

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK &
PLANNING COMMISSION

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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PLANNING BOARD MEETING

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THURSDAY
JUNE 29, 2017

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The planning board met in the auditorium of the Montgomery County Planning Department, 3787 Georgia Ave NW, Silver Spring, MD, at 6:00 p.m., Casey Anderson, Chair, presiding.

PRESENT

CASEY ANDERSON, Chair
GERALD R. CICHY, Commissioner
NORMAN DREYFUSS, Commissioner
NATALI FANI-GONZALEZ, Commissioner

MAREN HILL, Senior Planner

MARYE WELLS-HARLEY, Vice Chair

ATUL SHARMA, Planner Coordinator

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1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 6:11 p.m.

3 CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay. If we could
4 get everybody to take their seat, we'll get
5 started. While everybody's settling into their
6 seat I just want to explain some of the ground
7 rules for testimony.

8 If you are here with a group, we
9 strongly encourage you to consolidate your
10 testimony and have either one person speak for
11 the group, or each of you can speak together.
12 But try not to repeat each other.

13 And I'll try to accommodate it if
14 people, want to go one after the other. So it
15 all sort of is more effective coming in one place
16 so you can communicate your message more
17 efficiently and directly.

18 I generally will try not to cut people
19 off. But I reserve the right to do that.
20 Particularly if you're repeating points that have
21 already been made.

22 I'll put you on the clock for three

1 minutes unless you're representing a larger group
2 here. And I bend over backwards to let everybody
3 get their points out. But I at some point have
4 to keep people moving along.

5 And that's not -- I should say, that's
6 not for our benefit, it's for the benefit of
7 everybody who came here to testify.

8 Because if I let some of the people
9 who are speaking early go on over the -- over
10 time, that means that people who are speaking
11 last are going to be here until 10:00 at night.

12 And we don't mind doing that. Because
13 that's our job. And that's why we're here. But,
14 for the benefit of people I know who have to get
15 home and they have kids to take care of.

16 Or some of you may even be going to
17 another job or just getting home to cook dinner
18 and go to bed. We try to make that easy on
19 everyone. Or as we can while still giving
20 everybody a chance to speak their peace.

21 Maren?

22 MS. HILL: Thanks Casey. Good

1 evening. My name is Maren Hill. And I'm the
2 planner for the Grovesnor-Strathmore Metro Area
3 Minor Master Plan.

4 Item Nine this evening is the public
5 hearing on the public hearing draft of the
6 Grovesnor-Strathmore Metro Area Minor Master
7 Plan. The public hearing was advertised in the
8 Montgomery Sentinel Newspaper on May 25, 2017.

9 And before we begin the public
10 hearing, we need to make note of the documents
11 that will be entered into the public record in
12 addition to the letters and emails that we've
13 received thus far.

14 Which will be the 1992 North Bethesda
15 Garret Park Master Plan, the Grovesnor-Strathmore
16 Metro Area Minor Master Plan public hearing draft
17 dated May 2017, the letter transmitting the
18 public hearing draft plan to the County Council
19 President, Roger Berliner, with the receipt date
20 stamped on May 25, 2017, and a letter
21 transmitting the public hearing draft plan to the
22 County Executive, Isaiah Leggett with a receipt

1 date stamped on May 25, 2017.

2 The staff recommends that the public
3 hearing record remain open for two weeks from
4 today, until the close of business on Thursday,
5 July 13, 2017.

6 Finally, we are also scheduled to have
7 our first work session on this plan with the
8 Planning Board on July 13. The work session is
9 tentatively scheduled for the evening.

10 CHAIR ANDERSON: Great. With hearing
11 no objection to that, the record will stay open
12 for two weeks.

13 So that means, by the way, that if you
14 think of something that you didn't get a chance
15 to say, or you'd planned to say but you ran out
16 of time, you can still send us an email or a
17 letter if you really want to be old school about
18 it, and we'll still consider it.

19 Okay? So that means if you don't get
20 it in tonight, don't worry. We'll still get it
21 to the staff as part of the record. And we'll
22 talk about it at the work session.

1 And it doesn't have to be fancy. Just
2 type out and email. And that's just as good as
3 something that's more formal.

4 So with that, I'm going to call up two
5 groups of people who have asked to speak in
6 groups. The first is the Fivesquares Group.
7 Which is Ron Kaplan, Andrew Altman, Matthew Bell
8 and Nancy Randall. I think.

9 If I missed any of that group, now's
10 the time. And as I just explained, I'm -- since
11 they're all in a group, one of them can speak for
12 all of them.

13 Or they can each speak in a row. But
14 they can't each speak for 15 minutes each. That
15 won't work.

16 (Off record comments)

17 MR. KAPLAN: Hello. There we go.
18 Thank you very much. My name is Ron Kaplan with
19 Fivesquares Development.

20 Very quickly, I wanted to thank the
21 staff for what is an extraordinary thorough and
22 professional document. It's really a testament

1 to the quality and passion that you guys have.

2 And I'm just really impressed by it.

3 And think it's a tremendous body of work. And to
4 Gwen Wright for her leadership in understanding
5 this precious resource and starting the process
6 in the beginning.

7 So, very quickly. Just going to take
8 a couple of minutes. As I said, Ron Kaplan. A
9 lot of you know my background as Chief Investment
10 Officer of Federal Realty.

11 Only reason that's important is
12 Bethesda Row on the left was 100 percent about
13 the creation of place. This is our passion as a
14 company.

15 That was a ten-phased plan. It took
16 15 years to execute. We could have simply built
17 buildings. We controlled all the land.

18 But what we built was community. And
19 I think everybody knows the benefit when you do
20 that.

21 It's a huge investment in
22 infrastructure to do that. We have the density

1 that ultimately allowed and justified doing that.

2 And it's really what we want to bring
3 to this opportunity. Different, completely.

4 But, really about creating community.

5 Even at Clarksburg Premium Outlets
6 that just opened, two of the most gratifying
7 things about that, which is one awards is the
8 highest, best architecture outlet center, is that
9 it created a thousand full time and part time
10 jobs.

11 But more than that is it created a
12 local gathering spot where people now go to some
13 of the art installations or the fountains. Or
14 even just the food offerings that weren't there
15 before.

16 Similarly, Symphony Park on the other
17 side of Strathmore it's where we began our
18 partnership with Strathmore, really was about how
19 you do something with excellence in art to create
20 community. And it exceeded.

21 My partner who will speak in a minute,
22 Andy Altman, and cofounder was the master planner

1 of 600 acres for London. Redeveloped the entire
2 east end of London with 15 thousand units.

3 A 30-year plan, transit oriented, held
4 as the best long term plan. All of these things
5 have one thing in common.

6 Which is you invest up front with a
7 lot of infrastructure and with a long term plan.
8 Which is what Grovesnor-Strathmore is about. It
9 is a 20-year plan.

10 We want to make a community of these
11 disparate neighborhoods that exist in these high
12 rises. And it's one of the reasons we're asking
13 for more density is we'll get to it in just one
14 second.

15 Only two more slides. I want to keep
16 really on time here.

17 How does that process start for us?
18 Outreach. Community. They live there now. What
19 are they looking for? What will you benefit
20 from?

21 We've had 30 meetings already. And
22 we're only at the minor master plan. Thirty

1 community meetings, 750 calls. We have learned a
2 lot.

3 And we've incorporated it. And we'll
4 show you how we've incorporated it as we go
5 through this.

6 I said that we think it's a great
7 plan. We do. We really just think it needs a
8 little bit more flexibility.

9 There are four specific points. Matt
10 and Andy will touch on them. One is we really
11 think that it should be a FAR of 3.0.

12 The amount of infrastructure that goes
13 into this tight site, and as green as we want to
14 make it, not just both with lead green, but
15 actually open space.

16 We plan to dramatically exceed by at
17 least 30 percent the Montgomery County standards
18 for open space. As well as the bike
19 requirements, requires a real investment.

20 And over 20 years, we think you have
21 to. And you can easily without bad negative
22 effects. We think you will create a better

1 community with more density there.

2 Number two, we really think, it's
3 important that there be a third signature
4 building. We think that the plan that Park and
5 Planning came up with, we have revised our master
6 plan based on recommendations they made, really
7 actually improvements.

8 And very sincere in that. We thought
9 we had the best planners. But you can always
10 learn something from somebody, and we found ways
11 to improve it. Sorry Matt.

12 But, there's the ability to have a
13 third signature building here. And we'll show
14 you that.

15 And we've studied it. And it doesn't
16 have any adverse effect. And it really allows
17 you to create more open space and taller, higher
18 buildings.

19 There's something called the
20 transition zone. We've focused a ton on this.
21 This is the space directly across Tuckerman where
22 Strathmore Park exists.

1 It's very important that that feel
2 right and in scale. So we've committed to do
3 four story buildings across from the four story
4 buildings that are there.

5 It's really just about some very
6 specific, how do you really create better
7 building spaces and green spaces? And Matt will
8 get into some flexibility in that transition
9 zone.

10 And finally, we love green space. We
11 love gathering spaces. It's what we do. And we
12 think you can do that with a one acre civic
13 green.

14 The plan requests a 1.25 acre civic
15 green. And without boring people when you really
16 master plan this, there isn't room to fit all of
17 that extra quarter acre right there.

18 But as I said, we plan to exceed by
19 over 30 percent the green space. It's just going
20 to be a little bit more disbursed. But at least
21 a minimum one acre civic green right there.

22 So, thank you very much.

1 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you.

2 MR. KAPLAN: And hopefully some of you
3 had a chance to see, this was really community
4 driven. I apologize. I forgot about this slide.

5 We did not know the community wanted
6 retail amenities. And they do.

7 And so we are going to do incubator
8 retail there. Arts, sculpture, integration and
9 partnership with Strathmore.

10 And another thing we heard, HOAs have
11 no meeting space. So we're going to create a
12 meeting space at the base of the building
13 stairways.

14 It's really great community feedback.
15 Thank you very much.

16 MR. BELL: Now is as good a time as
17 any to mention that we were all at this location
18 this morning and took a tour.

19 CHAIR ANDERSON: Mr. Altman, if you
20 want?

21 (Off record comments)

22 MR. ALTMAN: Okay. Well, thank you

1 very much. I'm Andy Altman. I'm also the
2 cofounder of Fivesquares Development.

3 And although I'm new to Montgomery
4 County, I'm not new to the area. Ron emphasized
5 London, but actually I've been a planning
6 director under Mayor Anthony Williams in District
7 of Columbia in his first term.

8 Worked a lot on trans-oriented
9 development then. And I'm thrilled to be able to
10 work on this project here, trans-oriented
11 development in Montgomery County.

12 I too just want to really tremendously
13 thank the staff and Gwen and everybody. Because
14 it's been a tremendous pleasure to work with them
15 and their leadership, and producing a really
16 fantastic report, a really visionary report.

17 And I've done lots and lots of
18 reports. And it's a thrill to be able to see
19 something so thoughtful. It's wonderful.

20 I'm just going to hit on a few points.
21 Since Ron, just a little bit about the vision. A
22 lot of it was in what was presented by the staff.

1 But I think it's just important to
2 point out as you'll see here that Grovesnor is
3 very unique among the red line stops. It's a
4 scarce resource as Ron said.

5 We want to maximize that for trans-
6 oriented development. Complement existing
7 business centers, Bethesda and NIH, and what's
8 emerging, Pike and Rose, and retail.

9 But it is unique. And -- next. It's
10 unique because it's actually surrounded by a
11 greenbelt. And that's two things.

12 One is often and, you know, a ten
13 minute walking radius of a TOD. You try to get
14 as much density within that walking area.

15 But this is a very protected area.
16 Whether that's 75 acres of Rock Creek Park, or
17 Strathmore Music Center, or the Forest Preserve.

18 So what's really focused here is a
19 focus density on the parking lot and the area of
20 the metro site. And how do we maximize that
21 density in a way that both is respectful to the
22 area, but also truthfully it's got a very unique

1 identity.

2 And I think that also gives the
3 neighborhoods a lot of protection that this
4 development is going to be very contained within
5 one part.

6 Up here are images that if you were
7 out there today, so I won't dwell on this. But
8 clearly, there's not a significant amount of
9 green space right on the metro.

10 No real center there. Obviously it's
11 a parking lot. No connection to adjacent
12 neighborhoods. That's a point that was
13 emphasized to us about connectivity.

14 There are developments here next to
15 it. Meridian Tower, and Strathmore Park, and
16 others. But how UA can connect in.

17 No established sense of place. And so
18 how do we build something? Next. Next.

19 So, what's the project vision? Again,
20 this is going to be very consistent with what
21 you've heard.

22 We want to establish unique place

1 making. That was what the pop ups were about to
2 give a feel for that.

3 This isn't just about putting
4 residential buildings. That's kind of easy to
5 do. The trick is how to make a place, create a
6 center.

7 Create opportunities for small shops.
8 A central organizing open space as proposed in
9 the Minor Master Plan amendment.

10 Practice spaces, the partnership with
11 Strathmore. We were urged early on by the
12 planning team, how do you bring live to this?

13 And Strathmore is a wonderful partner
14 right there. Bringing them into the public
15 spaces, the plaza for space, performance spaces.

16 Enhancing connectivity, the street
17 grid, the streets and the block. These are the
18 basic principals of smart growth. To create a
19 community.

20 We want to create a community here.
21 Not just -- so density is important to that. But
22 it's not just density. It's about place. And of

1 course, creating a significant amount of
2 affordable housing inventory.

3 So what is our proposal? As Ron said,
4 we really do applaud this master plan. We have
5 some revisions that we think are modest that can
6 be accommodated without creating significant
7 additional impacts.

8 We think you could revise the plan for
9 3.0 FAR. We think that's consistent with smart
10 growth policies. We want to promote those.

11 There as, you know very well, an
12 imbalance between the supply and demand for land
13 in the county, particularly at Metro Station. So
14 we want to make sure we take advantage of that.

15 Support the heavy cost of
16 infrastructure. That has to be done up front.
17 That is the replacement of the garage, the place
18 making, the storm water, the utilities, the
19 streets.

20 These are all up front costs that have
21 to be borne to create a place. It doesn't just
22 happen. It's a very different market then

1 Bethesda.

2 This is a site that very much we want
3 to create place, but it's not there today. And
4 there's a huge expense to do that. Density is
5 the incentive to do that.

6 We want to increase the affordable
7 housing inventory. And you're going to hear from
8 Matt and from Nancy and from Wells that we think
9 we can accomplish that, that modest increase,
10 without creating significant additional impact on
11 the community.

12 To conclude, I just want to show, as
13 Ron said, this is where we started out with our
14 concept plan. And we'll walk you through it.

15 But we had a central organizing green
16 space as you can see, public plaza off of the
17 metro, bringing streets and blocks through. And
18 a lot of community input through workshops. Lots
19 and lots of needs in the community. Next.

20 Then the plan that was released in the
21 Minor Master Plan amendment, we think is
22 terrific. We applauded it. We looked at it

1 carefully.

2 The reorientation of the open space to
3 create better light and just works better. The
4 removal of the loop road, creates more
5 opportunities for green space.

6 Putting connectivity through the WMATA
7 garage so you can really have better access.
8 These are all great points.

9 It did remove one parcel where the
10 pavilion building is to create the larger open
11 space. And so we're trying to figure out how
12 then some of the flexibility, because we want to
13 create that.

14 We want to invest in that. But how do
15 we do that? And we think that as I said, can be
16 done to achieve. And this is our new concept,
17 which very much mirrors the concept that's in
18 your Minor Master Plan amendment.

19 This is what we want to build. This
20 isn't a theoretical exercise for us. We are
21 putting time and energy and investment. And we
22 want to do this plan.

1 And we think with these modest
2 changes, we can implement that. And we'll be
3 thrilled to create this place and this wonderful
4 opportunity in Montgomery County that's really
5 trans-oriented development. Thank you.

6 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you.

7 MR. BELL: So, I just wanted to talk
8 about some other proposals that we'd like to put
9 forward for modifications that Ron outlined. The
10 issue number two for us the location of the
11 signature building zones.

12 This is a page from the Park and
13 Planning proposal that shows two signature
14 building zones there. And shows the maximum
15 height for those zones up to 260 feet.

16 We've studied this site. We've
17 studied, you know, how the development impact and
18 the tall buildings can be accommodated with
19 distances between them.

20 And we'd like to propose the following
21 change where we expand the zone to include this
22 dotted line. Where this zone that shields the

1 garage here could be also up to 260 feet.

2 And we've also added a 220 foot zone
3 here that we'd like to propose on the sort of
4 northern side. We've studied the shadow impacts
5 of these as well.

6 And know that these proposals don't
7 really. Because they're -- on the northern side
8 don't have the impacts, any adverse impacts
9 there.

10 So we'd like to ask for some
11 flexibility relative to the signature building
12 site locations.

13 Next is compatibility on Tuckerman.
14 And this is a drawing from the plan talking about
15 the area next to Strathmore Park, which are these
16 buildings here, these four story buildings.

17 And with a 40 foot set back and then
18 a 45 degree angle. We've looked at the
19 constructability and the reality of this relative
20 to the block that this building sits adjacent to.

21 So this is the proposed in the Park
22 and Planning Plan. And this is Strathmore Park

1 with the Meridian Development here, which is 15
2 stories.

3 This is just a simplified diagram.
4 But on the right side here, this is one rendition
5 we've studied of the plan of the angular setback
6 as proposed in the plan.

7 It makes some very small courtyards in
8 terms of constructability. So we'd like to have
9 something that gives us a little bit more
10 generous courtyard impact.

11 And to achieve that, we'd like to
12 propose this. Which is a 45 degree angle from
13 the center of the street here, going up.

14 So it would be four stories matching
15 across the street of Strathmore Park, with a
16 setback there. Then we get a generous courtyard.
17 For livability reasons, we think that's much
18 better.

19 And the view plane here is interesting
20 in the sense that the view plane from the street
21 across the way would only allow these two parts
22 of this building to be visible.

1 We're proposing here that this
2 building here be allowed to go up to 120 feet as
3 compared to the 85 feet that was shown in the
4 Park and Planning Plan. That's the 45 degree
5 angle there.

6 This is the view plane. And only that
7 much of a taller building would be visible. And
8 mine you, this would be right next to the 15
9 story Meridian building.

10 So we feel that that would be
11 compatible. And also more constructable. And
12 also would give a street section for Tuckerman
13 that is compatible with the existing context.

14 Then we show this here, the Meridian
15 building and the sketch we made showing that.
16 That's the compatible on Tuckerman. The zone
17 that is in the plan stretches from here too here.

18 We thought it was a reasonable thing
19 to do 75 feet, which is the distance from the
20 corner of the 15 story Meridian building to
21 Strathmore Park. And just to mirror that on the
22 other side for consistency sake.

1 That seems like something that would
2 be -- add a level of consistency to that and
3 still protect that zone in there. So, we would
4 like to see that revised, or given consideration
5 for revision.

6 And then finally, for my part, the
7 open space recommendation as Ron mentioned,
8 modify from 1.25 acre of civic square to one acre
9 of civic square. We have some examples to show
10 at other places.

11 One of the challenges for us here,
12 aside from the fact that we're exceeding the
13 required open space, and we've calculated it here
14 and it shows all the numbers. We have a variety
15 of different spaces here that show what those are
16 like.

17 But one of the things we're trying to
18 do here is to make a buildable block here to
19 screen the garage. And we have a 25-foot metro
20 setback plus a garage.

21 And we'd want to put active liner
22 units in front of a building that would be

1 developed there. So we've looked at that pretty
2 carefully in terms of dimensions.

3 What that leaves us with is a
4 dimension across here of about -- I think it's
5 140 feet across here. Which yields that into be
6 a one acre square there which would allow both
7 this site over here to be -- to have a
8 constructable footprint as well as this site.

9 If the square got bigger, we would be
10 forced to expose the garage. And we wouldn't
11 have room for the liner units in the --

12 CHAIR ANDERSON: I hate to cut you
13 off. But, I think we're getting in a level of
14 detail right now that will probably be better for
15 the work session.

16 MR. BELL: Okay. So just give me --

17 CHAIR ANDERSON: I think it's good to
18 get all this out in public so just people
19 understand what you're proposing. Which is one
20 of the reasons I'm not, you know, cutting you
21 off.

22 But we do need to kind of move it

1 along.

2 MR. BELL: Yes. And these are just
3 some precedents showing some open spaces and the
4 size of the open space with tall buildings and
5 buildings that are analogous to the Strathmore --
6 to the Grovesnor context with tall buildings and
7 medium sized buildings around it.

8 Some of them are local. That's an
9 acre of green space at Elcore there.

10 MS. RANDALL: I'm going to keep mine
11 very short.

12 (Off mic comment)

13 MS. RANDALL: Thank you. Nancy
14 Randall with Wells and Associates. And I'll keep
15 mine very short.

16 Using the files from your staff, the
17 highway capacity manual files, we tested a FAR of
18 3.0 with the same assumptions. And we found that
19 the road network can support this additional
20 density.

21 We also looked at a potential road
22 improvement at the intersection of Tuckerman and

1 -- North Tuckerman and 355. Certainly through
2 the process and the work sessions, we can contact
3 Park and Planning and work further with that and
4 with MCDOT.

5 But it works with or without that lane
6 use change. It was not a widening. It was just
7 lane use change and signal timing changes at that
8 location.

9 So, what we found was that using all
10 the same assumptions, all the different master
11 plans, this road network can support that
12 increased density up to 3.0.

13 (Off mic comment)

14 MS. RANDALL: Pardon? It would modify
15 the single lane coming in, I believe. I would
16 have to go back and take a quick check of it.
17 But, yes. Changes the lane use.

18 CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay. Thank you.

19 MS. RANDALL: You're very welcome.

20 CHAIR ANDERSON: The next group we
21 have who asked to speak together are Chris
22 Leinberger, Monica Jeffries Hazangeles, and I'll

1 apologize in advance for mispronouncing probably
2 many names tonight, Charlie Scott and Steven
3 Titelbaum.

4 Mr. Leinberger?

5 MR. LEINBERGER: How are you?

6 CHAIR ANDERSON: Nice to see you.

7 MR. LEINBERGER: Very good to see you.

8 Okay. My name is Chris Leinberger. I'm a
9 Professor and Chair for the Center for Real
10 Estate and Urban Analysis at George Washington
11 University.

12 I'm here to speak in support of this
13 project and the increased density. I'll also
14 mention that -- oh, and I do have to tell you,
15 just thank you for being on this planning
16 commission.

17 It is a thankless job. I would not
18 want to put up with these night meetings myself.

19 I have no connection to this project.
20 I'm just here because I happen to believe that
21 this is what's crucial for the future of our
22 economy.

1 That this is where the economy is
2 going to take place in this region. That it is
3 far more socially equitable than the continued
4 squelching of high density development.

5 The reason we have gentrification
6 challenges is because we have zoned out high
7 density development. So if you want to keep the
8 rich and poor separate and in this continual
9 battle that we have in this country, keep on down
10 zoning.

11 But the most important thing from my
12 own point of view is that this is the number one
13 way we're going to address climate change. Is by
14 building high density, walkable urban places.

15 One of the things about how this is
16 going to happen, this is going to take what I
17 would suggest is a drivable dense place. Which
18 is what is here now, in spite of the fact that
19 it's metro served, and turn it into a local
20 serving, walkable urban place.

21 And you're going to see the percentage
22 of car trips drop. You'll see a sense of

1 community that will be established.

2 And -- but what it takes is up front
3 investment to create this high density walkable
4 urban place that is vital to the community. And
5 it needs density to make this happen.

6 And I'll end by saying that in this
7 region, our research at GW shows that only 1.5
8 percent of the total land use is walkable urban.
9 That's where 70, 80 percent of all development is
10 now going.

11 That's why it's driving up the price.
12 Because we've outlawed, we've made it illegal to
13 build walkable urban in the other 98.5 percent of
14 the land.

15 That's what's driving gentrification.
16 That's why it's so hard to address climate
17 change. Because we've made walkable urban places
18 illegal.

19 We need to move that 1.5 percent up to
20 2 percent or 3 percent. It's not going to ever
21 go to 5 percent. And that's where the future of
22 our development will take place. And it's going

1 to be far more sustainable.

2 So please increase this density. We
3 need to take advantage of these very few
4 locations we have that have metro rail service.
5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN ANDERSON: Thank you. Ms.
7 Hazangeles. Am I getting, am I anywhere close?

8 MS. HAZANGELES: Yes. Very close.
9 It's Hazangeles. Good evening Chairman Anderson
10 and the Board Members.

11 Thank you for the opportunity to
12 testify before you tonight. My name is Monica
13 Jeffries Hazangeles.

14 And I am the President of Strathmore.
15 And I bring you greetings from our CEO, Elliot
16 Pfanstiehl, who is on travel today. But fully
17 supports these remarks and the vision they
18 convey.

19 Seven years ago Strathmore first
20 partnered with Ron Kaplan and the Symphony Park
21 team with the joint goal of creating a beautiful
22 new neighborhood at Symphony Park. And a

1 precedent setting arts integrated residential
2 community.

3 Today, our campus and the Symphony
4 Park residents are truly connected. And our
5 green space is more alive than ever before.

6 Grandparents stroll across the law to
7 attend backyard theater performances with their
8 grandchildren. Neighbors out walking their dogs
9 greet each other on the oval path.

10 Strathmore staff regularly welcome
11 residents for lunch in our café. And extend
12 invitations for special ticket discounts and
13 receptions.

14 The Symphony Park HOA hosts its
15 meetings at the Mansion. And our hills are
16 literally alive with the sounds of music during
17 summer outdoor concerts, which residents enjoy
18 from their balconies.

19 Strathmore is proud to partner with
20 FiveSquares and WMATA to bring this new community
21 to the area surrounding the metro station. We
22 are happy to support the proposed Strathmore

1 Square development.

2 Good and creative things happen when
3 partners operate with a sense of responsibility
4 to one another and to the greater community. We
5 trust Ron Kaplan and his team to deliver on their
6 promises.

7 They have demonstrated exceptional
8 transparency, civil discourse and openness to
9 input throughout their conversations with the
10 community about this project. Mr. Kaplan and
11 Fivesquares are engaged and creative partners who
12 truly believe in the power of the arts to build
13 community.

14 Together with Strathmore they
15 sponsored the Metro Arts Walk, featuring nearly
16 sculpture totems made by more than two hundred
17 high school ceramics students. They lined an
18 arts' pathway to Strathmore connecting it to the
19 metro.

20 The summer pop up village featured
21 Strathmore artists in residence, small business
22 owners, and convenient retail in creative cubes

1 fashioned from an old metro car. We continue to
2 collaborate with Fivesquares to envision how we
3 might incorporate a connection to the arts at
4 Strathmore Square.

5 One idea is to include ground level
6 Strathmore classrooms for musical education on
7 the village square, which might allow additional
8 arts education activity, civic meeting space,
9 maybe a night cap café hosting drinks with
10 artists after a show, and music performance space
11 for students.

12 Infusing what's important to the
13 community into their lively and diverse projects
14 is Fivesquares' genius. They really do listen
15 and they really do care.

16 Again, we ask you to support the plan
17 as well as Fivesquares' entire vision for what is
18 possible at Strathmore Square. Thank you.

19 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. And now
20 for our friends from WMATA.

21 MR. TITELBAUM: Good evening. My name
22 is Steve Titelbaum. I'm a senior real estate

1 advisor for the Washington Metropolitan Area
2 Transit Authority, commonly known as Metro.

3 We are, of course, the owner of the
4 land at the center of the study area for this
5 Minor Master Plan amendment. As a land owner and
6 as a transit provider looking to add riders, we
7 are obviously a believer in transit oriented
8 development.

9 Not so obviously perhaps, we are also
10 a national leader among transit agencies in
11 furthering transit oriented development. To give
12 you some context, Metro has been involved with
13 the following development projects along this
14 branch of the red line in Montgomery County.

15 The land for the office building that
16 sits over the bus station -- sits under the bus
17 station at Friendship Heights, was sold by Metro.

18 At Bethesda we own the land in which
19 the hotel, the Hyatt Hotel, the Three Bethesda
20 Metro Center office building and the plaza sit.

21 At White Flint, we own the land on
22 which the Nuclear Regulatory Commission is

1 located. The Harris Teeter grocery store, the
2 two apartment towers with a third apartment tower
3 proposed.

4 At Twin Brook, our land is leased to
5 a developer who is developing town houses and
6 retail. And at Grovesnor itself, we sold the
7 land south of the metro station for the
8 development of the town houses and the
9 residential high rise that are not located there.

10 The point is not to pat ourselves on
11 the back. The point is that our land has been
12 used for so many developments in this country
13 that are so organic that it's hard to remember
14 where we were before and how much better we are
15 now.

16 We believe this proposal furthers the
17 goal of using Metro to make Montgomery County a
18 better place. And in particular, to provide more
19 housing choices.

20 We support the proposal's emphasis on
21 maintaining the residential focus of the
22 Grovesnor-Strathmore area, its emphasis on

1 pedestrian and bike accessibility. And it's
2 emphasis on good design and public space.

3 Perhaps the only material area we
4 disagree with the study is on density. We think
5 the site could accommodate more than is proposed.

6 In that regard, I would like to
7 comment on the capacity of the metro station and
8 the red line itself to support more ridership.
9 Let's start looking at the metro station.

10 Our internal goal for vertical
11 circulation is to not exceed a .5 ratio. Which
12 means the platform can be cleared of passengers
13 in half the time or less before the next train
14 arrives.

15 In 2015, when our study was done, the
16 vertical circulation of Grovesnor was only .29.
17 That's well below our standard.

18 One conservative back of the envelope
19 analysis we did is that the Grovesnor station
20 would need to add more than 27 hundred
21 residential units within a half a mile to come
22 close to the .5 standard. Similarly, fair gate

1 crowding and platform crowding are not issues at
2 Grovesnor.

3 Nor does the passenger load at
4 Grovesnor station indicate any capacity problem.
5 Our ridership in May of this year was 5,215
6 riders per day, down about eight hundred from the
7 all time peak in May 2009.

8 Ridership at Grovesnor is half the
9 ridership at Shady Grove, slightly less than the
10 ridership at Medical Center, just over half the
11 ridership of Bethesda, and less than two-thirds
12 the ridership at Friendship Heights. It's also
13 less than half the ridership at Silver Spring,
14 which I mention only because it's sort of
15 Grovesnor's twin station on the other leg of the
16 red line for turn around traffic.

17 Finally, antidotal evidence aside, the
18 red line itself is not over crowded. We use an
19 industry standard of five square feet per
20 passenger inside a train car.

21 Meeting our capacity is about 100 to
22 120 passengers per car. That's not crush

1 capacity. That's comfortable capacity.

2 Our 2015 study found the average
3 maximum passengers per car on the inbound red
4 line topped out at only 80 to 90 passengers per
5 car. And only during the 8:30 to 9:00 a.m. peak
6 of the peak. And only between Dupont Circle and
7 Farragut North. There is plenty of capacity on
8 the red line.

9 I hope this provides you with
10 appropriate supporting information in making your
11 decision. Please let me know if I can provide
12 any further information. Thank you.

13 CHAIR ANDERSON: When we were
14 preparing the Bethesda master plan, we had some
15 questions about platform capacity in Bethesda.
16 And I believe somebody from our staff talked to
17 some staff at WMATA and got some very
18 interesting, very detailed material on how you
19 look at that.

20 Not just that .5 standard you talk
21 about, how long it takes to clear the platform.
22 But a pretty -- a much more detailed and thorough

1 elaboration of how you look at capacity in a real
2 station.

3 I think that might be helpful.

4 MR. TITELBAUM: Sure. I can send the
5 --

6 CHAIR ANDERSON: And we can make that
7 available maybe even on the website so everybody
8 can see how WMATA analyzes that question.

9 MR. TITELBAUM: Okay. I'll have
10 somebody do that.

11 CHAIR ANDERSON: That would be great.
12 Thank you.

13 COMMISSIONER CHICHY: I just had one
14 question.

15 MR. TITELBAUM: Sure.

16 COMMISSIONER CHICHY: The sketches
17 show potential construction over the tracks north
18 of the station and south of the station. The
19 sketch plan, is that still viable? Or --

20 MR. TITELBAUM: We are not considering
21 at this point any construction over the tracks.

22 COMMISSIONER CHICHY: The plan that we

1 have shows potential of that. Is that a
2 difficulty?

3 MS. HILL: I'm not exactly sure. But
4 I think that what the Planning Board Member is
5 speaking about is in one area we have potential
6 future air rights.

7 Which is not available in the --

8 MR. TITELBAUM: Very hypothetical.
9 There's questions of land value, of practicality,
10 et cetera. That is not under consideration at
11 Metro right now.

12 COMMISSIONER CHICHY: Is that
13 something that could be under consideration?

14 MR. TITELBAUM: Everything can be
15 under consideration. But --

16 (Laughter)

17 COMMISSIONER CHICHY: Just wanted to
18 know. Okay.

19 CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay. Thank you.
20 And I think that's it for this group. Thank you
21 all.

22 Could we get David Sears, Greg Ram,

1 Stewart Schwartz, Marilyn Bocke [sic], Jennifer
2 Russell, and Sean Emerson. And I might call
3 somebody else if we have one or more absentees,
4 to fill the table.

5 That sounds like we got all six of
6 those. Mr. Sears?

7 MR. SEARS: Hello. Great. Hi, I'm
8 Dave Sears. I'm with the Sierra Club. You
9 indicated you didn't want repetition. So I'll
10 make mine a little shorter.

11 Because you've heard several people
12 who have talked about maybe we could do more
13 density and that would be one of the points from
14 Sierra Club. That maybe we could do more
15 density.

16 And one of the other points that I'll
17 make, I'll do some of my presentation, but not
18 the whole thing, will be greater emphasis on
19 affordable housing.

20 But, in any case, as one of the
21 earlier persons said, climate change. And so a
22 piece of development at transit stations is it's

1 a great way to address climate change.

2 And generally, we think this plan is
3 really good. We like the high density. We like
4 affordable housing.

5 We urge the planning board to go
6 beyond the standard 12.5 percent MPDU in this
7 location. Because research has shown that people
8 who live in affordable housing are less likely to
9 use cars and more likely to use transit than
10 their neighbors who are higher income.

11 We like the parks and plazas. We like
12 the walkability. We like the reduced parking.
13 We'd love to see even less parking. Because I
14 think the real benefit of a neighborhood like
15 this is that you're providing people with options
16 to get around without their cars.

17 So they're right there at Metro. They
18 have that option. And if we can really upgrade
19 the pedestrian and the bicycle opportunities,
20 then that means that the folks that are living
21 there will have lots of good options other than
22 driving.

1 We also mention energy efficiency.
2 And -- so, I think I've made, I think the basic
3 points. So, I'll just underline the last two.

4 That this is a good plan. It would be
5 even stronger if we provided higher density. And
6 it would be even stronger if we provided a higher
7 percentage of affordable units.

8 Thank you.

9 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Mr. Ram?

10 MR. RAM: Yes. Good evening. My name
11 is Greg Ram. And I live just a mile and a half
12 from Grovesnor-Strathmore Metro Station. I'm a
13 daily rider of the red line.

14 I'm a member of St. Mark Presbyterian
15 Church, which is located on Old Georgetown Road,
16 less than a mile from the station. St. Mark is
17 one of 26 congregations belonging to Action
18 Montgomery. And I'm an active volunteer at AIM.

19 I and 25 members of St. Mark met with
20 Mr. Andrew Altman last Sunday to discuss the
21 development project. I offer this testimony this
22 evening regarding the affordable housing

1 component of the project.

2 In both Bethesda and West Park sector
3 plans, 15 percent MPDUs were required when
4 additional density was approved. In Symphony
5 Park, part of this plan area, 15 percent MPDUs
6 were required and built.

7 There's ample precedent to require 15
8 percent MPDUs in Grovesnor considering the
9 density proposed by staff for the two areas
10 within the plan. Mr. Altman told us that we were
11 req -- that Fivesquares is requesting additional
12 density to the 3.0 FAR.

13 Fifteen percent MPDUs plus ten percent
14 workforce units. Adela and Westpart agreed to
15 provide shows that 15 percent MPDUs and
16 additional workforce units as a reasonable
17 requirement when a developer requires substantial
18 additional density.

19 The higher AMI of workforce housing
20 occupants allows for higher rents to be charged
21 there by lessening the subsidy and financial cost
22 of providing this affordable housing. These

1 requirements are particularly compatible with
2 transit oriented development.

3 Most of the St. Mark members who met
4 with Mr. Altman agree the need for transit
5 oriented housing and the vision of making
6 Grovesnor a community with some retail and mostly
7 rental housing.

8 The density should only be approved
9 though -- it should require this additional 15
10 percent and 10 percent workforce housing if it
11 goes forward. Thank you.

12 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Mr.
13 Schwartz?

14 MR. SCHWARTZ: Thank you. I'm Stewart
15 Schwartz, Executive Director for the Coalition
16 for Smarter Growth. We're a 20-year old
17 organization first founded by the region's major
18 conservation groups.

19 Pete Tomao is here with me. He's our
20 man on the ground in Montgomery County doing
21 smart growth education and advocacy.

22 But we consider this project so

1 important that I've joined you here in addition
2 to the work that we do in D.C. and Virginia. We
3 strongly support the master plan amendment while
4 also supporting even up to 3.5 MA -- FAR on the
5 Metro site, affordable housing and reduced
6 parking ratios.

7 We commend the staff, the developer,
8 the community, for what is an excellent plan.
9 Which gets nearly every detail right in terms of
10 parks and public spaces, bike and pedestrian
11 connectivity, and design mix of uses appropriate
12 for this particular Metro station, building
13 design concepts and more.

14 Metro stations are valuable assets.
15 And we won't be making any more of them for some
16 time, at least this side of the river. And we
17 have one more in Alexandria coming, but that may
18 be it for a while.

19 Therefore, we should make maximum use
20 of this investment to meet the tremendous need
21 for housing. Particularly in locations where
22 high capacity transit will significantly reduce

1 regional vehicle trips, vehicle miles traveled,
2 and greenhouse gas emissions to fight climate
3 change.

4 The surrounding area and community
5 enjoys significant parks and open space. Making
6 it all the more important that the County take
7 full advantage of this site while providing the
8 population to support great neighborhood serving
9 amenities.

10 So in our testimony we cite many
11 statistics including the 17 thousand unit
12 increase in rental housing that you're needed,
13 according to your rental housing study. A George
14 Mason analysis that you need 62 hundred housing
15 units overall every year to meet demand through
16 2040.

17 That you're having a huge increase in
18 jobs over the next years in the I270 corridor,
19 which this will provide access to. We've also
20 noted that restricting housing production can
21 create higher rates of displacement and higher
22 rents.

1 We think the 2.5 FAR in the draft plan
2 is somewhat artificially constrained by the
3 projection of traffic at one intersection
4 potentially in 2040. And doesn't take into
5 account the bus rapid transit shared mobility,
6 the decline in retail trips, and increase in
7 telecommuting due to the internet or a robust
8 transportation demand management that's possible,
9 or the marketing for car free and car light
10 households.

11 So we really urge you to look at the
12 parking component of the plan and the impact on
13 vehicle trips. And on housing supply and
14 affordability.

15 If we could change it right now, we'd
16 love to get rid of the one for one Metro parking
17 replacement. I was talking to Richard Hoy, back
18 in 1992, we were here in that battle before, and
19 it almost put that other developer under.

20 And at the time we thought we had a
21 promise that that would be more flexible and we
22 would not have that anymore. And that Metro

1 would now be moving more to bike/ped
2 accessibility.

3 That said, moving forward, your own
4 parking ratios should be reduced, the minimums
5 certainly, to reduce the overall costs and reduce
6 driving demand from here.

7 So, looking back at affordable
8 housing, we see that if we go to 3.5 FAR, you
9 could get 206 units at 12.5 percent. Which is 63
10 more than you would get at the 2.5 FAR.

11 So we did talk to the developer. They
12 indicated very clearly the high cost of the
13 infrastructure they're being asked to provide,
14 including the parking.

15 And it certainly makes sense. This is
16 a high cost development with lower rents than
17 you're going to find in Bethesda.

18 So parking maybe one place we can
19 reduce costs. But certainly, if you can't go to
20 the 15 percent MPDUs, increasing the density with
21 good design will allow you to get far more
22 affordable dwelling units as part of the project.

1 Thank you.

2 CHAIR ANDERSON: Ms. Bocke? Is that
3 you?

4 MS. LOCKE: Locke.

5 CHAIR ANDERSON: Locke?

6 MS. LOCKE: Yes.

7 CHAIR ANDERSON: Sorry. That was a
8 typo on my list.

9 MS. LOCKE: My name is Marilyn Locke.
10 I represent the Strathmore Park at Grovesnor
11 Condominium Association. Which is located
12 directly across Tuckerman Lane from the proposed
13 development site.

14 You've heard a lot of testimony
15 tonight that supports development of that site.
16 And I'm sure you're going to hear more.

17 We at Strathmore Park are not opposed
18 to development of the site. Rather, we are
19 asking for reasonable development in keeping with
20 the existing character of the neighborhood.

21 As you engage in working sessions and
22 prepare your final recommendation for the County

1 Council, we're asking you to give serious
2 consideration to several issues. The first is
3 density.

4 The draft plan recommends a floor area
5 ratio of 2.5. Although only eight acres are
6 available for development, the FAR has been
7 calculated based on the size of the entire Metro
8 property.

9 As a result, the draft plan recommends
10 development of more than 1.4 million square feet.
11 We're asking the planning board to calculate the
12 FAR based on the portion of the site that is
13 actually available for development.

14 The second issue is building height.
15 To accommodate 1.4 million square feet, the draft
16 report recommends two, 260 foot tall towers and
17 additional buildings with a height limit of 160
18 feet.

19 The actual physical height of the
20 recommended buildings will be increased because
21 the Metro site rises 30 to 40 feet above street
22 level. Thus a 260 foot tall building will create

1 the impact of one that stands 300 feet.

2 This undercuts the draft report
3 commitment that new development on the site
4 should "sit within the context and established
5 character of the community."

6 Except for the Meridian, a 15-story
7 apartment building, all of the building along
8 Tuckerman Lane, east of Rockville Pike, are three
9 and four story townhouses, apartments, and
10 condominiums. Towers of 260 feet are not in
11 keeping with the neighborhood character of the
12 communities in proximity to the Metro station.

13 The Bethesda/downtown plan imposes
14 building height limits that range from 70 feet to
15 120 feet for many properties bordering
16 established neighborhoods. If signature high
17 rise buildings are incompatible with residential
18 neighborhoods in a mixed residential urban
19 setting, they most certainly do not belong in a
20 residential community.

21 We're asking the planning board to
22 provide similar height limitations for our

1 neighborhood. The third issue is lack of
2 holistic planning.

3 Existing planned and anticipated
4 development described in the Bethesda/downtown
5 plan, Twin Brook sector plan, White Flint sector
6 plan, and master plans for Rock Spring and White
7 Flint Two, will have significant impacts on
8 traffic that moves north/south along Rockville
9 Pike, on streets that intersect the Pike,
10 including Old Georgetown Road, Strathmore Avenue,
11 and Grovesnor Lane, and the Metro red line.
12 We're asking the planning board to evaluate the
13 impact of the Grovesnor-Strathmore
14 recommendations within the context of development
15 to the north and south.

16 So I'll conclude by emphasizing what
17 I said at the start. We are not opposed to
18 development of the site.

19 Rather, we are asking for reasonable
20 development. We're asking the planning board to
21 fulfill the vision articulated in the 1992 master
22 plan and repeated in the Grovesnor-Strathmore

1 minor master plan public hearing draft.

2 Development at this Metro station
3 should fit within the context and established
4 character of this community. Thank you.

5 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Ms.
6 Russell?

7 MS. RUSSELL: Good evening. I'm
8 Jennifer Russell. I'm here tonight as Vice
9 President of Economic Development and Government
10 Affairs for the Great Bethesda Chamber of
11 Commerce, representing over 630 member business
12 and non-profit organizations in Montgomery
13 County.

14 I'm here to provide comments and
15 recommendations in regard to this minor master
16 plan amendment. As a planner, as an aside, and a
17 keen observer of your processes, I'm really glad
18 to see a minor master plan amendment of
19 consequence come to fruition.

20 We endorse the concept for visionary
21 development at the Metro. But, as many before me
22 have said, we urge you to consider an enhanced

1 density of 3.0 FAR for the WMATA site.

2 Montgomery County has minimal
3 development -- minimal land left to develop. Yet
4 many people who grew up here want to stay.

5 This shouldn't be a problem since
6 development on top of Metro is the quintessential
7 expression of smart growth. I've heard your
8 Chair lament the fact that Montgomery County
9 needs housing, especially where density is
10 appropriate.

11 This remains one of the last red line
12 stops to be fully developed. Building density at
13 transit is essential. There's simply no where
14 else to go.

15 Development of a suburban metro
16 station typically presents between two and four
17 FAR with a mix of building heights. The Chamber
18 believes that a 2.5 FAR in this location is
19 somewhat short-sighted. And accordingly, we
20 support the 3.0 FAR.

21 With the opportunity of a higher
22 density, the developer will be able to nurture a

1 neighborhood like feeling for the community
2 through robust amenities. Including a focus on
3 the arts.

4 Importantly, building heights will
5 start low on Tuckerman Lane to match the heights
6 of Strathmore Park across the street. The
7 proposal also features a civic green of at least
8 one acre, including a village square, creating
9 connections to Rock Creek Park where none exist
10 today.

11 The buildings will step up in height
12 to Rockville Pike, compatible with anticipated
13 heights along the Pike. Fivesquares has brought
14 local retail to the station.

15 Our Chamber represents a large number
16 of small businesses which are the life blood of
17 Montgomery County. A fact that most people don't
18 realize.

19 And opportunities like the pop ups,
20 which require little investment or long term
21 commitment by the retailer, gives small
22 businesses the opportunity to reach a new market

1 and expand their businesses.

2 Strathmore Square is not designed to
3 be solely a dining or retail destination. It
4 promises to be a gathering place with a vibrant
5 public plaza to enhance connections to Strathmore
6 and adjacent communities.

7 It's a win for this neighborhood.
8 Thank you for the consideration of the Chamber's
9 remarks.

10 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Mr.
11 Emerson?

12 MR. EMERSON: Good evening. My name
13 is Sean Emerson. I'm here on behalf of the
14 Action Committee for Transit.

15 I'll keep my remarks brief as I am
16 largely reiterating what Mr. Schwartz and Mr.
17 Sears already said. The Action Committee for
18 Transit fully supports this plan and the goals of
19 this plan.

20 We believe that the Grovesnor Metro
21 site is especially suitable for new development
22 given its location of the 355 corridor and it's

1 proximity to the entrance of the station
2 literally being on Metro property.

3 One area that we do see an opportunity
4 for improvement on this plan is to increase the
5 FAR to 4.0. We believe that trans-accessibility
6 and for housing is very important for this region
7 and for housing affordability.

8 As previous speakers already said,
9 housing near transit is highly unaffordable in
10 this area due to the lack of demand. And we
11 believe that increasing housing around transit is
12 the best to reduce the prices overall.

13 And we also are happy that increasing
14 the amount of density in housing near transit
15 would increase the number of MPDUs. Which would
16 in turn allow even more people to live affordably
17 near transit.

18 One thing we would also like to point
19 out is that traffic lanes on Route 55, Rockville
20 Pike have largely remained stagnant in the past
21 ten years. In 2006 the volumes were 55 thousand
22 vehicles per day according to State Highway

1 Administration data.

2 In 2016, the count at Strathmore
3 Avenue was 52 thousand vehicles per day. Which
4 is actually a slight drop.

5 We are very understanding of the
6 neighbors concerns. But the traffic volumes on
7 the roads have stagnated and suggest that this
8 area can accommodate more development.

9 So in conclusion, we are in support of
10 the plan. And we'd like to see additional
11 residential density of the site to fully
12 capitalize on the investment of Metro and improve
13 the opportunities for housing for everyone in the
14 region.

15 Thank you.

16 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Our next
17 group is going to be Michael Kay, Wendy Calhoun,
18 Paul Sexton, Kathleen Nepper, Lynn Parsons, and
19 Howard Walker.

20 I think I could give this testimony
21 for you probably.

22 UNKNOWN: Oh, I've got some new

1 material.

2 CHAIR ANDERSON: You've got -- oh, it
3 is new material?

4 UNKNOWN: Oh, I'm excited.

5 CHAIR ANDERSON: You've been staying
6 up all night writing new material.

7 UNKNOWN: Well see after he speaks.
8 I'll let you listen and see.

9 CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay. Okay. Are you
10 going to take it out on me that you didn't have
11 the opportunity to give this last week?

12 UNKNOWN: Yes.

13 CHAIR ANDERSON: Oh, okay.

14 UNKNOWN: In fact I started with that.

15 CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay. Very good.

16 But Michael Kay is first.

17 (Off mic comments)

18 MR. KAY: My name is Michael Kay. I'm
19 President of the Symphony Park Homeowners
20 Association.

21 I'm speaking to you tonight in my role
22 as President of the Symphony Park Homeowners

1 Association. We ask that you approve the
2 development plans for Strathmore Square.

3 And with the additional density. And
4 we think that it makes sense. I'm very familiar
5 with projects like this.

6 My family, my father in particular,
7 developed the Bethesda Metro site. Which was the
8 first WMATA private partnership done with a land
9 lease.

10 So, it was very similar. And I know
11 what density does for a project and how it
12 energizes an area. I was assistant project
13 manager on that project back in the early 80s
14 when we built it.

15 Symphony Park was built within walking
16 distance from the Strathmore Metro. Which is why
17 many of us chose to live there.

18 Strathmore Square will add significant
19 appeal to both current and perspective
20 residences. Ron Kaplan, the Principal of
21 Fivesquares was involved in the creation of
22 Symphony Park over five years ago.

1 And I have worked with him in a number
2 of capacities to make it a success as to what it
3 is today. I think it is a one of a kind
4 development.

5 And they have shown their dedication
6 and their level of excellence with Symphony Park.
7 They've also shown their commitment to bringing
8 arts to the community.

9 When we all purchased our homes, we
10 were given three year memberships to Strathmore.
11 And we understand this will continue with
12 Strathmore Square. And that also includes space
13 for students.

14 And Montgomery County has very little
15 land left for housing. Less than three percent
16 in fact. So we need to find innovative ways for
17 our children and grandchildren to live in the
18 community where they grew up.

19 Putting greater density makes all the
20 sense in the world. They're not making any more
21 land. And this is a great stop that's
22 underutilized.

1 Our community has seen the plans for
2 Strathmore Square. And even with the greater
3 density, we are confident that it will be
4 developed with great sensitivity and respect for
5 the surrounding communities.

6 Fivesquares has been true to their
7 word. And I've worked with them, like I said,
8 for over five years.

9 If there's any place more density is
10 appropriate, it is on this red line stop. And on
11 behalf of the Symphony Park Board of Directors, I
12 would like you to approve the minor master plan
13 amendment with greater density for Strathmore.

14 Thank you.

15 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Ms.
16 Calhoun?

17 MS. CALHOUN: For the record, Wendy
18 Calhoun from the Walter Johnson Cluster of PTAs.
19 Chairman Anderson and members of the board, the
20 Grovesnor-Strathmore plan will worsen
21 overcrowding in Walter Johnson schools.

22 The plans you have approved or are

1 considering in our cluster since the year 2000
2 include almost 30 thousand dwelling units. Which
3 will add over 18 hundred elementary students, one
4 thousand middle school students, and 11 hundred
5 high school students to our cluster.

6 That's almost four thousand students.
7 And does not include students from natural
8 neighborhood turnover.

9 While not exactly apples to apples,
10 the Clarksburg Master Plan allows for the
11 development of up to 15 thousand residential
12 units. And includes five future elementary
13 school sites and one future middle school site.

14 We are asking for two elementary
15 school sites. Including a WMAL site, and one
16 middle school for almost 30 thousand units.

17 James Song and Joe Gallahue (phonetic)
18 told you that the WJ Cluster needs a middle
19 school and two elementary schools to accommodate
20 growth. The dedication of land at WMAL for an
21 elementary school was much needed.

22 And we think you and your very

1 dedicated staff for making that happen. This is
2 real progress to help ensure the schools keep
3 pace with development.

4 And we are extremely grateful. And
5 yet we still need a middle school and another
6 elementary school.

7 At the County Council hearing for the
8 Rock Spring Master Plan, we heard from the
9 developer's representative who suggested the site
10 reserved in White Flint one is a viable
11 elementary school site.

12 We disagree since it's been reduced
13 from 4.2 acres to less than 4 acres. Although if
14 adjusted back to the original acreage before the
15 upcoming plan passes, it could work.

16 We also heard that Rocking Horse is a
17 viable site for a Walter Johnson Middle School.
18 We disagree.

19 MCPS never said that Rocking Horse
20 would be available for the WJ Cluster. The Down
21 County Consortium or another cluster is likely to
22 need it for a secondary school since their needs

1 are significant too.

2 But when we disagree about those
3 particular sites, I am sure that you agree, it is
4 not in the best interest of tax payers or their
5 children, to let developers choose the location
6 for our children to attend school with the only
7 criteria being that it's most convenient to
8 locate a school on a site that doesn't belong to
9 them.

10 Now MCPS will soon begin a site
11 selection study for an elementary school in our
12 cluster. We have already asked them to expand
13 that site selection to include a middle school
14 site.

15 Once that study's complete, we should
16 know where MCPS believes the best possible
17 locations are for the school we need. If you
18 reserve land in these plans, and MCPS determines
19 that it is not usable or necessary, then the
20 reservation should be released.

21 Let's leave the site selections to the
22 educational professionals. We'd like you to work

1 with MCPS to balance growth with facilities.

2 Therefore, between Rock Spring, White
3 Flint Two and Grovesnor-Strathmore sites
4 currently under your consideration, we request
5 that you mean potential school sites such as the
6 Wilka Wilga (phonetic) site, Marriott, or
7 Montrose Crossing.

8 Reserve acreage for an elementary and
9 middle school. Require maximum dedication of
10 that land and add space for additional fields for
11 use by the high school students and/or existing a
12 new high school.

13 Naturally, we don't expect you to find
14 a school within this plan area. But we think
15 it's only fair that developers in this plan and
16 Rock Spring and White Flint make contributions
17 that are proportional to their impact.

18 In the first White Flint plan, you
19 recommended a tax district to refle -- to defray
20 the transportation costs. Please ask the staff
21 to research a three area tax district to pay for
22 costs of school land.

1 If we don't name potential school
2 sites now, while we can, we will lose the
3 opportunity to economically find appropriate
4 sites later for not just school children and
5 their families, but all taxpayers.

6 Thank you for working to balance
7 growth with facilities.

8 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Mr.
9 Sexton?

10 MR. SEXTON: Hi everyone. Thank you
11 for having me today. My name is Paul Sexton. I
12 am a former Kensington Town Councilman and
13 current member of the Kensington Developmental
14 Review Board. And am a current Board Member on
15 the Wheaton Kensington Chamber of Commerce.

16 CHAIR ANDERSON: You know, I
17 apologize. I didn't realize you were here in an
18 official capacity.

19 MR. SEXTON: I brought -- I'm not.
20 I'm just throwing that in there for a little
21 extra.

22 CHAIR ANDERSON: Oh, okay.

1 (Laughter)

2 CHAIR ANDERSON: All right. Well, I
3 just need to know that. Because usually we have
4 people that are here for other government bodies.

5 MR. SEXTON: Right. So I'm not. And
6 I hope that forum cites that.

7 CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay. Good. Thank
8 you for clarifying that.

9 MR. SEXTON: Yes.

10 CHAIR ANDERSON: Go right ahead.

11 MR. SEXTON: So, I am here in a couple
12 of different capacities. As a Millennial, I
13 would appreciate the opportunity for more
14 affordable housing closer to home.

15 I grew up in Kensington. I have a
16 business in Kensington. And there aren't a whole
17 lot of options for people in the first couple of
18 years of a career to buy anything.

19 So, it would be nice to have something
20 closer to home. And not have to go all the way
21 to Bethesda or to Rockville to find something
22 that's affordable.

1 From a merchant perspective, I was
2 lucky enough to participate in the pop up market
3 that took place. And it was very interesting to
4 see the residents who came to pick up family
5 members who were community.

6 And just that there was something
7 there that had not been before. I would imagine
8 that in that segment of the neighborhood there
9 isn't really a lot of local shopping.

10 So, a few more options wouldn't hurt.
11 Even if they were temporary vendor places to have
12 local businesses or artists come.

13 The biggest thing that I experience
14 during my time on the Town Council and currently
15 on the Developmental Review Board is that it's
16 difficult to find a happy medium. I think that
17 if you are a member of an established
18 neighborhood, anything new coming in is
19 difficult.

20 And as far as Strathmore's development
21 affecting the neighborhood, my sister is
22 currently sitting back in the audience, and she

1 pushed me off a sled when we used to sled up at
2 Strathmore before they did that renovation.

3 So, that transition was hard for us.
4 But, there is always progress. And it's not
5 necessarily a bad thing as long as the developer
6 takes the time to hear from the community and
7 adjust their plans accordingly.

8 I don't think that it's possible for
9 there to be a project where there's 100 percent
10 consensus between a developer and a community.
11 But, I think Fivesquares' done a wonderful job so
12 far hearing feedback and adjusting.

13 And I'm sure that's something that
14 they're more than willing to continue to do. The
15 experience that I had with them at the pop up
16 again, was wonderful.

17 And I hope to continue to be involved
18 in those going forward. Thank you.

19 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Ms.
20 Nepper? Hit it one more time. It should light
21 up. If it does -- oh, there you go. Yes.

22 And just pull it a little. Pull it

1 towards you. It's not connected. So, we don't
2 have to worry about yanking it loose.

3 MS. NEPPER: Okay. All right. That's
4 how it works now.

5 My name is Kathleen Nepper. I own a
6 condominium that is part of the Grovesnor-
7 Strathmore Condominium Association located along
8 Tuckerman.

9 I am on the third floor. My unit
10 faces Tuckerman. This development will be across
11 the street from where I live.

12 As I listen to all the testimony, I'm
13 a supporter of the Sierra Club. I believe in
14 affordable housing. I use the Metro and value
15 the access I have to the Metro.

16 I am a high giver to the Strathmore
17 Music Center. Everyone who has spoken here
18 represents values that I share.

19 But I bought the place that I bought.
20 Not because it was a high rise, but because it
21 wasn't a high rise.

22 I love the birds that I see across the

1 street. I have seen wood ducks. I have seen
2 herons in the Catchman area. I know that's going
3 to be gone.

4 But when we hear about green space, I
5 don't think that green space is going to be very
6 many trees. And I think the character of what is
7 going to be across the street will change
8 radically.

9 I am prepared for that. But, as
10 everyone is in -- sitting around the table and in
11 the room and is encouraging a move toward a lot
12 of density, they're not across the street.

13 And I wonder -- I feel as though that
14 as I'm hearing all this testimony that all of the
15 problems of Washington, D.C. and the Montgomery
16 area are somehow focused on our little pi -- the
17 little piece of property across the street.

18 And it's seen as a way to address and
19 solve many of those. I'm concerned about the
20 problems that could be created by higher density.

21 I'm concerned about safety issues.
22 I'm concerned about pollution issues. I'm

1 concerned about traffic. I'm concerned about
2 just the number of people that are going to
3 occupy a very small piece of land.

4 And I would urge -- I appreciated that
5 the proposal by the planning board, the staff,
6 respected the fact that across the street is a
7 four story set of buildings.

8 And some how or other 15 years ago or
9 whenever it was, four stories was seen as a good
10 way to build within our community. And now it's
11 for some reason not.

12 I respect the fact that you are
13 proposing to keep the site level consistent.
14 But, now what I'm hearing is even more density.

15 And I'm asking, and I support
16 everything that Marilyn had to say, Marilyn Locke
17 who represents us a group. I would urge you to
18 keep a rational, reasonable, thoughtful approach
19 to this.

20 And remember that this for us is a
21 neighborhood. It's not a business area.

22 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Ms.

1 Parsons?

2 MS. PARSONS: Hi. I'm Lynn Parsons.
3 I am a 30 plus year resident of Parkside
4 Condominium, which is right across.

5 And I probably don't share the same
6 views as the rest of the people who live close
7 by. But, I am a big lover of wildlife and wild
8 land and green space.

9 And in my lifetime that has
10 disappeared very rapidly. We have a lot of
11 people and we have to find a place to put them.

12 And I was so excited to read, I
13 couldn't read the whole 70 plus pages. But, what
14 I did read gave me hope that we can come up with
15 a plan that will be exemplary for other
16 communities.

17 So that we can learn how this many
18 people can live in this world in a sustainable
19 way. I've spent a lot of time the last couple of
20 years trying to help children learn how to be
21 better stewards of the planet.

22 And what I have discovered in the

1 green space in Rock Creek Park is that it's
2 overrun with invasive. The green space that is
3 in the spot behind the Metro station, other than
4 the trees, is almost entirely invasive species.

5 And those poor birds that we want to
6 keep around for a while, are not going to be able
7 to find the insects that they're used to.
8 Because that invasive growth is not supportive of
9 the food that they need.

10 So, I see this as a possibility to
11 start from scratch. I understand that they're
12 planning to plant native species.

13 If they really truly do what they say
14 they're going to do, I see that as a way to help
15 the wild life in the park.

16 I drive an all electric car. And I
17 had a tremendous challenge trying to figure out a
18 way to charge my car, because Park Side has been
19 around for a long time.

20 And so the infrastructure is old.
21 This is an opportunity to look at the
22 infrastructure and hopefully build it out.

1 I see new infrastructure going in
2 where they put one or two charging stations, and
3 say oh, good. We've done a great deal for the
4 electric vehicles.

5 But, really electric vehicle owners
6 need to have a parking space that they go to,
7 park their car and plug in and go on about their
8 lives. This idea of sharing electric vehicle
9 charging spaces is not sustainable for the long
10 run if many people get these cars.

11 So, I hope that there's some
12 consideration about how -- I'm hoping for very
13 limited parking. Because I would rather see most
14 of the people that live there be pedestrians and
15 bike riders.

16 But for those parking spaces that we
17 do have, is there an easy way to get that
18 electricity out there? I hope they're thinking
19 about those kinds of things.

20 So, I see it as a great opportunity to
21 again teach others around the area how to bring -
22 - okay. Thank you.

1 CHAIR ANDERSON: Well, I didn't want
2 to cut you off. That should let you know you're
3 about out of time.

4 But if you wanted to finish that
5 though, you're welcome to.

6 MS. PARSONS: Ah.

7 (Laughter)

8 CHAIR ANDERSON: Or I'm not -- I'm not
9 -- it's not required. But I didn't want you to
10 feel like you were brought up short.

11 MS. PARSONS: I lost it. But, I think
12 you got the gist of it.

13 CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay. Very good.
14 Thank you. Mr. Walker?

15 MR. WALKER: Can you hear me? Yes, so
16 as not to repeat what's been said, my comments
17 are shortened.

18 It seems to me that Park and
19 Planning's recommendations and the County's
20 desires for high density around the Grovesnor
21 Metro station are without consideration of the
22 existing character of our neighborhood,

1 maintaining views, afternoon sun, loss of tree --
2 open green space, and -- which is reduced from
3 five acres now too about one and a quarter acres
4 as per the site plan, and the disruption that
5 would result from increased traffic congestion
6 and limiting parking.

7 By the way, as mentioned above,
8 protecting the existing character of the
9 neighborhood, maintaining views and sunlight, and
10 having more open space were taken directly from
11 the Park and Planning's PowerPoint presentation
12 to us in December 2016.

13 During one of the public meetings, a
14 WMATA representative said that the Grovesnor
15 Metro station was at maximum capacity for
16 parking. If this is the case, in reducing
17 traffic congestion that exists is truly a major
18 concern, why not increase the number of parking
19 spaces by hundreds or even thousands, and
20 actually help to reduce traffic?

21 The proposed size and density of the
22 development will only exacerbate the problem. I

1 suggest that the planning board reduce the size
2 of the development and increase the number of
3 available parking spaces.

4 This in my opinion would be a win/win
5 for all. Reasonable building density and
6 building heights and increased ridership would
7 allow a more reasonable approach to the whole
8 project.

9 Please don't ignore the concerns that
10 we've expressed. And also, the experts that the
11 developer has had come here speaking for him,
12 present great statistics and points of view.

13 But they don't address common sense
14 approach. Because they really don't live in the
15 immediate area of the project.

16 Thank you.

17 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. I think
18 we'll take a couple minute break. But, I'll call
19 the next group so they can come up and get
20 settled while we're taking our break.

21 The next set of speakers will be
22 Richard Hoy, Doug Mitchell, Nathan Hedges, Penny

1 Clark, Natalia Gleason, and Tina Slatere.

2 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
3 went off the record at 7:24 p.m. and
4 resumed at 7:36 p.m.)

5 CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay. The mics are
6 back on. And we're ready to go. If I could just
7 ask -- folks, we'll never get out of here if
8 everybody -- Jerry. Okay.

9 Okay. I hate to shut down everybody's
10 networking. But, we need to get on with it.

11 Mr. Hoy, whenever you're ready.

12 MR. HOY: Thank you Commissioner --
13 Chairman Anderson and fellow Commissioners. I'm
14 here in support of the Grovesnor-Strathmore Metro
15 area master plan amendment.

16 And in particular the plans for
17 Strathmore Square. As Stewart Schwartz from the
18 Coalition for Smart Growth mentioned, I was here
19 in 1992 commenting on the Grovesnor plan then and
20 supporting for dense urban development.

21 That project from Potomac Investment
22 Properties has succeeded. Yet the developer went

1 bankrupt through the long process and through the
2 cuts in attrition in the site that occurred
3 through the process.

4 Today we have an opportunity to bring
5 a great sense of energy and vitality to the Metro
6 site by maximizing density in a mixed use form on
7 the site. As so few -- so precious few areas of
8 our county are served by a metro station, we owe
9 all our residents a visionary and bold plan to
10 create a vibrant place for community building
11 through densities using a FAR of at least 3.5.

12 Density is not a dirty word to me or
13 to members of our younger generations who will be
14 the inheritors of what we decide here. What's
15 decided through this process. It's for them.
16 It's for Tristen here more than it is for me.

17 Tuckerman Lane provides a -- and in
18 particular if I can get down to some of the
19 details here, Tuckerman Lane -- I'm a retired
20 firefighter as you probably know, and a bicyclist
21 on the streets.

22 And I'm keenly aware of the dynamics

1 and the appeal or lack of it, of our street
2 network towards the alternative modes of
3 transportation. And Tuckerman Lane is an example
4 of a high speed, suburban freeway design that
5 just really strangles the site as a barrier.

6 So, by going an adjustment to the plan
7 by allowing more of a facade and better buildings
8 along Tuckerman Lane, we'll create, we'll
9 pedestrianize that street through density. So
10 density has an impact.

11 And it should. Buildings should have
12 an impact. And they should impact us in positive
13 ways. And this is what I see as going along with
14 Fivesquares' plan for a different facade and
15 approach to Tuckerman Lane.

16 The plans for this area should
17 maximize the physical and the virtual grid of
18 streets and pathways as creatively as possible
19 for the convenience of the public. And to reduce
20 car trips.

21 I ask that an elevated pathway be
22 constructed over the existing Woodship path that

1 connects the Metro site to Montrose Avenue in the
2 Parkside neighborhood. It's over an existing
3 path.

4 And I ask that a bike station is added
5 to the plan. This is similar to what's at Union
6 Station.

7 Also, a first class connection to th
8 Rock Creek Trail. And finally, a bus pull off on
9 the west side of Rockville Pike over the top of
10 the existing pedestrian tunnel so that busses do
11 not have to go into and cross the intersections
12 at Tuckerman and Rockville Pike, but can drop off
13 passengers on a route that would be faster and
14 more convenient.

15 So this is about increasing the grid.
16 And what Fivesquares will do with this site, if
17 they have the resources with the density to do
18 it, is to build a place like the place that I
19 inhabit regularly, Bethesda Row.

20 I wish I had the time to tell you some
21 of the stories of the interactions with the
22 people I've met in what was built with the -- Ron

1 Kaplan's brilliance.

2 These are the people that write the
3 book on urban design. And we really have an
4 opportunity if we give them the resources to
5 create a place that as Chris Leinberger says,
6 will help to reduce the parochialism that is so
7 corroding society today.

8 Thank you.

9 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Doug --

10 COMMISSIONER CHICHY: I have one just
11 question. Given your fire and experience, the
12 county is prepared for high rise buildings in
13 terms of fire service and --

14 MR. HOY: Generally, yes.

15 COMMISSIONER CHICHY: Generally yes.
16 Okay. Is anything that needs to be reinforced in
17 fire service?

18 MR. HOY: Staffing and resources.

19 COMMISSIONER CHICHY: Staffing and
20 resources. Okay.

21 (Laughter)

22 COMMISSIONER CHICHY: All right.

1 MR. HOY: Well, that's a very
2 important point. So, I'm glad you raised that
3 point.

4 The Bethesda area had a premiere fire
5 department years ago when I was hired by
6 Bethesda. When the local fire departments were
7 doing the high rise.

8 CHAIR ANDERSON: And of course since
9 your retirement it's all been downhill from
10 there.

11 (Laughter)

12 MR. HOY: It was probably after that.
13 We had a fire department with three stations and
14 over 120 staff with three ladder trucks and three
15 engines.

16 And also, we had fire prevention
17 staff. And then we had four people, four
18 firefighters on the engines and trucks. We don't
19 have that today. And we have more buildings.

20 CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay. Thank you.
21 Mr. Mitchell. Push the button until it lights
22 up. There you go.

1 MR. MITCHELL: I'm not wearing my
2 smart growth patch. But I hope I support smart
3 growth. I think I'm going to be pointing toward
4 one element of what I would like to make sure we
5 have so that this will be smart.

6 My name is Doug Mitchell. My family's
7 lived in Strathmore Park since it was built in
8 2002. At that time WMATA's vision for
9 development of Grovesnor was called an urban
10 village.

11 But that mixed use vision has not come
12 to pass. And it's not presented in this plan
13 either.

14 So, residents of the study area will
15 continue to rely on cars as well as on transit.
16 There are amenities within walking and biking
17 distance, I'm a big biker like you, as described
18 in the plan.

19 I take full advantage of those. But
20 note that they are all recreational and arts
21 related.

22 For all other purposes, future

1 residents will have the same choice as they have
2 today. Between transit or driving. And when
3 they go by car, they will have to drive on
4 Tuckerman Lane.

5 If the draft plans are higher, you can
6 expect traffic volume on our loop of Tuckerman to
7 increase by more than half. That's because
8 density at this study's recommended level would
9 increase the number of dwelling units by a
10 minimum of 60 percent.

11 I doubt that Tuckerman Lane can absorb
12 that. Here's why not.

13 One, Tuckerman is the only street
14 access to Metro for busses, commuters, and
15 parkers. You cannot approach Grovesnor in
16 multiple ways as with most other stations.

17 Two, Tuckerman is the only street
18 access to the music center used by event goers of
19 all sorts, the Levine School and so forth. And
20 three, Tuckerman is the study areas only through
21 street. You saw that today.

22 So every resident has to travel on it.

1 This includes our five existing neighborhoods and
2 the WMATA development.

3 On page 28 and page 25, the draft plan
4 makes a general reference to these realities.
5 But it doesn't confront them. Or even suggest
6 where the development might have its points of
7 ingress and egress.

8 Tuckerman's half mile loop has a
9 finite capacity. And congestion is not confined
10 to the intersections with 355.

11 Intersections in traffic flow internal
12 to the street will only handle so much capacity.
13 And a FAR of 2.5 may well be excessive. The
14 draft plan identifies transportation demand
15 management as a response to this problem.

16 But reducing the share of the trips
17 made by a car is premised on two things. One, a
18 development that's sufficient mixed use to meet
19 residents needs on site, but that prospect
20 already has been discounted by planners and
21 developer alike.

22 And two, investment in connectivity

1 that will lead residents to walk and bike. They
2 already have excellent connectivity from what I
3 experience every day.

4 The threat to that connectivity and to
5 the character of our neighborhood is traffic
6 congestion and traffic hazards that were not
7 planned for.

8 So, I use Metro regularly. I get that
9 transit accessible development should put less
10 pressure on area roadways than other forms of
11 development.

12 But it adds pressure nonetheless. And
13 the pressure in this case falls on the study
14 areas sole through street.

15 I don't see how high density can be
16 approved without accounting for the limits of
17 traffic handling on Tuckerman. So I ask you not
18 to approve the proposed density.

19 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Nathan
20 Hedges?

21 MR. HEDGES: Good evening. Thank you
22 first to the Commission for all of your thankless

1 work.

2 My wife and I are neighbors of this
3 development living at Indigo's Crossing
4 Apartments on Tuckerman Lane. Our apartment is
5 on the seventh floor. And we have birds waking
6 us up every morning.

7 My wife and I are planning to raise a
8 family in the neighborhood. We both walk through
9 Grovesnor Park to get to the Metro which we take
10 to work. We drive only on the weekends.

11 We love this area. We take walks to
12 Grovesnor Park. We frequent a few local shops
13 that we currently have around, most often
14 Grovesnor Market for their produce.

15 With the tremendous reception received
16 by the local vendors at the short term booths at
17 the Grovesnor station, I think there's reason to
18 be excited about the Strathmore Square
19 development.

20 My wife and I believe that this
21 development is all that is missing. A place
22 where we can shop local businesses, enjoy a

1 coffee or a drink after work.

2 Meet friends on the village green or
3 grab a bite to eat. That's exactly what
4 Strathmore Square can offer all of us in this
5 area.

6 Learning about the project, I've seen
7 the necessity of a slightly higher density to
8 assure we have these amenities for years to come.
9 As a neighbor, I think it's essential to create a
10 sense of place.

11 Changing a dismal parking lot into a
12 vibrant green space where we can meet friends and
13 where our kids can play. Or where we can listen
14 to live music from Strathmore affiliated groups.

15 Building here just makes sense. I'd
16 much rather see it take public transportation
17 then have to sit in traffic.

18 Montgomery County is growing and will
19 continue to grow. And it's better that it grow
20 here at a Metro station than a mile down the road
21 where people will have to get in their cars just
22 to get to the Metro.

1 Thank you for your considering the
2 proposals brought to you tonight by the
3 Fivesquares team. I appreciate their efforts to
4 make this a special place for our neighborhood.

5 Thank you.

6 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Penny
7 Clark?

8 (No response)

9 CHAIR ANDERSON: No? How about
10 Natalia Gleason?

11 MS. GLEASON: Yes. Hello. My name is
12 Natalia Gleason. Thank you so much for listening
13 on what I think about this development.

14 That I have been excited about ever
15 since I find that we have moved to this country
16 three years ago. Originally from Budapest.

17 And I grew up in a very high density
18 neighborhood without any scars. In fact I
19 believe that I benefitted from it greatly.

20 And there's really it's not the
21 quantity of the people, but the quality of life
22 that architects and urban planners bring to it,

1 just like Strathmore Square. So, I would like to
2 put in a support for this project.

3 I also think that this offers us a
4 type of place that is missing from the landscape
5 of Montgomery County. As much as it has to
6 offer, I am yet to find a true piazza or a place
7 where I do not have to worry at all about him
8 being hit by a car.

9 And that I have -- and where we have
10 this sort of retail experience that is quite
11 unique. Because it's more like a market square
12 as opposed to the cookie cutter retailers that
13 pop up everywhere.

14 So, I'm very excited about the small
15 business element of it. I'm very excited as a
16 theater director about what is contribute to arts
17 education and arts in general to an already
18 vibrant artistic landscape.

19 I think that this project could really
20 have the small enterprises which need to most
21 have. So, this is one of the reasons why I would
22 like to ask you to consider the density today.

1 And also, I spent two years of my life
2 living across the street in the same development.
3 And it has been very dangerous actually even just
4 to get to the Metro with a four year old.

5 And it's not a pleasant walk. And
6 it's very disjointed. And as a European, you
7 pass all those people build around like to a
8 Metro.

9 It's a lovely neighborhood, but it
10 just doesn't cash in on what really a Metro could
11 offer. And I think it will be great if you could
12 build it the way it's proposed.

13 Because it's a place that I would like
14 to retire in for example. Where I wouldn't have
15 to relocate somewhere far far away. And I would
16 have all the conveniences.

17 So, I like to support the future. And
18 I think this is a good future to have around.

19 And it's about an hour away from my
20 house. And because I consider my body a vehicle,
21 I would walk that hour from home after commuting
22 it.

1 And hopefully we'll have a bus as well
2 that let's me get there. And I'm just excited.

3 It could be a destination that
4 encourages people to walk really. To get out of
5 their car and get closer to each other. That's
6 how I see it.

7 I think it has much more benefits to
8 offer by way more then risks. And those risks
9 can be managed, I think. Thank you.

10 COMMISSIONER CHICHY: That was great
11 remark.

12 MS. GLEASON: It's what I do.

13 CHAIR ANDERSON: Yes. Thank you.
14 Tina Slatere is right here in the pink.

15 MS. SLATERE: Good evening Chair
16 Anderson and Commissioners. I like this plan. I
17 really like what the planning board did.

18 And the need for housing in Montgomery
19 County cannot be denied. Millennials of course
20 want to live near transit and so do downsizing
21 seniors.

22 And if for lack of housing we push

1 people up and out of this county, we're going to
2 get them back commuting on our roadways. But
3 we're not going to get their property taxes.

4 I do like the concept of the civic
5 green where people gather. I like that
6 possibility of additional green space on top of
7 the Metro parking garage. I also like the
8 planned connectivity of sidewalks, bikeways and
9 trails in the plan.

10 I want to talk about density. It's
11 approved for 2.5 FAR. But I think 3.0 would be
12 more appropriate.

13 The added density would give more
14 units of workforce housing and moderately priced
15 units. And I would also like to see it go above
16 the 12.5 percent guideline.

17 And secondly, I thought the signature
18 towers along Rockville Pike would become
19 remarkable landmarks to define the gateway to
20 north Bethesda.

21 And anybody living on the upper floors
22 would have a panoramic view of the city. Which

1 would be something I'd like to be there to watch
2 Fourth of July fireworks from up on those
3 buildings.

4 And finally, as per energy, higher
5 density housing also decreases energy usage by as
6 much as 50 percent. Because walls are shared,
7 the units maybe a little more compact, and
8 there's shared heating and cooling units.

9 So, I think that's another benefit of
10 this plan. And I think people will be very lucky
11 to live adjacent Rock Creek Park and right next
12 to the music center.

13 So I hope it will be built. Thank
14 you.

15 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Did I
16 miss anybody? Yes. Oh, go right ahead.

17 MR. MacGOWAN: Thank you Chairman and
18 Commissioners. My name is Patrick MacGowan. I'm
19 a resident of Symphony Park. And I'm here in
20 support of the program.

21 I will tell you that Symphony Park is
22 a beautiful facility. It's a beautiful

1 community. And the Kaplan Group, I think, has
2 done an amazing job with the green spaces, the
3 landscaping, the ponds, the fountains and the
4 trails.

5 And it really truly has created a
6 community where we can all come together. And
7 it's not just a bunch of neighbors that never see
8 each other.

9 What they've done as far as
10 integrating into Strathmore, I think -- or the
11 Strathmore Music Center, I think is done --
12 provided a great value to our group. Where we
13 actually view that as part of our community.

14 So to see them do this at the
15 Strathmore Square and integrate that into the
16 Strathmore also, I think is going to provide
17 great value to all of our communities in this
18 area.

19 And so, -- but we also recognize the
20 fact that in order to support the amenities
21 within those -- that community, you need to have
22 the density. You need to have people that would

1 be able to support the businesses and attend the
2 music events and those type of things.

3 So, from the Symphony Park, we intend
4 to use these amenities. We'd like to see them
5 supported long term.

6 And so we would be in very -- we'd be
7 very supportive of the 3.0 FAR. Thank you.

8 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Next
9 group is Bret Rolph, Amy Ginsberg, Jeanette
10 DeBrough, Megan Sexton, Thomas Bryan and Pat
11 MacGowan.

12 Oh, sorry. Just did Pat MacGowan.

13 All right. I'm just -- I'm confused.

14 (Laughter)

15 CHAIR ANDERSON: All right. In that
16 case we can also take Elizabeth Stuckle if she's
17 here. Or not. As the case may be.

18 Hi. Are you Mr. Rolph? No. Is Mr.
19 Rolph here?

20 (No response)

21 CHAIR ANDERSON: I guess not. Amy
22 Ginsberg I don't see. Jeannette DeBrough. Am I

1 pronouncing that right?

2 MS. DeBROUGH: Jeannette DeBrough.

3 CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay. Why don't you
4 go right ahead whenever you're ready.

5 MS. DeBROUGH: Thank you. My name is
6 Jeannette DeBrough. My family and I have lived
7 at Strathmore Park Condos since 2015, a place
8 that we bought because we wanted to downsize and
9 we liked the idea of being near the Metro.

10 I want to say that I'm against the
11 development as the proposed plan stands right now
12 because of quality and environmental issue
13 concerns.

14 The draft plan as it is written right
15 now, envisions approximately 1,150 apartments of
16 about 1,250 square feet each. The statistics
17 however are misleading.

18 As the board knows, there is no such
19 thing as a development that features only one
20 size of unit or one type of configuration for the
21 units. Developments consist of mixed sized
22 units.

1 There is nothing to prevent a
2 developer from building thousands of mini or
3 micro dwellings as well as one bedroom units with
4 a commensurate increase in the number of
5 residents.

6 Now, even if only 1150 two bedroom
7 units are built, if you estimate an occupancy of
8 four persons per unit, that means an extra 46
9 hundred people will move into the neighborhood.

10 Since retail, schools, doctors, banks,
11 et cetera, are not within walking distance yet,
12 new residents will still require cars.

13 According to Mr. Kaplan, this is a
14 project that could take about 20 years in most
15 instances to establish a neighborhood with proper
16 retail and services that benefit all of the
17 residents so that the neighborhood is walkable.

18 You probably should anticipate a 15 to
19 20 year delay in the availability of those
20 services. Which means that the development on
21 such a scale will consign our neighborhood to
22 years of gridlock and congestion.

1 If only half of the people living in
2 those 1,150 apartments have cars, that still
3 means an extra 575 vehicles on the road for that
4 particular development.

5 The plan therefore must make
6 reasonable attempts to meet the demands for what
7 is going to be a need for parking for the
8 foreseeable future. Until these small businesses
9 are established.

10 I have heard comparisons and comments
11 from Symphony Park residents. Basically, these
12 don't hold water.

13 This is a development where the
14 properties cost well in excess of a million point
15 three dollars. To compare this to the kind of
16 housing that is going to be put up at Strathmore
17 -- at the Strathmore development is simply not
18 comparable. It's apples to oranges.

19 Now, the current plan places two 260
20 foot high towers on the highest point of the
21 land, with an additional 160 foot high buildings.
22 We believe this will cause a lack of light, views

1 and air.

2 And will diminish the interior of
3 living quality of the residents who exist -- who
4 live in the existing communities.

5 Now I must say, the plan envisions a
6 civic green of approximately one and a half
7 acres. Although the developer now wants to cut
8 it down to one acre.

9 The standard lot size in Montgomery
10 County in our zip code is between a quarter and a
11 third of an acre. That's about four houses, four
12 standard lots placed in that civic green.

13 If you look at the amount of green
14 space that 46 hundred residents would have in
15 that one acre, it comes to about a three by four
16 square foot area. Which is the size of a small
17 throw rug.

18 So for everybody who has desires to
19 congregate in the green, they better reconsider.
20 Especially if they have a large pet.

21 If approved, the landscape will result
22 in significant cutting down of trees. And the

1 alteration of the physical landscape.

2 The pond, the surrounding green area
3 will disappear. And right now that pond is the
4 closest thing we have to an openly accessible
5 market -- openly accessible park for the entire
6 neighborhood.

7 The hundred of extra cars until we can
8 get to the point where people are able to not
9 walk to retail and other services, will add
10 congestion, noise pollution, and air pollution.

11 And finally, the development seems to
12 completely ignore the ongoing projects that are
13 both to the north and to the south of us. And
14 that are going to placed significant problems and
15 stresses on existing infrastructure and schools.

16 For these reasons along I request that
17 you reduce the area available for development and
18 consider reducing the density. Which I know
19 flies against what everybody else has said.

20 That you preserve as much existing
21 green as possible. Because the current plan is
22 simply not sufficient for the number of people

1 that are going to be placed there.

2 That you limit the building heights to
3 keep them in line with current buildings. And
4 that you follow the statement that laid out in
5 the 1992 Grovesnor-Strathmore master plan, the
6 development at this Metro station should fit
7 within the context and established character of
8 this community.

9 I ask this as a resident who really
10 would like to continue living in this community
11 and enjoying what the community does. We don't
12 live at the Metro. We live in the neighborhoods
13 around the Metro.

14 Thank you.

15 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. Megan
16 Sexton?

17 MS. SEXTON: Good evening everyone.
18 Thank you for your time.

19 Strathmore Square is a project that
20 came to my attention about six months ago. And I
21 was immediately impressed by the plan, the
22 design, the dedication of Ron and his team.

1 I am a current Kensington resident,
2 which is about a mile and a half down the road.
3 And I'm in the market to move.

4 My number one consideration for where
5 I want to buy is proximity to Metro. This
6 project blends the convenience of public
7 transportation with, from what I have seen from
8 the plans, the feel of a quiet community.

9 This is exactly the kind of place I
10 would look to buy. The plans for Strathmore
11 Square are absolutely beautiful and incorporate
12 green space with convenient local shopping.

13 This is a community gathering place
14 that we would all benefit from. Because of their
15 proximity to Metro, I would encourage a higher
16 density on this project.

17 There are very few places left to
18 build this close to the Metro and cater to the
19 work, life, play demand of the current market.
20 This is absolutely reasonable to have a higher
21 density for this particular project.

22 Remaining in Montgomery County is my

1 goal. And this is the type of housing and Metro
2 combination that is attracting me to this
3 community and what I am looking for.

4 Thank you.

5 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thanks very much.

6 Mr. Bryan?

7 MR. BRYAN: Good evening
8 Commissioners. My name is Thomas Bryan. I'm
9 here tonight to express my support for Strathmore
10 Park, Strathmore Square. And to ask that you
11 increase density beyond the current
12 recommendation.

13 I am a new resident in the
14 neighborhood. I just moved less than three
15 months ago. I'm less than a mile away to the
16 gables of Tuckerman.

17 I had the pleasure of meeting the
18 Fivesquares development team at a town hall
19 meeting in my neighborhood. And was very taken
20 by the plans. Really enjoyed seeing their
21 community feel. And the commitment to working
22 with the community.

1 Although I have enjoyed my time in my
2 three months in the area, and I find it to be a
3 very pleasant area, I do find it a little
4 frustrating to have to leave the neighborhood or
5 get in a car to do something as simple as just
6 get a quick bite to eat or to get a coffee.

7 I'm more used to some areas that are
8 more walkable and having more options. Easier to
9 get to Metro.

10 That's one of the best reasons why I
11 think we should increase the density so that
12 other people can live in housing that provide us
13 with that type of -- those type of amenities that
14 we need, walking to Metro, green space, a small
15 neighborhood retail area, and a place to meet and
16 relax with friends.

17 There isn't enough housing like this
18 in the area. And Strathmore Square offers this
19 whole package.

20 The greater the density the more
21 opportunities everyone will have to live a
22 sustainable lifestyle in a community setting. We

1 need to take advantage of this opportunity and
2 increase density beyond the staff recommendation.

3 Thank you so much.

4 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. The last
5 group I have, I had already called Elizabeth
6 Stuckle, but if she missed out and wants to come
7 up now, that would be great. Assad Moushamin
8 (phonetic), Renee Dancez and Ryan Denaro
9 (phonetic).

10 If there's anybody else that thinks
11 they signed up but I didn't call them, now is the
12 time to come forward. And while I'm waiting for
13 -- I don't know.

14 Do we have anybody? Ms. Dancez. Okay.
15 While she -- while our one remaining speaker is
16 coming up and getting ready to sit down, I'll
17 just do a little bit of housekeeping here.

18 As I mentioned at the beginning, if
19 there's something you didn't get a chance to say
20 or if you think about something on your way home,
21 or while you're lying in bed tonight thinking
22 geez, I wish I'd said this, it's not too late.

1 You can send Maren or Atul an email.
2 And they'll not only get it into the official
3 record, but make sure that they respond to it as
4 part of the work session.

5 And which brings me to the work
6 sessions. These usually -- we try to do the
7 hearings like this at night to maximize the
8 chance that everybody can come who wants to say
9 something.

10 The work sessions inevitably, we just
11 have no choice really but to hold them during the
12 day. But we still welcome you to come to the
13 work session.

14 And you can follow the schedule. It
15 will be on our website. Also, if you want to
16 call Maren or Atul, they can keep you up to date
17 on what the schedule is.

18 And if you come to the work session,
19 when we get to a specific topic, usually I'll be
20 able -- I always try to let people talk who want
21 to weight in on specific subjects as we reach
22 them.

1 You can't come here and just say --
2 talk about whatever you want to. That's what
3 tonight's for. You can say whatever you want.

4 When we get through the work session,
5 as we get to each subject or area of the plan, if
6 there's anybody here that wants to address the
7 board, we can usually accommodate that.

8 So, I invite you all to follow that
9 process. And come here physically if you want
10 to. And if you want to weigh in.

11 If you can't do that, you can watch it
12 live online. Or we have it available on the
13 website, you can stream it later at your
14 convenience.

15 So there's other opportunities to
16 participate is my point. Do you want to say
17 something Maren?

18 MS. HILL: Just really fast. I will
19 be sending out an email to our email list. So if
20 you are not on that list and want to be, you can
21 talk to me afterwards.

22 It has information from tonight and

1 will also have an announcement about the agenda
2 time for the work sessions and any future events.

3 If you already get emails from me,
4 then you're probably on the list.

5 CHAIR ANDERSON: Okay. Very good.

6 Ms. Dancez?

7 MS. DANCEZ: Thank you for letting me
8 speak tonight. I think the one thing that I --
9 the one -- there's so many good things that have
10 been said here tonight that I'd like to echo.

11 The one thing I would like to remind
12 everybody is that July and August of 2016 were
13 tied for the hottest months of the year in recor
14 -- excuse me, the hottest months in recorded
15 human history.

16 So when density is simply a moral, an
17 environmental imperative. This is not -- this is
18 not something to mess around with.

19 With have an amazing opportunity here
20 to take advantage of an extraordinary resource to
21 build an amazing community and development right
22 at a Metro center. This is exactly what we

1 should be doing.

2 I'm going to echo Sean Emerson's --
3 excuse me Epp's position that we suggest that the
4 amount of density be increased to a ratio of 4.1
5 to take care -- to take advantage of this amazing
6 opportunity.

7 And also because I think some folks
8 didn't get to hear Sean say this. I apologize if
9 I'm going to repeat this.

10 Traffic volumes on -- and this is from
11 the Maryland State Highway Administration. And
12 they county traffic volumes. That's their job.

13 Traffic volumes on Maryland 355 have
14 actually remained stagnant and even declined
15 slightly in the past ten years. In 2006
16 Rockville Pike carried about 55 thousand vehicles
17 per day, just south of Strathmore Avenue.

18 And in 2016, which was a mere ten
19 years later, the average for that same location
20 was about 52 thousand vehicles per day. So
21 actually traffic has actually gone down.

22 You provide people the opportunity to

1 live and work near transit, they will take it.
2 And they will use it. And they will get out of
3 their cars.

4 We've been very, very fortunate.
5 We've had a really mild June so far. But that's
6 not going to -- well, this is D.C. That's not
7 going to chang -- that's going to change really
8 soon.

9 And I just ask that you would consider
10 again, as we head into the hottest, you know,
11 hottest summer of what could once again be the
12 hottest in human history that we consider that.

13 Thank you.

14 CHAIR ANDERSON: Thank you. And I
15 want to say thank you to everybody who came out
16 tonight. Whether you testified or not.

17 We appreciate each and every one of
18 you taking your time to be part of this process
19 no matter what your point of view might be.

20 Thanks very much.

21 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
22 went off the record at 8:09 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the foregoing transcript


In the matter of: Montgomery County Planning Dept.
Planning Board Meeting

Before: Montgomery County Planning Board

Date: 06-29-17

Place: Silver Spring, MD

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