



THE VOICE OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY BUSINESS

GAITHERSBURG WEST MASTER PLAN

SUPPORT - SEPTEMBER 15, 2009

The Montgomery County Chamber has a vision of a future Montgomery County that is competitive in a global economy, where world-class science and innovation takes place every day, and where science and technology jobs take root and grow. We are lucky enough to be home to some great scientific and technology assets, both public and private. But in order to flourish, and to continue attracting the best and brightest scientists and entrepreneurs, we must be a destination for research and collaboration.

The Gaithersburg West Master Plan is essential to the identity of Maryland, Montgomery County, and the I-270 corridor as a national center for science and technology.

As the Council considers and reviews the plan, we respectfully urge you to consider the following points:

1. The plan needs to include enough commercial square footage for this site to be considered by NIH and other federal research agencies for their long-term future expansion needs. We believe the 20 million square feet recommended in the Planning Board's draft is appropriate and urge you to maintain that level of density in the final approval of the plan.

Concentrating higher densities and a vibrant mix of uses around the transit stations, and providing more flexibility in height limits if needed there, will help boost our chances of landing future federal research campuses here in Montgomery County.

2. It is our hope that Montgomery County will be an attractive place for headquarter companies engaged in technology innovation now and in the future. In order to be a competitive location, we need to be proactive about creating the kinds of places where those labs and highly sought-after private-sector companies they need to collaborate with all want to be.
3. Currently approved master plans are all that MTA is allowed to use for their ridership projections for the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT), which is nearing a critical phase in the federal funding process and is a high priority for MCCC. The County will only consider two master plans where densities could be increased enough to impact those ridership estimates – Gaithersburg West and Germantown – before these decisions are made. Right now the cost-effectiveness ratings are at the low end of what we need in order to compete against projects around the US for both light rail and bus rapid transit options. If we are serious about funding and building the CCT, we need to be committed to approving these master plans with enough density and walkable, transit-oriented design elements to boost ridership and raise the cost-effectiveness figures.

Your decision has far reaching impact on whether the young people we educate here will stay here to work, advance science, build their lives and be the next generation of stewards for this great community of ours.

Thank you.

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