

Samuel T. Wolf
---- Kerwin Ct.
Silver Spring, MD 20901

September 22, 2025

Dear Council:

My name is Sam Wolf. I live on Kerwin Court with my wife, daughter, and dog. Our home is in the portion of the Northwood-Four Corners neighborhood that the University Boulevard Corridor Plan proposes to rezone from R60 to CRN. If the Council adopts the Plan, it will harm our neighborhood and not produce any meaningful benefit for the County.

The Council should **not** adopt the upzoning as proposed in the UBCP. If there is to be any upzoning or increased density in the Northwood-Four Corners area of the plan, it should be narrowly tailored and limited to those areas that already have commercial development.

The Council should exclude the area from Royalton Road through Caddington Avenue from any proposed upzoning. This portion of our neighborhood cannot support the proposed increased density, and the zoning changes would change the character of the neighborhood for the worse and force out many current residents.

The first reason to reject the proposed upzoning is a practical one. Our decades-old single-family home neighborhood cannot support the increased density. Increasing the number of residents would inherently mean increasing the number of school-aged children. Our neighborhood is served by Forest Knolls Elementary School. That school has a maximum capacity of 581 students. MCPS projects that 550 students will be enrolled at FKES by the 2027-2028 school year.¹ That problem can't be solved by expanding the school. There is no room on the school's lot for the building to be expanded, and there is no place to put portables. The problem also can't be solved by building a new school. There is no available open land in the neighborhood—or any surrounding neighborhood—to build a new school.

Increasing the residential density of our neighborhood would increase the number of cars and traffic in the neighborhood. It seems that this was not seriously considered when the UBCP was developed, as there is no way our neighborhood can accommodate the increased number of cars that would need to park or drive through the neighborhood. The streets in our neighborhood in the immediate

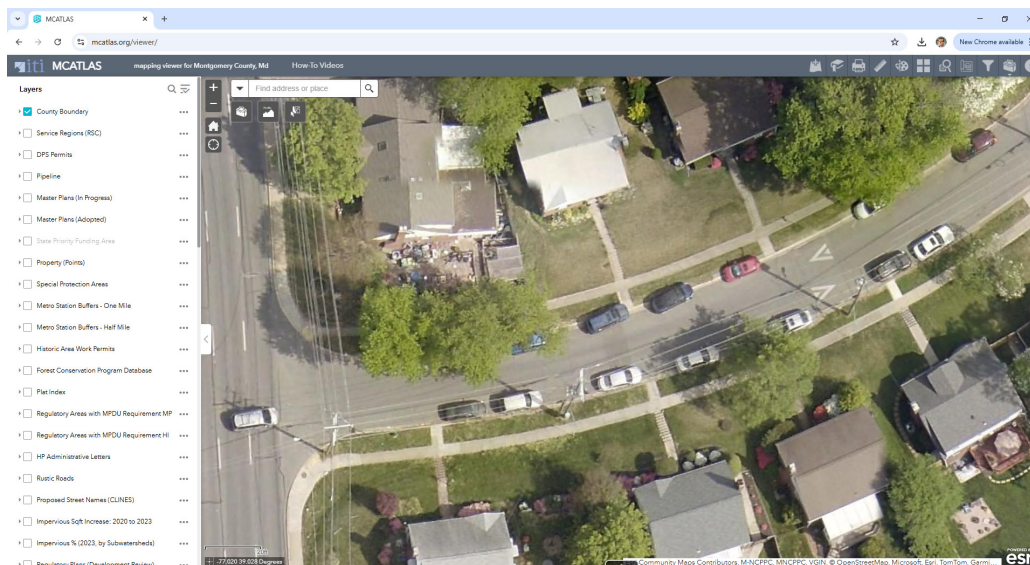
¹ See

<https://ww2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/regulatoryaccountability/glance/currentyear/schools/02803.pdf>.

vicinity of University Boulevard—where the upzoning is proposed—already have problems with parking and traffic. Many of the homes in our neighborhood lack off-street parking or have insufficient off-street parking. Because of the way the lots are shaped and/or graded, the existing lots cannot have off-street parking added to them. Our roads are extremely narrow. The result is that virtually every legal street parking space is usually taken on nights and weekends. On Kerwin Road between University Boulevard and Kerwin Court, cars are routinely parked halfway on the curb and the road is *still* too narrow for two cars to pass in opposite directions.² This creates unsafe situations when cars attempt to turn into the neighborhood when another cars is attempting to leave the neighborhood by turning onto University Boulevard. Combined with the traffic slowing and transit measures proposed for University Boulevard, increasing the density of the area immediately adjacent to University Boulevard will only have the effect of causing more traffic cutting through our neighborhood to go from eastbound University Boulevard to northbound Colesville Road. Cut-through traffic is already a problem in our neighborhood. Slowing down traffic and reducing the number of travel lanes on University Boulevard would only increase cut-through traffic in the neighborhood. The minimal safety benefits to the minimal number of pedestrians who could ever be expected to walk along and across University Boulevard would be far outweighed by the dangers caused by cut-through traffic speeding through the interior of the neighborhood, where there is much greater foot traffic, particularly when children are walking to and from school.

Implementing the UBCP would require changing the character of the neighborhood and displacing the residents who currently live between University Boulevard and

² This image from mcatlas.org depicts Kerwin Road from University Boulevard to Kerwin Court on a morning in April 2023 (judging by the blooming azaleas and shadows from the morning sun). Parking is worse in evenings and on weekends when residents (and their cars) are at home.



Edgewood Avenue. Our diverse neighborhood consists predominantly of detached single-family homes. The approximately 200 homes that would be affected by the upzoning in our neighborhood are some of the most affordable detached single-family homes in the County. My wife and I chose to buy our home in Kerwin Court in 2014 specifically because we sought an affordable suburban single-family home with a fenced-in yard for our dogs and children to play in that had quick and easy access to the beltway. Those are the same factors that led so many of our neighbors to this neighborhood. The people who live in the neighborhood deliberately chose not to live in an urban area or an area that seeks to emulate a downtown area.

The zoning changes would change our neighborhood for the worse and force many of us out if UBCP were fully implemented. The proposed higher density and some of the proposed changes to the University Boulevard right of way itself are incompatible with the existing layout of the neighborhood. Thus far the UBCP has been pitched as increasing density and providing attainable housing by allowing the building of duplexes and triplexes that would blend into the existing community. The idea of that happening in our neighborhood is implausible nonsense. No one develops a property without seeking to profit. It defies logic and any understanding of human nature to believe that anyone would purchase a single-family home at market value, tear down the current structure, build a new multi-unit structure, go through the process with of subdividing the property into multiple separately taxable parcels, without selling each unit for more than what was paid initially for the original single-family home. The only foreseeable way any developer would create increased housing density is by acquiring several lots to construct condominiums or apartment buildings of the type that have been built in other areas of the County that have traditionally had a more commercial use, like the Flats at Wheaton Station or Rockville Town Square.³ Even then, the prices or rents will be comparable to or more expensive *per unit* than each single-family home that is being replaced. The proposed increases to the FAR with the upzoning would further incentivize the large-scale redevelopment of our neighborhood into condominiums or apartments. The proposed changed to CRN zoning with a 1.0 FAR permits a large increase in density, and far more than what has been suggested as permitting duplexes and triplexes. That is especially true since, for purposes of calculating FAR, the lot size of each property along University Boulevard is presumed to include the land under University Boulevard to the center line of the right of way.⁴ Allowing such development in our neighborhood would leave current homeowners with the awful choice of either selling to the developers buying up lots

³ Notably, these developments describe and price themselves as “luxury.” At Fenestra Apartments in Rockville Town Square, \$2,972 rent per month will get you a 1,306 2-bedroom, 2-bathroom apartment with a den. <https://www.fenestraapts.com/rockville/fenestra-at-rockville-town-square/conventional/>. That is more expensive than the mortgage payment on my 4-bedroom, 2-bathroom house on Kerwin Court. The Flats at Wheaton Station are priced similarly, rent there for a fifth-floor apartment with 2 bedrooms and 1.5 bathrooms is a whopping \$3,089 per month.

⁴ Md. Code Ann., Real Prop. § 2-114.

around them or stubbornly staying in their home like Carl in the movie “Up” while condos are built around them. Increasing density, and therefore traffic, would also likely make University Boulevard as miserable to drive on as Route 1 between the Beltway and the University of Maryland. As discussed earlier, the residents of this neighborhood chose to live in a suburban, single-family home neighborhood. None of us chose to live in a downtown area. We do not wish to be converted into a downtown area.

The proposed safety and transit changes to University Boulevard are also inconsistent with the housing that currently exists in our neighborhood. The widening of University Boulevard over the years has already eaten away at the lots along the road. Past decisions of the Planning Board and Council are the reason why there is no buffer between the narrow sidewalk and the travel lanes of University Boulevard. There is no way to create a tree-lined buffer between the traffic of University Boulevard and a more walkable sidewalk without widening the right-of-way or eliminating travel lanes that are needed to accommodate vehicular traffic (the very reason University Boulevard was widened in the first place). There is no way to carry out the UBCP’s vision of eliminating driveways along University Boulevard. There are no alleyways or side streets to which those driveways could be redirected, and there is nowhere to construct new alleyways or side streets without eliminating current residents’ yards and houses. Even the idea of planting trees along University Boulevard is impractical given the utility lines currently running along University Boulevard, which would need to be buried (at great expense) first.

Drastic changes to the University Boulevard right-of-way would also likely entail severe quality of life problems like what has been caused along University Boulevard east of the I-495 exit and Wayne Avenue by the “construction” of the Purple Line. That has been a years’ long debacle that has left both roads in terrible condition and has been a quality-of-life problem for everyone who lives along and uses those roads.

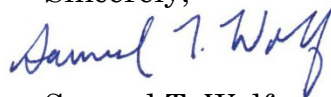
While the safety of foot and bike traffic along University Boulevard should be improved, the methods used to improve safety should be more measured than what is proposed in the UBCP. University Boulevard exists the way it does because it is necessary to meet the transportation needs of this County and Prince George’s County. It is three lanes wide in each direction because it needs to be. Even if a larger percentage of the area’s population could be convinced to use buses, and sufficient numbers of buses, drivers, and routes could be funded, most people will continue to use personal cars. As the population grows, that means more cars. Taking away traffic lanes to dedicate them to bikes and buses is unwise. Even where the State has painted the red bus lanes on University Boulevard, buses are infrequent, bike use is almost entirely non-existent, and the bus/bike only signs are routinely ignored by aggressive drivers who are too impatient to sit in the congested rush hour traffic in the other two lanes moving 10 mph below the speed limit.

A few final thoughts:

- There is no logical reason increased density should be tied to the proposed improvements to the University Boulevard right of way. If the desire is to make University Boulevard safer, and more walkable and bikeable, then do that. That can be done without adding greater density burdening the neighborhood.
- There is no logical reason the zoning changes need to be as extensive as they are. There are areas where zoning changes could be a good thing, like right at the Four Corners intersection, which is already devoted to largely commercial use, but the business were all plopped down in a haphazard way with no thought given to ingress, egress, or parking. Those limited areas might be a good place to put limited mixed-use development. But there is no reason R60 zones should be changed to CRN or CRT.
- The UBCP seems to rely heavily on assumptions about transportation changes that may or may not ever happen, like a currently unfunded proposed BRT line on University Boulevard. Even if there were some rational basis to link increasing density with promotion of public transportation, the *only* thing that the Planning Board and the Council have within their power to do that could cause immediate change would be the proposed upzoning. There is no reason to do the proposed upzoning while the transportation proposals are still so uncertain.
- The UBCP as currently conceived is bad policy and bad politics. The Council's constituency is the current population of Montgomery County, not some hypothetical future population. While the County should plan to accommodate the foreseeable needs of future residents, the plans made for the future should not be made to the detriment of those who actually live here now.

Thank you for your consideration. As you are no doubt aware from the public hearings and other testimony you have received, the residents who will be affected by the UBCP are overwhelmingly opposed to the Plan. I ask you to oppose the UBCP and to vote against it.

Sincerely,



Samuel T. Wolf