

September 19, 2025

The Honorable Council Chair Stewart and Members of the Montgomery County Council:

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective on the Planning Board Draft Summer 2025 version of the University Boulevard Corridor Plan (UBCP).

My name is Michal Segelman, and I have been a Jewish resident of the Kemp Mill community for the past nine years. I have followed this proposal closely since it was first introduced to the public, and my family has attended hearings—both virtually and in person. I must express that the way this plan has been communicated and presented to the public has been deeply troubling. The process has felt imposed rather than collaborative, as though decisions are being made by officials who neither live in our community nor fully understand its needs. While I support the goals of improving traffic safety and expanding affordable housing, the current approach is flawed. Meaningful change must be made with the people, for the people. Moreover, the proposed plan would likely fail to achieve its intended goals, as it could easily result in increased car traffic and reduced pedestrian safety.

I have several specific concerns about the proposed plan:

1. **Impact on Kosher Businesses:** The proposed rezoning regulations would prevent local kosher establishments from operating as they currently do. For example, Shalom Kosher would exceed the allowable size for the Kemp Mill Shopping Center. This would force Jewish residents to drive to more distant kosher grocery stores, undermining the plan's goal of reducing car usage. Many of us currently walk to shop and dine locally—this change would diminish our quality of life and increase the number of cars on the road.
2. **Threat to Schools and Synagogues:** There is widespread concern that rezoning could jeopardize the operation of our schools and synagogues. Should any be forced to close or relocate, many families would feel compelled to leave the area, disrupting the fabric of our community.
3. **Traffic and Accessibility Challenges:** Kemp Mill is uniquely bordered by woods on three sides, with only three access points: University Boulevard via Arcola Avenue, Georgia/Amhurst via Arcola Avenue, and Randolph Road via Kemp Mill Road. Any changes to traffic regulations on these roads could severely hinder access to and from our neighborhood. This poses serious safety and health risks, especially if emergency services are delayed in reaching residents.
4. **Family Transportation Needs:** Many Kemp Mill families are large and rely on daily car commutes to transport children to school. Public transportation is not a feasible solution for managing multiple young children each day.

I wholeheartedly support initiatives that promote affordable housing and pedestrian safety. However, these goals must not come at the expense of the essential needs of Kemp Mill's Jewish community. Nor should residents feel forced into adversarial positions with their elected representatives simply to be heard.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely, Michal Segelman