

Sandy Spring Civic Association
301-774-9166

January 16, 2003

Malcolm Shanaman
MNCPPC, Development Review Committee
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

RECEIVED
0136
JAN 29 2003

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN
THE MARYLAND NATIONAL CAPITAL
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Dear Mr. Shanaman:

At our Civic Association meeting on Monday, January 13, 2003, many people were present to discuss the **HODGES AND LANSDALE** subdivision, and make comments. There are several issues we would like to bring to your attention.

1. **We want more input in the changes that are proposed for our community.** We would like to meet with the applicant and MNCPPC staff while design changes are being discussed. It's way too late for helpful input once a project is scheduled for the Planning Board. We invited the developer and MNCPPC staff to our 1/13/03 meeting. We were told you and they were still discussing changes to the plan and someone would try to come to our next meeting. This leaves us out of the process, making it unlikely that our comments will be incorporated into the project.

2. **We need a light at the intersection of MeetingHouse Road/Brooke Road and Maryland Route 108.** This intersection is simply dangerous, and this is not being addressed by anyone. We believe SHA's goals - to keep a constant flow of traffic through the village - is outdated. SHA needs to be aware of the multiple users in this village, and address our welfare. There are many reasons why a light is needed here:
 - a. *It is very difficult for a pedestrian to cross the road, and for cars to park.* Local businesses need safe access because we want our local businesses and Post Office to thrive and stay here. There is a bus stop and crosswalk, but traffic doesn't stop and the traffic has very few breaks to make a safe crossing. This is exacerbated by accel/decel lanes that let traffic get around a stopped vehicle, and we note that additional bypass lanes are proposed in this new subdivision plan.
 - b. *This is the primary intersection for the new fire station, and a traffic light under their control is imperative for health and safety reasons.*
 - c. *The traffic (residents) from existing Sandy Spring side streets, including Bentley Road and Sky Meadow, already find it difficult to turn on and off of Route 108. There are often "fender-bender" accidents, and these have recently increased since the corner gas station at Bentley Road went to off-label gasoline.*
 - d. *No traffic study is required by this developer (or any of them), yet the cumulative effect of all the new development in Sandy Spring is overwhelming. As far as we know, no one is studying the overall effect because the numbers per subdivision are below the study threshold. This is a financial and development strategy that everyone is aware of, and which doesn't serve the local community at all.*

3. **We are concerned about the actual design changes for roads and sidewalks in the Sandy Spring Village downtown.** Sidewalks have been promised since the 1980 *Master Plan*. Within the last year, we hear that sidewalks will be soon be built, yet we have no idea what they will look like, and whether there will be appropriate paving, or additional trees. We would like to see details about these proposals and have an opportunity to comment.

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4. The loss of significant trees along Maryland Route 108 will change the rural character of the Sandy Spring Village. We strongly urge selective tree cutting, rather than clear-cutting the project area and planting new trees, which we will never see of any size in our lifetime. This includes the area of the proposed new sidewalks. We would like to see the identification of impacts on trees along the entire route before any work is undertaken.
5. SHA has acknowledged that the proposed new entrance road is **SUBSTANDARD** in terms of its distance to existing roads. The existing side streets (Brooke, Sky Meadow, Bentley, and Meeting House) all have trouble making turns on and off of 108 right now, and pedestrians do not have a chance. We believe the traffic should have periodic stops and checks to allow people to move within the community rather than simply through it. This will be good for the residents, for local businesses, and for local tourists. This could be accomplished with a light that was activated by traffic on Brooke and MeetingHouse Roads, with the addition of a pedestrian-activated button, and a connection to the Fire Station. Much of the time, the light could be blinking orange to slow people down through the Village center. *This may not be SHA's goal but it is our goal.*
6. The loss of the 130 year old house, Roadside, is presumptuous. That house has been there longer than any of us and it has a significant local history, being the office of the Enterprise Telephone Company established in 1894 by Harold Stabler (historic photograph in the Sandy Spring Museum). The applicant proposes three new homes facing Route 108 to continue the existing building pattern, which we endorse in principle. Surely one of those lots should include the renovated historic home, Roadside. The development at Hidden Garden Way in Ashton is a very strong model of how to work a new development into an existing community. One shouldn't have to destroy the old to bring in the new, and certainly not when there is significant history.

Sandy Spring has been endorsed for state support as a tourist destination in Montgomery County. Since the historic character is the main attraction and serves to draw people to our local shops and Museum, it hardly seems appropriate to demolish one of the historic buildings along our Main Street. What will be left of this historic village for the local tourists and the local community?

7. We note on page 34 of the 1998 Master Plan, that the Planning Board endorsed *a more detailed concept plan for the Village Center*. Without more detail, the new development is haphazard and done in an uncoordinated fashion, and without local input for local concerns. We want to start this study now, and ask that a moratorium be placed on new development, subject to preparation of this study, where we can look at road and streetscape design, and traffic impacts, among other things.

Please contact me immediately, and we can decide the best way to involve our Civic Association into your discussions and decisions, which, after all, affect us the most.

Sincerely yours,


Carolyn Snowden, President

cc: ✓ Derrick Berlage, Chairman, Montgomery County Planning Board
Marilyn Praisner, Montgomery County Council
State Highway Administration
Gwen Wright, MNCPPC Historic Preservation Supervisor

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January 20, 2003

Councilmember Marilyn Praisner
Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

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Dear Ms. Praisner:

At our Civic Association meeting on Monday, January 13, 2003, we agreed to send a letter to you asking for your assistance. We are also sending you a copy of a letter that we sent to Development Review at MNCPPC.

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People don't seem to appreciate that this is a small village, and we love it. Sandy Spring is an old community with a long history and committed families. Today, this is a hot new development area, and we are concerned about the integration of the old and new, so we won't destroy the rural village character that we prize. There are several issues we would like to bring to your attention:

The *1998 Master Plan* calls for a more detailed concept plan for the Village Center. We want to begin this study now. We ask that a moratorium be placed on new development, subject to preparation of this study, so we can look at road and streetscape design, and traffic impacts, among other things. These changes should be coordinated and have community input.

We need a light in the center of the village, at the intersection of Brooke and MeetingHouse Roads and MD 108. This intersection is simply dangerous, and we need your help to work with State and County transportation agencies to achieve this. At this time, there is a failure to recognize the complexity of multiple users – commuters, patrons of local businesses, students walking to school, recreation walkers. While the amount of traffic is actually beneficial to our businesses, there is no accommodation for pedestrians.

Our Fire Station uses this intersection and it would be much safer for everyone if they had a traffic light under their control for rapid egress to MD 108. It's hard to debate this one.

No traffic study is required of any developer in the Sandy Spring vicinity because each subdivision is one unit under the study threshold. This is clearly a legal financial and development strategy by the developers, yet the cumulative effect of all the new development in Sandy Spring is overwhelming. Existing residents can't access side streets, and new residents are on their way on more side streets. The proposed new entrance road to the Hodges/Lansdale Subdivision is **SUBSTANDARD** by State Highway standards in terms of its distance to existing roads (Bentley, Sky Meadow). What safety measures are being proposed for our residents on these roads?

We are concerned with the loss of significant trees along MD 108. As sure as we need sidewalks, we need to know that they will enhance our village and make the pedestrian environment inviting.

There are serious flaws in the zoning in the downtown village area. Several of the new businesses are currently discussing the possibility of a text amendment to address their problems. For example (although they may not ask for a change), the Hodges/Lansdale project is one project with two zoning areas. They are not permitted to move units from the area along MD 108 to the "cluster" area at

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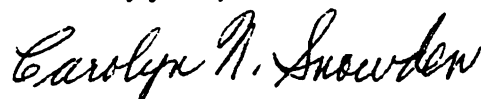
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the rear (where there would be room to add more homes on small lots). The result is a proposal to tear down a historic building and remove dozens of mature hardwood trees along MD 108. This is awful for our village. The loss of the 130 year old house, Roadside, is presumptuous. Historic structures add real meaning and value to a community. One shouldn't destroy the old to bring in the new, and certainly not when there is significant history.

Sandy Spring is one of the two county destinations under the State Certified Heritage Tourism program. Tourism is a proven industry that encourages and supports business and job growth throughout the country. Since the historic character is the main attraction and draws people to our local shops and Museum, it hardly seems appropriate to demolish one of our historic buildings on MD 108.

Please help us with these issues. Together I know we can decide the best way to involve our Civic Association in these decisions. As always, we look forward to working with you.

Sincerely yours,



Carolyn Snowden, President

cc: Albert Wynn, State Senator
Karen Montgomery, State Delegate
Doug Duncan, County Executive
Michael L. Subin, County Council President
✓ Derrick Berlage, Chairman, Montgomery County Planning Board
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