



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

Douglas M. Duncan
County Executive

October 14, 2003

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Mr. Derick Berlage, Chairman
Montgomery County Planning Board
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

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

Dear Mr. Berlage:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Public Hearing Draft Olney Master Plan. I have reviewed the plan and am in agreement with many of its main goals and objectives. There are, however, several issues that I want to address before the final draft plan is transmitted to the County Council.

I am especially pleased with the proposed upgrade of the Town Center and the recommendation for additional affordable housing. I suggest that the civic center discussion on page 50 mention the need for a permanent satellite office of the Mid-County Regional Services Center.

I support the Plan's recommendations for protecting environmental resources and for preserving parkland through dedication. I also support the four proposed parkland acquisitions: 10.6 acre Simms property, 17.2 acre Casey property, 16.4 acre Kimble property, and all or part of the 10.4 acre Graefe property.

The Plan includes several recommendations for additional housing, both affordable and market rate, including specific recommendations for elderly housing on the Finneyfrock property, Tower Company site, and Silo-Inn property. I support the recommendation for more residential development in the Town Center, housing on the County-owned property on Bowie Mill Road, and clustering of low density development. In addition, I support the recommendations that will generate Moderately Priced Dwelling Units for the area, including a density increase on land south of the Inter County Connector (ICC) right-of-way, and cluster housing on the large properties in the Southeast Quadrant.

With regard to the transportation recommendations in the Plan, I believe the Plan can do a better job of balancing our environmental goals and our efforts to reduce congestion. The Plan needs to consider the overall public needs of the County as a whole and not just the desires of local community when proposing changes in road continuity and classification. The Plan recommends against the construction of locally unpopular roads, even where these will contribute to the overall reduction of congestion at key intersections or corridor segments.

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I agree with many of the recommendations in the Plan, including the ones for Georgia Avenue, Norbeck Road, Brookeville Bypass, Cherry Valley Drive Extended, and the Town Center roads of Appomattox, Spartan, and Hillcrest. I cannot support most of the recommendations in the Plan for reclassifying or removing road segments. I also believe the Plan must recognize the need for flexibility in certain cases, so that we can deal with changes that may arise in the future. The remaining paragraphs are my recommendations for changes to the transportation section of the Plan.

On page 83, the Plan recommends against widening Muncaster Mill Road to increase capacity. I suggest that the language of this recommendation be more flexible and read: "Do not widen Muncaster Mill Road to four lanes; spot capacity improvements would be permitted."

On page 83, the Plan recommends completing the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the ICC and, if the EIS precludes full ICC buildout, that the two alternative east-west options (TPR Options 1 and 2) be considered. I recommend changing the wording of the recommendation to provide additional flexibility as to the options available if the full ICC buildout is precluded by the EIS: "Complete the federal Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process to implement the ICC. If the Final EIS concludes that the full ICC cannot be built as envisioned in the Master Plan, then alternative east-west transportation options may be considered. These alternatives include, but should not necessarily be limited to, those described as Transportation Policy Report Options 1 and 2."

On page 86, the Plan recommends downgrading from arterial to primary residential, a portion of Cashell Road (between Hines Road and Emory Lane) where it crosses through a residential neighborhood, so that traffic calming measures can be used. I cannot agree with this recommendation for several reasons:

- The road now functions as an arterial in that it connects two arterials and it is already carrying the traffic load of an arterial.
- The volume of through traffic can be expected to increase if Cherry Valley Drive Extended is deleted from the Plan as recommended. Future development, including the proposed rezoning of the 198-acre Norbeck Country Club (p. 37), recommended by the Plan will also add to the traffic volume.
- Cashell Road is the only north-south road between MD 115 and MD 97, a distance of approximately three miles.
- The bikeway chart on page 102 recommends Cashell Road as a 'shared road' facility, which will require additional right-of-way since the sidewalk and current roadway are not adequate for this.

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- Cashell Road is the only north-south road between MD 115 and MD 97, a distance of approximately three miles.
- The bikeway chart on page 102 recommends Cashell Road as a 'shared road' facility, which will require additional right-of-way since the sidewalk and current roadway are not adequate for this.

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- There are two significant destinations accessible from this road, including Cashell Elementary School, located on the southern part of the road, and Olney Public Pool.

On page 86, the Plan recommends a two-lane road policy for the rural portion of the planning area. I concur with the overall policy, but recommend using more flexible wording in case there are segments of roads requiring additional lanes.

On page 87, the Plan recommends removal of Cherry Valley Drive Extended (P-8), since, if built it would attract cut-through traffic and exceed primary residential street traffic volume standards. While I concur with the removal of Cherry Valley Drive Extended, I suggest that the Plan include text that describes the impact this deletion will have on congestion elsewhere in the planning area, especially Cashell Road.

On page 88, the Plan recommends downgrading Buehler Road from arterial to primary residential roadway between Prince Philip Drive and Spartan Road and keeping the 70 foot right-of-way. It further recommends a shared use path for the unbuilt portion of the right-of-way. I cannot support this recommendation since this road provides access to a large number of homes, a church and a park. In addition, future congestion may require relief in this portion of Buehler Road.

On page 90, the Plan recommends removing the extension of Emory Lane east of Olney Manor Park, and providing only pedestrian and bicycle access to the park from adjacent development. I recommend retaining this extension since the connection is needed to provide access to the park and reduce congestion at the intersection of MD 97 and MD 28.

On page 90, the Plan recommends removing the extension of Barn Ridge Drive across Batchellors Forest tributary to reduce the impact on the natural resources and existing community, and given that the amount of residential growth in the planning area is less than that recommended in the 1980 master plan. I recommend keeping Barn Ridge Drive extension in order to preserve network connectivity. The environmental review process can ensure that the natural resources and community are adequately protected.

On page 92, the Plan recommends downgrading Brighton Dam Road east of New Hampshire from arterial to country road. I recommend retaining the arterial designation for this portion of Brighton Dam Road since this road serves a significant amount of through traffic from adjoining Howard County, where the road is designated a major collector.

On page 95, the Plan proposes to limit future park-and-ride options to either the existing lot east of the Longwood Community Center, the Montgomery General Hospital campus, or the Town Center parking lots through shared parking agreements with commercial development. I recommend deleting language that limits park-and-ride lots to the options noted, since other,

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equally suitable options may arise. In addition, I recommend adding wording that indicates the potential need for bus bays serving local feeder buses and passenger amenities in the park-and-ride lots.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Public Hearing Draft Plan. The Executive Branch staff looks forward to working with you in your worksessions on the Plan.

Sincerely,



Douglas M. Duncan
County Executive

DMD:jgs

9014

September 25, 2003

Mr. Derick Berlage, Chairman
Montgomery County Planning Board
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Re: .Olney Master Plan

Mr. Chairman, members of the board and staff:

The Greater Olney Civic Association appreciates this opportunity to comment on the proposed Master Plan for the Olney Planning Area.

We believe that the plan submitted is generally consistent with the vision and expectations of the community in keeping Olney as a vibrant, living suburban community which retains the character of its rural heritage and provides for the feel of an urban village at its core.

We believe the process started in 2002 with the formation of the Master Plan Advisory Group, the public meetings and the guidance and cooperation from the staff has helped bring us to this point of refining the language to be used as the vision for the community for the next twenty years.

We believe that the process has generally worked well in bringing this vision to life while addressing the concerns of the community. We look forward to working closely with you and the staff through the final draft of this Master Plan.

The Greater Olney Civic Association would like to reiterate and confirm its support for the following specific elements of the plan:

- We support the Urban Core concept for the Town Center with enhanced pedestrian amenities.
- We support the concept of a Town Hall or Commons in the Town Center, which would retain substantial green space and structures consistent with recreational uses.
- We support the retention of the 1980 Master Plan Rural Entrance Way to Olney and to have a clear delineation of the Town Center.

Greater Olney Civic Association
P.O. Box 212
Olney, Maryland 20832
www.goca.org

- We support that the Town Center be the target area for any additional commercial development in this plan.
- We support the preservation of the rural character of the Southeast Quadrant to the maximum extent possible.
- We support the concept of expansion of the Olney Manor Park and the inclusion of a skate park in the existing facility.
- We support retaining the 32 acre county owned site on Bowie Mill Road in its current natural state.
- We support the removal of the proposed extension of Cherry Valley Drive from the plan street and highway network.
- We support the reclassification of Bowie Mill Road to a Primary Road from Rte.108 to the boundary of the Plan area with the Upper Rock Creek Plan area.
- We support the reclassification of Cashell Road to a Primary Road from Bowie Mill Road to Emory Lane.

The Greater Olney Civic Association would like to reiterate and confirm its opposition to the following specific elements of the plan:

- All alignments of the Inter-County-Connector (ICC) in the Plan.

In closing, we will submit additional written testimony into the record, we thank you for your time and look forward to working with you in the future.

Stephen J. Smet, President
Greater Olney Civic Association



Supplemental Comments of the Greater Olney Civic Association
Olney Master Plan
October 17, 2003

The Greater Olney Civic Association (GOCA) appreciates the opportunity to submit for the record of the Sept. 25, 2003 hearing on the Public Hearing Draft of the Olney Master these supplemental comments. GOCA reserves the right to file more material at a later date in the proceeding as appropriate.

These comments are derived from the discussion held at GOCA's Oct. 14, 2003 meeting as well as from analyses of the plan drawn up by individual board members.

I. Southeast Quadrant

At its Oct. 14 meeting, GOCA unanimously passed the following resolution:

For environmental reasons and in light of the rural entry way that is to be preserved in the Southeast Quadrant, GOCA urges the Planning Board to adopt lower densities for the properties in the Southeast Quadrant than those proposed in the public hearing draft Olney Master Plan, and in no event to adopt higher densities as requested by certain developers and property owners.

The resolution was passed after a discussion of the testimony given at the Planning Commission hearing and after discussing the recommendations of our member organization, the Southeast Rural Olney Civic Association (SEROCA). Quite frankly, the members of GOCA were appalled at the requests for increased development in the southeast quadrant as requested at the Sept. 25 hearing by development interests and major land owners. In the view of GOCA, even the one unit per three acres specified in the draft Master Plan may be too high to preserve the rural character of the area – one of the states goals of the plan. To develop these properties, some bounded as they are by a rustic road and two-lane road is simply inappropriate. It is similarly inappropriate even to consider changing the density of a piece of property based on the rather novel theory that because more dense development can be seen from any given location, then that density should apply (TR at 95). And the fact that the Golden Bear triangle is located near an already overcrowded intersection that may at some time in the future be improved is not in itself a justification for tripling the recommended density, nor awarding the location a silver medal (TR at 41) unless the Board is prepared to require new residents to use the bus and subway.

The higher densities requested at the hearing stand in stark contrast to the recommendation of the Master Plan (at page 22) to "Preserve open space, streams, significant forests, and the low-density character of the Southeast Quadrant" through cluster zoning. There would have to be some very large clusters to comport with the requests made at the hearing, and GOCA would oppose them. GOCA fully supports the

testimony of SEROCA President John Lyons in preserving the unique character of what is truly the last significant area of green space in our area.

II. Affordable housing

There are numerous places in the Draft Plan which recommend setting aside sites as eligible for "affordable housing." These include the 32-acre site on Bowie Mill Road, and the Oakdale school site on Cashell Road. This is a topic which received very little attention during the Advisory Committee stage of the process, in part because the planners believed the area would have a sufficient stock. GOCA believes that these optional sites should not be considered for affordable housing, but should be left as green space unless the 230 units called for in the plan have not been constructed or approved for other locations.

Overall, GOCA supports the goal of increasing opportunities for affordable and senior housing, but without increasing density to accomplish that goal. GOCA supports mixed-use development in the town center, provided height restrictions are observed. GOCA supports use of the Finneyfrock property for affordable elderly housing.

III. Town Center

GOCA supports the Plan's vision of the Town Center with a mix of residential and commercial uses, and supports as well the recommendation to use landscaping, improved crosswalks and design characteristics to manage traffic and to improve the character of the area.

GOCA also believes, however, that there should be some setback requirements for buildings of four stories (or 50 feet in height) that are located within 300 feet of Georgia Ave. and Route 108. We also question whether hotels are an appropriate use, or should have been mentioned as a possible use as a "residential facility" as suggested in the plan.

While GOCA supports the need for a civic center and "town commons area," and supports examining the feasibility of the Olney Elementary School site should the building no longer be needed for educational purposes. If a civic center is built elsewhere, and the school is no longer needed, then the area should be preserved as public green space.

III. Transportation

GOCA as long opposed the building of the Intercounty Connector, but does favor the construction of a grade-separated interchange at Georgia Ave. and Norbeck Road. GOCA also supports the downgrading of Bowie Mill Road,

Cashell Road and Heritage Hills Road to a primary road status, and the upgrading of Queen Elizabeth Drive to arterial status.

We also note that two intersections of great concern, Route 108 and Spartan Road, the site of many accidents in the community, and Route 108 and Georgia Ave., are not mentioned as possibilities for improvement. They should be, as the traffic volumes will continue to climb through the life of this master plan. GOCA also supports the construction of a busway down Georgia Ave.

IV. Parks and Recreation

GOCA supports the expansion of Olney Manor Park, if done in a manner consistent with protecting the Southeast Quadrant, and supports expansion of existing parks or creation of new parks on the condition that there is no high-density lighting. GOCA also wishes that more attention be given to protecting, preserving and publicizing the historic resources in the planning area.

In addition, GOCA supports the interconnection of our trail system between parks and other recreational facilities.

V. Environmental Issues

While GOCA agrees that certain environmental goals should be encouraged (Plan at 69), there is need for additional policy options should the voluntary encouragement not prove sufficient. As pointed out repeatedly during the hearing, the Southeast Quadrant in particular is a highly vulnerable area with a high water table, and considerable attention should be paid to preserving that environment.

Appendix A. Detailed comments on the Town Center

Town Center Plan

GOCA supports the vision of the Town Center area "as a low-scale, retail and service center containing a mix of commercial and residential uses in a variety of building types and sizes with safe and convenient pedestrian connections, public open spaces, and other amenities." We also support the recommendations to enhance Georgia Ave and MD 108 through the town center area with landscaping, improved crosswalks, and the addition of design treatments that could help manage the traffic and improve their character. However, there are a few additional requirements we would propose.

Mixed Land Use

Plan Recommendations:

1. Encourage development of residential uses in the Town Center.
2. Rezone all properties in the Town Center with a single, mixed-use one.

GOCA supports the recommendation to add 400 residential units, including the 100 affordable elderly housing units approved on Georgia Avenue, to the town center area as a way of enhancing the vitality of that area. The type of housing being proposed is consistent with the long standing goal of concentrating higher density housing within the town center area surrounded by rings of successively lower density residential development. We agree with staff's conclusion that the higher densities being proposed would only be appropriate on the large properties in the Town Center or on assemblages of smaller properties in the Southwest quadrant in the vicinity of North High Street.

We agree that the proposed new Mixed-use Town Center Zone (MXTC) defined in the Implementation Chapter of the Plan will help achieve the goals outlined for the town center area more so than the conglomeration of commercial zones currently found in the town center area. However, we believe that the section on Page 132 discussing Height and Setback Controls should include some setbacks so that the four-story or 50 buildings proposed for within 300 feet of Georgia Avenue and MD 108 within the Town Center are not so close to these roads. We believe this will help to minimize the overwhelming visual impact buildings of this height could have. This may require expanding somewhat the 300 foot depth for the four-story/50 foot buildings.

We also have two questions about some of the elements listed under Permitted Uses on pages 130 and 131. On page 130, the list under Residential begins with apartment hotels, and hotels or motels are included further in the list. We were not certain the word hotel should be included after the word apartment. On page 131, under Services, we propose that in the item Family or group day care home the word home should be changed to facility.

Civic Center and Town Commons

GOCA heartedly agrees that the "Olney Town Center needs a central public square, a town commons, preferably surrounded by, or adjacent to, retail activity and a civic center that would house various public services currently located in and around the Town Center."

Plan Recommendations:

1. Explore opportunities for a civic center/town commons with retail, offices, a civic center, and a major public space of at least one acre in the Town Center through a variety of public and private mechanisms.
2. Explore the feasibility of a civic center/town commons on the Olney Elementary School site if it is no longer needed for a school use.
3. If the Olney Elementary School site is used for a civic center, the current ballfields and open space could be preserved and designated as parkland.

GOCA agrees with the analysis of the staff that it is unlikely that there will be sufficient or a cost-effective space in the privately owned areas within the Town Center area to provide for a civic center/town commons area. And, therefore, support the recommendation to explore the feasibility of using the Olney Elementary site for this use if it is no longer needed as a school. However, we are concerned that, though it is unlikely that this use will occur on privately-owned land, it is still possible that a site could be located somewhere other than the Olney Elementary site for a civic center/town commons. And, there are no recommendations that cover that possibility which leaves the Plan silent on how the school site should be used in that situation. We propose, therefore, that a fourth recommendation be added as follows:

4. If the civic center/town commons is built on a site other than the Olney Elementary School site and the school is no longer needed for educational purposes, the site should be developed as a public green space such as a park or commons with structures that would be consistent with such recreational uses.

Pedestrian Circulation

GOCA agrees that the Town Center area "needs an improved network of streets, sidewalks, with short and direct pedestrian connections among stores and different parts of the center," and, agrees that street improvements, "should be carefully designed to incorporate features that help reduce speeds and improve pedestrian safety," especially on Georgia Avenue and MD 108.

Plan Recommendations

1. Provide easy and convenient pedestrian connections between the shopping centers and the adjoining residential areas.
2. Create multiple, safe, and pedestrian-oriented crossings of Georgia Avenue and MD 108.
3. Provide a safe, convenient, and pedestrian-oriented vehicular connection between the Village Mart and Olney Town Center.
4. Connect North High Street to Morningwood Drive. Explore the feasibility of connecting MD 108 to North High Street/Morningwood Drive at the time of redevelopment of the Olney Library and the Olney Shopping Center.
5. Allow on-street parking where feasible on all streets except Georgia Avenue and MD 108.
6. Create pedestrian-oriented streetscape through landscaping, traffic calming measures, and other design features.

GOCA support the goals of trying to find to make the Town Center more inviting to pedestrians. The volumes of traffic on the two State roads that form the center of the Town Center area make this a significant challenge that the Plan is trying to address. GOCA and the Olney Chamber of Commerce have worked for many years to create a connection between the Olney Village Mart and the Olney Town Shopping Center and so, we strongly endorse Recommendation 3.

Urban Design

Plan Recommendations:

1. Limit the height of any building within approximately 300 feet of Georgia Avenue and MD 108 to 50 feet or four stories, whichever is higher. In the rest of the Town Center, limit the building height to 40 feet or three stories, whichever is lower. Unoccupied features such as clock towers and spires may be higher than these maximum building heights.
2. Pedestrian ingress, egress and interior walkways should be raised or separated from parking areas through change of materials, curbs, railings, grass panels, or other design features.
3. Provide benches, landscaping, light fixtures, trash receptacles, and other amenities in public spaces.
4. Create visual breaks in larger parking lots through plantings and walkways.
5. Encourage any redevelopment in the portion of the Town Center that drains to the Hawlings River to incorporate extraordinary stormwater management features that contribute to the restoration of the James Creek and Upper Olney Mill tributaries.
6. Stormwater management techniques should include measures to improve the efficiency of existing down stream facilities and protect remaining streams in the Town Center area.
7. Accommodate forest conservation requirements on-site, where possible, to assist in greening the Town Center.

GOCA agrees with the goal of encouraging a variety of building heights to “avoid the monotony of linear, single-story shopping centers.” While we do support the recommendation to place the taller buildings along Georgia Avenue and MD 108, we do not agree that there should not be any minimum front building setbacks. We want to avoid situations such as the proximity of the three-story building on the west side of Georgia Avenue just south of Morningwood Dr.

We understand that there are ways of designing buildings to minimize their visual impact, but we believe having them further back than the building on Georgia Avenue building will help to minimize that impact as well. The heights of buildings like the Buffington RE/MAX building and the proposed elderly housing project on Georgia Avenue north of MD 108 are or will be less imposing because they will not be right on top of the roadway. We are not suggesting that they necessarily be back far enough for parking spaces, but we do think there needs to be more distance with some green space, landscaping and some of the other features listed in Recommendation 3.

GOCA supports the road network and proposals for on-street parking within the Town Center, including the proposal to only provide a pedestrian and bicycle connection on Buehler Road along the unbuilt section of that road. Much of that rest of Buehler Road was not developed as envisioned in the 1980 Olney Master Plan and King William Drive is not wide enough to support the additional traffic that would be drawn to that area if Buehler Road were connected. We also support the recommendations directed at preserving the ponds, streams, creeks, and tributaries in the Town Center.

Appendix B. GOCA Comments on Parks and Recreation

GOCA Positions on the Draft Master Plan's Parks and Recreation Plan and Historic Resources Plan

I. Parks and Recreation Plan

A. Recreation Opportunities Recommendations (pp. 107-109)

This section of the Parks and Recreation Plan contains ten enumerated recommendations. (p. 108) In general, GOCA supports the expansion and protection of the parks and recreation system in the Olney area, and endorses the ten recommendations included in the plan, with the following two caveats.

1. Possible Expansion of Olney Manor Recreational Park

Expansion of Olney Manor Recreational Park may be a worthy goal during the life of this plan, depending on the nature and purpose of the expansion. However,

expansion should be considered only if it is consistent with the other objectives of the plan that emphasize preserving and protecting the sensitive environmental resources of the Southeast Quadrant. For example, expansion that would significantly increase the amount of impervious surface in the Southeast Quadrant (such as an outdoor pool, a soccer/lacrosse field, and additional parking lots) would seemingly be inconsistent with the plan's environmental resources objectives. Such expansion would also likely have an adverse impact on the groundwater recharge rate in an area where residents are dependent on wells.

In addition, it is inappropriate to cast a cloud over the Kimble and Graefe properties (both of which are improved and occupied by their owners) and effectively devalue them in the absence of a clear program and budget to accomplish any expansion. Eliminating specific references to acquisition of the Kimble and Graefe properties from the plan would not preclude future acquisition of some or all of those properties for park expansion, but it would have the salutary effect of removing a "sword of Damocles" over them until such time as a real expansion program and budget are developed.

Therefore, recommendation #1 should be revised to read: "Explore possible plans to expand Olney Manor Recreational Park in ways and for purposes that are consistent with the Plan's other objectives and recommendations for the Southeast Quadrant of Olney."

2. New Parks or Park Expansions Should Not Have Lights

During the past ten years, there has been a tremendous increase in high-intensity lighting in the Olney area. In addition to washing out the night sky, such lighting tends to have an adverse impact on surrounding communities due to both spillover effects of the lights themselves as well as noise and other forms of disturbance resulting from use of the facilities well after dark.

Therefore, the following recommendation should be added to the plan: "Do not include high-intensity lighting at any new park or in any park expansion contemplated by the Plan."

B. Resource Protection (p. 110)

GOCA supports the recommendations in the Resource Protection section of the Parks and Recreation Plan. GOCA observes, however, that while the text of this section mentions concern about continued protection of the North Branch of Rock Creek and the Southeast Quadrant, it fails to include any recommendation to address these concerns.

Therefore, the following recommendation should be added to the plan: "Explore opportunities to acquire sites that would continue to protect the North Branch of Rock Creek and the headwaters of the Northwest Branch in the Southeast Quadrant."

C. Trail Corridors (pp. 110-113)

GOCA strongly endorses the recommendations of the Trail Corridors section of the Parks and Recreation Plan.

II. Historic Resources Plan (pp. 115-119)

GOCA believes that the Olney Planning Area is rich with historic and archeological resources, and therefore endorses the Plan's express goal to "protect the important historic and archeological resources in the area." (p. 115) However, GOCA notes that the Historic Resources Plan is devoid of any recommendations for achieving this worthy goal, and is, in substance, merely a listing and reconfirmation of properties in the planning area that "have previously been designated on the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*." It seems pointless to have a nominal plan and an express goal without any recommendation for achieving the goal.

Therefore, at least the following recommendation should be added to the Historic Resources Plan: "Explore opportunities to protect, preserve and publicize the important historic and archeological resources in the Olney Planning Area."

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY MNCPPC RE:
PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT OF THE OLNEY MASTER PLAN BY
ARNOLD B. GORDON, PRESIDENT, NORBECK MEADOWS CIVIC
ASSOCIATION
SEPTEMBER 25, 2003

(Note: To save time portions of this testimony shown in *italics* will not be presented verbally at this hearing.)

Chairman Berlage, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Commission, thank you for allowing us to appear here this evening to present our views regarding a most important milestone for the Olney community – the final deliberations on the new Olney Master Plan. My name is Arnold Gordon and I represent the 500 homes in the Norbeck Meadows area. *For your reference our community is bounded by Cashell Road, the Norbeck Country Club, the North Branch of Upper Rock Creek Park and Emory Lane.*

First, a note of appreciation for the ladies and gentlemen of the community who labored intensively to bring this draft plan to fruition. We in Norbeck Meadows are proud of the fact that we had at least three of our members and residents on the Master Plan Advisory Group, all of whom were past presidents of our association and they, like all of the members, gave unstintingly of their time and effort. We commend the work of your staff, most notable of which was Mr. Khalid Afzal, to whom we wish to give special commendation.

We are generally in favor of the draft plan but wish to voice our concerns about some of its elements, the timing and order involved in the decision making on some of the recommendations, and some disturbing ambiguities or omissions which we fear may lead to abuses later as the plan is built out. *We list our comments under headings which correspond to the Plan's contents although not in the same order as listed in the Table of Contents.*

Transportation

Cherry Valley Drive (Pages 86 - 87): We wholeheartedly wish to endorse the recommendation to abandon the proposal to extend Cherry Valley Drive (P-8) beyond its present terminus. This is wise from a safety standpoint as well as the environmental and community impacts which would have resulted from such extension as noted in the plan. The road is not an arterial by any stretch of the imagination and to extend it through to Muncaster Mill Road would have been disastrous for our community. We attach for the record an analysis of the adverse environmental impacts that Cherry Valley Road's extension would have caused.

The Inter County Connector (Page 82): Much of the transportation portion of the plan assumes construction of the road. We remain confident that the EPA will find, as was all

but conclusively determined in 1997, that the ICC is an environmental disaster in the making. We remain deeply disturbed by plans which call for the ICC, or substitutes therefor as presently under consideration, to have at-grade intersections at Emory Lane and Georgia Avenue – a plan which is absolutely ludicrous. Should the ICC be built we will return here to fight for every conceivable ameliorative improvement to abate noise, preserve wildlife and reduce pollutant run-offs from such a road. The plan is silent about such needs, but we will not be. What happens if it is not built? The plan falls short in not clearly delineating improvements which may then have to focus on widening Muncaster Mill Road and other alternatives. This has not received sufficient consideration.

Cashell Road (Page 86): We concur in the recommendation to designate Cashell Road as a primary residential road between Hines Road and Emory Lane but believe that designation should extend to the full length of the road to Bowie Mill Road. If the goal is to "...preserve the rural ...character of the area" it makes little sense to give the Hines to Bowie Mill portion arterial status. *Making that portion arterial assumes that traffic will suddenly disappear at Hines as it moves south or north between there and Bowie Mill Road.*

Muncaster Mill Road (Page 82): Whether or not the ICC is built this state highway must be widened. It is dangerous and we have lost too many lives there for this situation to continue. The ICC will not materially reduce demand on this road now or in the future as it is a neighborhood commuting, school and locally trafficked artery.

Other Roads/Rustic Roads (Pages 90 - 92): We support the plans recommendation regarding rustic roads in the Southeast quadrant and support the elimination of any extension of Emory Lane east of Georgia Avenue (P-15). *We leave to SEROCA and GOCA further elaboration on this, except to state that an extension of Emory Lane along the P-15 route would create a bypass to Route 28 and an alternative to the "ICC parking lot", and thus ruinous to our community.*

Bowie Mill Road: Left unmentioned by the plan is the status of Bowie Mill Road (A-42). The road is narrow and has numerous driveways. On large portions at its northern terminus near Route 108 houses are quite close to the road. We believe it is essential that this road be downgraded from arterial status to a "primary residential" designation to preserve the character and quality of life in this area.

Housing/Zoning

Affordable Housing: No definitive figures are available which quantify the existing stock of affordable housing in this county, and therefore no reliable data supports the supposed need which motivates the plan's intentions (Page 57) regarding MPDUs. Little or no effort is underway to preserve the existing stock of MPDUs and affordable units and to keep them so designated and in inventory, and we fear that the higher densities awarded to developers who develop such housing is not public policy which has any support in the empirical data available. The County Council called upon you at its June hearings on Zoning Text amendment 03-09 to develop such data and we have not seen

any response to this inquiry. To plan on the basis of this is therefore at this time, premature and unsound.

Since the plan calls for a total of 200 affordable units for Olney we see no need for designating further sites for such purposes as the units planned for the Kirby project on Georgia Avenue, and the TDR area at Norbeck Road, already match that sum.

We support additional affordable housing in our community. We fear the density which results in an area already suffering excessive traffic and overcrowded schools such as ours, and the environmental spoliation which will result. With that as our warning we nonetheless support the intended build outs set forth in the plan, with the exception of the South East Quadrant recommendations, knowing that population expansion must be accommodated, and that we must take our share. This must be done in an orderly manner and with our sensitive natural environment protected as far as possible. We therefore have the following specific comments:

Cashell Road (Oakdale Junior High School) (Page 58): We object to the ambiguous recommendations regarding this school site. What exactly is being recommended? Again our concern is proposed density...not the affordability of the housing. We have a right to know what is planned – finally and definitively, should the MCPS abandon this site for school purposes. Until that is known we oppose any greater densities than presently permitted around the site, i.e. R-200.

RE2/TDR2 Designation: It remains unclear to us just what the RE2/TDR2 designation means in terms of allowable densities. We reserve judgment pending more definitive information on the impact on each property as rezoning and development proposals arise.

Silo Inn Property (Page 36): We support the recommendation to designate this site as R-200 in keeping with the intention to preserve the scenic and semi-rural nature of the approach to Olney from the south. Commercial development on this site is not in keeping with the area's appearance and the concepts contained in the master plan draft, and we will fight present efforts to develop or rezone this property as Commercial as is presently the developer's intention, based upon the content of the ugly and non-conforming signs he has placed on the property. The language regarding "special exceptions" for this property on page 39 is suspicious to us as it may provide a loophole to evade the announced purposes of the draft Master Plan. We object to it and ask that this be clarified.

Norbeck Country Club (Pages 37-38): Should this magnificent property become available we believe it should be acquired under the Legacy Open Space program and so designated in the Master Plan. If this proposal be unsuccessful we do not oppose its re-designation as recommended (RNC). We would be opposed if cluster development as and when proposed would appear to impact the environment adversely. In short we reserve judgment as it would be too speculative at this time to assess this matter further. We will be wary and watchful, and request that we be involved closely with the Planning Staff if development plans arise.

Southeast Quadrant: We support the efforts of the Southeast Rural Olney Civic Association (SEROCA) to preserve the rural and bucolic nature of their neighborhood. Batchellors Forest is truly a gem and must be preserved. Our association has read a statement of their position presented to the Greater Olney Civic Association (GOCA) as dated September 9, and our membership urges your adoption of their recommendations.

Olney Town Center

We are proud of our town and want the most esthetic and practical arrangements for its development. The plan does that. We have but one exception to the recommendations and that is the proposal to allow four story buildings fronting the main thoroughfares (page 54) and allowing lower buildings to their rear. We believe there should be minimum setbacks from these roads to prevent the replication of the kind of architecture represented by the monolithic facade built five steps from the west curb of Georgia Avenue between Olney Elementary School and Morningwood Drive. We are fearful that the four story proposal without a setback requirement will lead to the erection of more such monstrosities. The Sandy Spring Bank is a shining example of the type of architecture and adequate setbacks that will preserve and enhance the Town Center.

In summary we find the Draft Master Plan generally acceptable except for the items noted, and, as amended to accommodate the comments herein, urge its adoption and presentation to the Council. We thank you for the opportunity to be heard on this matter.

MEMORANDUM

TO: MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING BOARD
MNCPPC-MC

FROM: NORBECK MEADOWS CIVIC ASSOCIATION

SUBJECT: ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF CHERRY VALLEY DRIVE EXTENDED

DATE: SEPTEMBER 18, 2003

This memo accompanies the oral testimony of the Norbeck Meadows Civic Association. We fully concur with the removal of the Cherry Valley Drive Extension from the Olney Master Plan. When this road extension was proposed in the 1960's and re-evaluated in the 1985 Upper Rock Creek Master Plan, there were few environmental policies considered as part of the planning process. Specific environmental guidelines have been adopted since 1985 as scientific knowledge about the natural environment has grown. The environmental policies relevant to current planning exercises are extensive, and include:

- The 1987 Chesapeake Bay Agreement and 1997 directive from the Chesapeake Bay Executive Council which established regional wetland protection and restoration goals;
- the Maryland Non-Tidal Wetlands Act implemented in 1990 to prevent impacts to non-tidal wetlands from development;
- the Maryland Economic Development, Resource Protection and Planning Act of 1992 requiring protection of 100-year floodplains, streams and their buffers, and designating protection of sensitive environmental resources as a key element of planning and development;
- the Montgomery County Forest Conservation Law implemented in 1992 to conserve forests and minimize forest fragmentation to protect habitat continuity;
- the 1993 General Plan Refinement which provided enhanced protection of water quality and conservation of waterways, wetlands and sensitive stream valleys;
- the 1998 Countywide Stream Protection Strategy to monitor and protect streams; and
- the 1998 Maryland Clean Water Action Plan which categorizes and prioritizes watersheds and subwatersheds in terms of restoration and protection needs.

These and numerous other requirements were enacted to maintain biologically viable and diverse streams and wetlands, protect and restore stream water quality, conserve and restore riparian forests, reduce flood potential, preserve and protect wildlife habitat and corridors, and provide other environmental protections. The proposed extension of Cherry Valley Drive is inconsistent with these policy goals, and will result in a number of devastating environmental costs to the Upper Rock Creek and Potomac watersheds, to the Chesapeake Bay, and to the community as a whole.

A few of these costs include:

- **Destruction of significant forest interior.** This road extension would bisect one of the largest areas of significant forest interior remaining in the URC watershed. The forest interior provides habitat for many species, including birds, which need large areas of contiguous woodland to thrive and for migratory routes. The forest interior dwelling species in Montgomery County have been rapidly