

9/22/25

Dear Members of the County Council,

I am writing as a parent of a Blair High School student and a resident of the Woodmoor neighborhood for 15 years. **As currently written, I oppose the University Boulevard Corridor Plan (UBC).** I have been following the plan for the past year—attending neighborhood association meetings, following hearings in the news, attending two public meetings, reading the written testimony of others and discussing the plan with neighbors. While a vision of a “pedestrian-oriented and multimodal corridor” is laudable, attaining that vision is challenging when you are not starting with a blank slate. It is tricky to balance the needs across the impacted communities. In my opinion, this plan falls short of addressing a host of concerns and until those concerns are better addressed, I ask the council to put a pause on the proposed UBC plan.

Key concerns include the following:

- **New Zoning Ordinance Just Passed by the County Council:** This summer, the Council approved ZTA 25-02 which allows multi-family homes (duplexes, triplexes, and small apartment buildings) on approximately 2,470 lots across certain county corridors that previously only allowed detached single-family homes. “The Planning Board will share a report every two years until 2037 tracking stats like total applications, units produced, and traffic impact. It will also include data on new teardown/rebuild single-family homes to compare stats like frequency of construction and price outcomes with multi-family homes built under this ZTA.” Why does the County Council want to pass a new plan before first assessing the effectiveness of this new ordinance?
- **Public Transit and Density:** Per County Executive Elrich, the UBC plan “is based on a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line that does not exist and is not even in the planning stage.” And per the Montgomery County Department of Transportation, “if density is added without realistic solutions that offer a viable alternative to driving, people will have no choice but to drive, further degrading traffic operations and environmental conditions, given the current transportation options in the corridor.”
 - Why would the County Council be amenable to a plan that allows for greater density before there is existing transit that can handle the influx of residents? If the Council is set on advancing this plan, then the Council should add an amendment that makes it clear that increased density is dependent upon the existence of BRT stations on University.

- **Infrastructure to Support Increased Density:** What level of density can our neighborhood reasonably absorb? I don't know. Presumably some, but what if the density added puts a strain on existing infrastructure—impacting sewers, electrical grids, and schools—and increasing demand well beyond their original capacity? Retrofitting existing infrastructure is costly. Who will incur those costs and ensure needed upgrades are made? As noted by the Woodmoor-Pinecrest Citizens Association, "The planning dept has either not performed or is unwilling to provide a detailed analysis of anticipated impacts despite our neighborhoods many requests."
- **Affordability of Housing.** Per the plan, the UBC "area is characterized by its general affordability compared with the county as a whole in sales prices, rents, and the large amount of housing stock that is income restricted." (p.77) Despite a recommendation that the plan "prioritize greater percentages of or more affordable MPDUs than required by county code" there seems to be a recognition of how difficult this may be to achieve in reality when one of the other recommendations is to "preserve existing market rate affordable housing where practicable, striving for no net loss of market rate affordable housing in the event of redevelopment." (p. 80) I wonder whether redevelopment, which stands to bring new amenities (like shopping and dining), could drive up property values and have the unintended consequence of reducing affordable housing?
- **Parking:** It is not entirely clear to me how much parking will accompany redevelopment. The parking lot at the Woodmoor Shopping Center is often full. If it is redeveloped as a large apartment complex with built-in retail, how much parking will developers be required to provide? Will it be enough to support those still reliant on cars? While I use the metro when travelling to D.C. for work or fun, it's not feasible to use public transit to travel to medical appointments for myself and my family. Nor was it feasible in the past to get to and from childcare and work in a timely manner relying on public transit. My point is that while we can build plans to encourage greater public transit, it is unrealistic to think that cars won't continue to be an important part of how people get around. So I sincerely hope the plan won't simply eliminate or reduce parking to try to engineer less driving as I believe it will only cause more congestion and frustration. One only needs to look at the parking lot at Trader Joes on Colesville on a weekend to see what I mean.
 - If the Council is set on advancing this plan, then the Council should add an amendment that makes it clear that increased density is dependent upon providing reasonable parking to accommodate new housing and businesses (e.g. underground or above ground garages in commercial spaces).

- **Size or Redeveloped Buildings:** Per one my neighbors with 20 years of volunteer experience in planning issues, there are 14 properties in Four Corners alone recommended for redevelopment with a height of 100 feet which is roughly 10 stories. A building of that size in the current location of the Woodmoor Shopping Center would tower over the residential area beside it. I'm guessing the same is true of at least some of the other locations.
 - If the Council is set on advancing this plan, then the Council should add an amendment to reduce the height of such buildings. For example, in suburban or "village" settings, 2 to 6 stories is more typical. Also, under the ZTA 25-02, the maximum height is 40 feet for apartments. With this in mind it would seem reasonable to cap the height at 40 or 50 feet.
- **Safety:** Nearly everyone who testified at the most recent 3-hour public hearing acknowledged that safety along the corridor is a real concern. I also agree. However, it has been made very clear that the Maryland State Highway Administration is already working on ways to improve safety along University, making it more timely than the UBC Plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input. I truly hope the questions and concerns raised by the many communities and businesses impacted by this plan are heard and acted upon.

- Kelly Luck