

Former Silver Spring Library Presentations

Comments received by the Montgomery County Department of General Services

I enjoyed the two presentations at the Civic Center last night, although I preferred the second one (senior housing). One of the things I liked about that plan was the provision of two meeting rooms accessible to the outside. Silver Spring already has a meeting room crisis [the new library is not helping] and it's most important to the community that there be meeting rooms that can be reserved by groups of all kinds. The Quakers in Philadelphia guaranteed themselves a place in heaven when they included free meeting rooms of all sizes when they renovated their old Meeting House.

Walter E.

Dear Sirs,

I vastly prefer the Gudelsky-Centronia proposal after attending the October 4 meeting! The Victoria Housing building looks like a huge fortress. It reminds me of the horrible former Wheaton library.

Regards,
Beverly M.

Good morning,

I was unable to attend last night's meeting, but I'm very interested in the two proposals that you've posted online for the old Silver Spring library site.

I have to say that I'm disappointed in both proposals. The site is next door to a 12-story apartment building, only a few blocks from the Silver Spring metro, near fantastic amenities in downtown Silver Spring, and on a major road. To build only a 4-story building with 92 units, or even worse to limit the redevelopment to a single-use low-rise child care center, is a waste. To put 92 surface parking spaces on a site with 92 units of mostly affordable senior housing that is well-served by bus lines and a few blocks from the Metro is also a waste. My understanding is that car ownership rates among low-income seniors are relatively low, and the site is just down the street from a large public garage for any childcare staff who choose to drive.

Given the apartment building next door, the height of the townhouses across the street that are built into the hill, and the height of other nearby buildings (the apartments at Cedar & Ellsworth, the apartments on the NW corner of Colesville & Spring) the site could easily accommodate a 6-8 story building without impact to the character of the neighborhood. This would provide dozens of additional units of desperately needed housing over the current proposals, or additional space for community amenities or offices. Given the location and the type of housing planned, no additional parking beyond the 92 already proposed spaces should be needed.

If an expanded plan is infeasible, then I would much rather see the Spring House plan than one that provides no additional housing at all. I also strongly support the child care use that's in both proposals. I have two young children and am well aware of the need for additional options in the area, especially if they can provide affordable child care for those who are unable to spend nearly double their mortgage on daycare the way I do.

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For what it's worth, I live in the single family neighborhood just down the street. I imagine that comments from those of my neighbors who dislike any change or additional development will be plentiful, but please know that they do not speak for the entire neighborhood. Some of us chose to live in the area because of its proximity to the urban downtown, and recognize the potential for denser development on the site to add badly needed housing for some lower-income members of our community.

Sincerely,
Catherine V.

My wife and I attended last night's presentation of the two proposals by both teams and would like to offer the following observations:

1. The proposals are have very different goals and is hard to compare them in the same plane.
2. The Children's Day Care center proposal appears to have the best approach to the site. It is the least disruptive of the overall environment and has the strongest purpose/concept basis. It's main weakness is the insufficient response to the elderly housing component/requirement. That might be solved by negotiating a higher level of units than the proposed 15.
3. The housing block proposal looks far weaker in many respects. This building is bulky and does not fit well in the site. The presentation cleverly avoided showing the looming apartment building next door, and the overwhelming site coverage that will greatly disrupt the existing environment. It also misses an opportunity to express the strong potential of an Architectural Statement that does not try to cow-tow to the surrounding housing stock. The building "front" looks at a 12 story mediocrity. What a sad view for the apartment dwellers. Furthermore, how can this outfit function well with so little parking and so many site circulation problems that its many distinct functions bring up? We also think that the undefined daycare space size and location appears to be another problem. And why does it show a courtyard in the north side where the sun exposure is nonexistent?

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to express our thoughts. We hope that the Day Care solution gets serious and positive consideration. Missing that, we hope that the Housing proposal gets a strong critical review.

Tad G.

Hello,

My name is Marciela D. and I'm a resident of the Seven Oaks-Evanswood neighborhood. I want to thank you for putting together an excellent forum yesterday on the old Silver spring library project. Both teams had good presentations and ideas. I wanted to provide some input as a younger (32) homeowner in the area and why I think the first proposal is a better fit for the neighborhood and for the Silver Spring community as a whole.

1st proposal (Martha Gudelesky Center)

· This proposal was excellent and well thought out. It seemed that the community would be able to use much of the space of the center both indoors and outdoors making it not just a building in our community but a real community member.

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- Affordable **early childcare** is a critical need! As a young woman who will not get any paid maternity leave from my job, finding infant care is essential and very difficult in our area. This is even more critical for low-income working families. I was heartened to see this center would incorporate infant care and have 125-150 slots for that.
- The commitment to repurposing the old building and sustainable materials for the new portion is environmentally friendly and cost-effective
- The lack of need for external funding or large zoning changes means this project could happen quickly and minimize current community disruption.
- The lack of senior housing on site was not ideal but the commitment to fund affordable housing in a block in the more immediate downtown community might be better for seniors with quicker access to restaurants, pharmacies, and transit.

2nd proposal (Victory Housing)

- It was great that this group would provide a high level of affordable senior housing on site. One thing that was unclear was what would happen if seniors did need to transition to assisted living eventually - would they be kicked out of this building at that time? Would there be resources to help them?
- It was disappointing to see the limited places that the community would get to interact with this formerly public space. The group referred to a "terrace" outside and one amenity room, but that really means quite a lot of loss of currently public use land for the community.
- The lack of early childcare/infant care is disappointing. Families need care for infants often starting as young as 6 weeks, and this childcare facility will not address that need for young families. MoCo wants young families to move to and remain in the county, but without adequate infant care in metro accessible areas, it's easier and more cost-effective to move further out.
- The lack of details on space for the children was concerning and made me feel the childcare portion was not well-thought out. The proposer described children using Ellsworth Urban Park as a play area which really isn't ideal. It seemed that perhaps the group would "figure out details later" but that could greatly affect the quality of the child care.
- The number of parking spaces seems inadequate if each resident will be given a parking space (staff for the childcare center, community members using the dog park and Ellsworth urban park, parking for childcare pickup/dropoff etc.)
- The need for zoning changes will likely make this project progress slower and creates some additional risk

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts and I hope you continue engaging with the residents of the nearby community as well as the larger Silver Spring community throughout this process.

Marciela D.

Greetings,

I just want to say I was impressed with both presentations the other night. Although both proposals have attractive aspects, the first one, the Martha B. Gudelsky child development center, is the one I would love to see built. The Millennials, our largest generation of Americans, are starting their families and will continue to have children for the next 15 years. Millennials also love urban environments like downtown Silver Spring, with its transit options and proximity to restaurants and entertainment. I think providing a quality child development center for children ages 0-5 is a fantastic idea to attract this

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generation and encourage them to call Silver Spring home. They will find the area an attractive place to live and work. Having a child development center with outdoor green space is the perfect addition to downtown and is a fabulous way to honor the former library site. In addition, Montgomery County won't need to lend any money to make the center a reality.

I strongly hope that you choose to award the contract for the Martha Gudelsky child development center. This center would be a huge asset to our neighborhood.

Thank you,
Denise P.

Hello,

I live in the Chelsea Heights community and have a strong opinion about the 2 proposals for the old library site.

I am opposed to the Victoria Housing proposal. The building will be much too high and will eat up too much green space with its parking lot. It will ruin the view from numerous residences in my community. The beauty of the park will also be diminished as it will be dwarfed by this huge building. The building will simply be too large for this area to maintain a "neighborhood" feel. As a homeowner, I also worry that 72 subsidized housing units will have a negative impact on property values.

The MBGD CD project on the other hand will provide a much more neighborhood-friendly space, use only their own funding sources, and maintain the integrity of the original building.

If I have a say, I vote for MBGD CD!

Thank you,
Karen W.

Hello,

I am a Silver Spring resident and appreciated hearing about the two proposals for the former Silver Spring library site.

I'd like to express my concern regarding the Spring House by Victory Housing. I live across the street in the new Chelsea Heights Townhomes and a few things spring to mind about this proposal:

1) The proposal, while ambitious and thoughtful, appears to try to do too much in an extremely small space. It's like fitting the furniture from a three bedroom home into a studio apartment. I believe the construction of such a space (which includes demolition of the current library) will not only take a much, much longer time than the other proposal, but will create a lot of air pollution due to the tearing down of the building. I can see the library from my home (I'm literally right across the street) and am extremely concerned about this.

2) The addition of all of the new residents poses several concerns:

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A) There are exclusively one-way streets on Ellsworth which will make traffic difficult not only during rush hour (with the dropping off and picking up of children) but pretty much all the time. I'm not sure those small one-way streets can accommodate all of that additional traffic.

B) The new residences will need to be hooked up to the water/sewer system. When I moved in across the street, I was told I'd have to pay over \$1,000 a year for the next 20 years to cover the cost. Since these apartments are all affordable housing, will the costs be taken on by Montgomery County (and passed to the tax payers)? Also, with all of the additional homes plugged into the water/sewer system, I would think that would create additional wear and tear on the system, potentially resulting in problems and extra costs for those already in the neighborhood.

C) The proposed childcare center is not creating any outdoor space for the children and they will all be using the park nearby. This seems like the city/taxpayers are subsidizing the daycare center. Additionally, I found it troubling that the builders implied they would seek to expand their space into the nearby dog park for parking of other needed space. The current residents enjoy utilizing the space as it is.

D) Visitors to the residents of the homes will need to park on the street and there is already extremely limited street parking in that area.

E) While the homes are set to be, primarily, for low-income elderly persons, who is to say that children and grandchildren - entire families - will move into these apartments? Will there be reviews to ensure only a certain number of people per apartment? Or could one person move in, and then many other family members move in to join them? If there are 92 units, that could translate into hundreds of additional people in that small area.

3) This proposal appears that it will have a much higher cost on Montgomery County taxpayers than the day-care center. Additionally, not all Montgomery County taxpayers contribute equally - the people who live in the 4-5-year-old new housing development near the Forest Glen Metro (where there was a mansion that was torn down and turned into about 10-12 homes) pay significantly less taxes than I do, because they have not been reassessed yet - and their homes are much bigger and likely worth the same or more as my home.)

The only drawback of the Martha Guldesky childcare center is the increased traffic during rush hour - but it will probably be about the same as the Communikids daycare. I believe the Martha Guldesky center will be of great value to the neighborhood and others, and will be an asset to the immediate and further-out neighborhood. Spring House appears to be too ambitious and will cause great harm to those living near by.

Thank you for considering these concerns.

Kind Regards,
Lillian W.