



EAST COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD

September 26, 2023

The Honorable Marc Elrich
Montgomery County Executive
Executive Office Building
101 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Mr. Elrich,

I am writing in response to the Fairland and Briggs Chaney Master Plan on behalf of the East County Citizens Advisory Board. The ECCAB is very encouraged by the efforts to improve the quality of life in this important corridor of East County. We are heartened by the attention given to housing, transportation, green space and the needs of our vibrant, diverse population. While we are energized by the major thrust of the plan, we also have some concerns which center around two related areas: housing and transportation. The proposed increase in density and types of housing impacts transportation, schools, safety and the overall quality of day to day living.

As residents of East County, we are cognizant of the need for housing that makes for a healthy community and serves its citizens. It is important to ensure a range of housing options that support excellent schools, reflect transportation needs, invite quality retail and restaurants, and provide a sense of security. Specifically, the plans for higher density and 30%+ affordable homes in certain areas are concerning. We also question the position stated in the plan "...to reach deeper levels of affordability by providing affordable housing below 65 percent of the Area Median Income..." Though we fully support the county's plan for increasing the stock of affordable homes, we urge that this be achieved throughout the county rather than in the already stressed communities of Fairland and Briggs Chaney. To truly make our community the vibrant, diverse place we want it to be, a variety of market rate housing should be included with the plan in concrete and specific ways.

We understand that the 30%+ number aforementioned is an outcome of the Local Housing Target document developed by the Planning and approved by Council. At issue are the metrics shown in the tables within this document and the presumptions used to calculate the recommended number of affordable homes in the stated public

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facility development with a residential component included. It seems this criterion is being applied only to Master Plans post Thrive 2050.

We question why affordable housing for "public facilities with residential components in them" in Takoma Park Master Plan is indicated as needing to be "maximized," yet the Fairland-Briggs Chaney Master Plan is indicated as needing to be a number of "30%+?" We question the ambiguity of the "maximized" qualitative measure with the quantitative measure of "30+%" and question the implications of each. We are concerned that these varying measurements will not ensure equitable allocation of affordable housing throughout the various localities within the county. We also question how the localities in the Local Housing Target document were determined and chosen.

Additionally, that by focusing on the narrow Route 29 corridor, while excluding adjacent residential communities such as Tanglewood and Calverton, the real effect of increased density may be detrimental to those adjacent areas. The proposal for the Verizon sector on Route 29 and Musgrove Road is a case in point. We ask that you closely examine the effects the plan will have on those communities.

As for transportation, the need to balance the reality of crowded roads with the expectation for efficient public transit and pedestrian safety is a challenge. Route 29 is the main road on which citizens of Fairland and Briggs Chaney depend to get to work, shop and meet social obligations. To help encourage more use of the BRT there must be dedicated lanes and ways to enable pedestrians' safe access to bus stops. There must be more attention to driver safety entering and exiting Route 29 at all the cross streets through the corridor. We ask that you consider bus routes originating in Briggs Chaney to travel Route 200 westward and also to consider funding the study of the Randolph Road BRT to access Metro, employment and economic centers and other opportunities across the county for those who reside in the master plan area, including current communities and future ones surrounding this master plan area.

Finally, though dropped of the proposed Master Plan, we ask that the Agricultural Technology Education Center component be added back in and be located in the Greencastle Park area. Citizens not only in the Master plan area but throughout East County would benefit from this center. There might also be an opportunity with Montgomery College to develop the center.

We hope that the Fairland and Briggs Chaney Master Plan will enhance the quality of our community and make it a more inviting place to live, work, go to school, shop and socialize. In conclusion we want to emphasize that as long as our community has a greater burden for providing for the most stressed citizens of Montgomery County this will be difficult to achieve. It is incumbent upon those responsible for governing in our county to address the uneven distribution of affordable housing in particular so that all county residents share fairly in its resources.

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We again thank you for providing us the opportunity to opine on the Fairland - Briggs Chaney Master Plan.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Myo Khin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Peter Myo Khin
Chair, East County Citizens Advisory Board

Cc: Evan Glass, County Council President
D5 County Council Member Kristin Mink
Artie Harris, Montgomery Planning Board Chair
Jewru Bandeh, Director, ECRSC