Paint Branch), US 29, and Cherry Hill Road and other traffic mitigating solutions. As part of this effort, we believe a coordinated peripheral roads improvement project should be spearheaded by Montgomery County in coordination with the Maryland State Highway Administration and Prince George's County so those improvements come on line as any new development is built out. New ideas such as a Cherry Hill interchange with I-95, a mile south east of Viva White Oak, and a Flash bus to the nearby Greenbelt Metro Station should be explored. The North White Oak Civic Association stands ready to work with the MCB Real Estate, the Counties, and State to discuss the challenges and identify potential solutions.

Thank you for your considerations of our views in this matter.