



12200 Tech Road, Suite 250, Silver Spring, MD 20904 • Phone: 301-622-2400 • Fax: 301-622-2800

TESTIMONY ON THE VEIRS MILL CORRIDOR MASTER PLAN  
BY STEPHANIE ROODMAN OF MONTGOMERY HOUSING PARTNERSHIP, INC.  
FEBRUARY 7, 2019

February 7, 2019

Good evening, Council President Navarro and members of the Council. My name is Stephanie Roodman, and I am testifying on behalf of Montgomery Housing Partnership, the largest non-profit housing developer in Montgomery County.

MHP is the developer of Halpine Hamlet Apartments, a community of 67 mainly affordable one and two-bedroom apartments, located just off of Twinbrook Parkway. We support the Planning Board's recommendations to rezone our property from R-30 to CRT 1.25, with a maximum height of 85 feet. While we have no near-term plans to redevelop the property, several other market-affordable housing communities north of ours in the Twinbrook District may wish to demolish and redevelop sooner rather than later. A recent study released by the Planning Department provides new insights into what could happen if these properties are redeveloped. While redevelopment of existing multifamily buildings has been rare in the last 25 years, demolition and redevelopment by market rate developers does tend to result in a loss of affordable units. When affordable housing developers such as MHP or HOC are involved and when the County has found county owned land, additional affordable units have been developed to offset what would otherwise be a reduction in affordable housing from redevelopment. By upzoning the garden style apartments for redevelopment, the affordability of rental housing in the Twinbrook corridor will be lost if there is not a concerted effort to preserve or replace them. To the extent that the sector plan is incentivizing redevelopment along this corridor, the plan should ensure a one for one replacement of the potential loss of market rate affordable housing – this can best be done by the county aggressively seeking to identify county-owned sites where affordable housing can be located in this plan.

For example, the plan contemplates the redevelopment of the Department of Recreation's administrative offices near the intersection of Veirs Mill Road and Randolph Road once the department relocates to the county office building that is currently under construction in downtown Wheaton. However, under the design guidance section, the plan recommends the site for "attached single-family building types or stacked townhouses to transition to adjacent single-family neighborhoods." Any redevelopment of the property should be compatible with the existing neighborhood, but we would put forward that midrise multifamily construction is also appropriate for the site and can be configured such that it is in keeping with the surrounding neighborhood. We therefore request that the design guidance be amended to give equal consideration to multifamily housing. Also, language should be included to encourage affordable housing on the site. As many of you know, only 1500 units of new housing came online in 2018 in the county, which is woefully short of our county's needs. We must maximize the use of county-owned land for housing if we hope to increase housing production in Montgomery County.

Another barrier to building affordable housing at this site is the planned extension of Gannon Road to Randolph Road. The plan anticipates that the extension of this road would be the responsibility of the private developer. This would add significant costs to any redevelopment of the site and pose a serious challenge in particular to building affordable housing at the site. We request that the Council assess the

utility of this road extension and the unintended consequences that it may create for redevelopment of the property.

Another county-owned property which the Council should target for affordable housing is the Holiday Park Senior Center. The plan recommends that the zoning remain at R-60, or detached single family housing. We believe the surface parking lots surrounding the senior center are a prime opportunity for housing, especially senior housing given its immediate adjacency to a senior center. Notwithstanding the fact that solar canopies were constructed on the parking lot two years ago, the county could accomplish both its housing and sustainability goals by utilizing the surface parking lots for housing with solar on the rooftop. And again, language should be included to identify this site for affordable housing.

Lastly, we would ask that the Council take a close look at the zoning recommendations for houses of worship along Veirs Mill Road. Many churches, both locally and nationally, are experiencing declining congregations, and they may not have as much need for the amount of land that is currently dedicated towards parking or other uses. In light of these realities, we should provide religious institutions with zoning that allows them to remain in place, but which also encourages them to serve out their mission by providing affordable housing to members of our community.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on the plan.