

Greater Colesville Citizens Association
PO Box 4087
Colesville, MD 20914
March 21, 2024

Montgomery County Countywide Planning
Attn: Lisa Govoni, Supervisor County Wide Planning and Policy Division
2425 Reddie Drive
Wheaton, MD 20902

Re: 3/14/2024 Draft of Growth and Infrastructure Policy Update

Dear Ms Govoni:

The Greater Colesville Citizens Association (GCCA) has been active in developing county growth policy for decades, especially four years ago for the 2020-2024 document. Our comments on the document will evolve over the next several months as the planning department recommendations evolve. For the most part, we support your current recommendations except as follows:

1. Map 1 is not understandable without the different areas being in color.
2. Page 5. Premium transit needs to include BRT that is built or included in the CIP for construction.
3. Page 12. The description of changing school impact boundaries to transportation policy area is anything but clean, even after asking for an explanation. We understand that the proposal is to align school infill areas and transportation red policy areas. That makes sense since those two areas are nearly identical. That still leaves the school turn-over area as being covered by three transportation policy areas: orange, yellow and green.
4. Page 17, GCCA supports changing the classification of Life Sciences/FDA Village in White Oak Science Gateway (WOSG) Master Plan from orange to red area per Thrive Montgomery 2050. We also recommend that the White Oak activity center in that WOSG plan be made red. With the recent approval of the Fairland/Briggs Chaney Master Plan, the commercial area on Briggs Chaney and along Old Columbia Pike south of Briggs Chaney Rd also needs to be classified red. We disagree with changing the area north of that from Yellow to Orange. It needs to remain yellow as much of the area will remain low density. The change to red would agree with the proposed BRT route service changes – see attached letter.
5. Pages, 15, 26-28. We support the concept that UPP funds can be used in adjacent schools. This makes sense since MCPS can change school boundaries. Actually, MCPS conducted a school boundary study before the pandemic which showed that many school boundaries have not been changed for an extended period of time and need to be updated. Many schools no longer serve their local neighborhoods. Children many times are bussed past one school to reach their assigned school. That is especially true for the Northeast Consortium. Also, with the Viva White Oak development starting to move forward, MCPS and community will need to consider boundaries across the entire consortium.

Viva White Oak is required to provide a site for an elementary school but the GIP doesn't provide any way to avoid an UPP charge at the elementary school level assuming MCPS and Council have not included funds for the construction of the school in the CIP. Viva needs to be provided with a UPP credit for the cost of the land.

The School Utilization Premium Payment should also be eliminated since MCPS has the option to change school boundaries. Taxes are so high that developers often choose not to develop in the county. That impacts multiple county goals, such as obtaining more housing in general and affordable housing specifically.

6. Page 27. It is hard to believe that the median size of single-family houses is 5600 sq ft.
7. GCCA supports the Opportunity Zone Exemption. Parts of White Oak are except from impact taxes because of the opportunity zone exemption but developers are still required to pay the LATIP fee, which is still substantial.
8. Transportation Impact Taxes. As stated during the presentation to the Planning Board, impacts from development occur from vehicles, not walking, biking and transit. The GIP needs to encourage more walking, biking, and transit, which is encouraged by Thrive and the Climate Action Plan. Thus, impact taxes should only be applied to trips made via vehicles. In a like manner, developers should receive an impact credit for improvements required under LATR that improve walking, biking and transit modes. We also support the other changes proposed on pages 26-31.

Sincerely

Daniel L. Wilhelm

GCCA President