



The Honorable Marc Elrich  
Office of the County Executive  
101 Monroe Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

The Honorable Sidney Katz  
County Council President  
Montgomery County Council  
Stella Warner Council Office Building  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

The Honorable Hans Riemer  
Chair, Planning, Housing and Economic Development Committee  
Montgomery County Council  
Stella Warner Council Office Building  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

September 11, 2020

Dear County Executive Elrich, Council President Katz, and Councilmember Riemer:

During the Fiscal Year 2020 budget work sessions, the County Council asked the Montgomery County Planning Department (Planning) to explore whether the presence of a research university in the County could increase entrepreneurship, new business formation, and talent, ultimately bolstering the local economy. Concurrently, the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC) was asked by the County Executive to consider ways to expand university research opportunities in the County for those same reasons.

Accordingly, Planning and MCEDC collaborated together to coordinate and streamline their tasks to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of “what it would take” to achieve a greater research university presence in Montgomery County, especially within our biohealth cluster. While we have had a chance to informally brief and discuss this issue over the past several months with both the executive and legislative branches, attending to the COVID-19 response and relief efforts caused a brief pause in our activities. Given the strong interest in the issue researched in these complementary reports, particularly as the county charts a path forward following the pandemic, we are submitting these reports to you concurrently to sharing them with the Planning Board and MCEDC Board. These Boards have not yet provided formal comments.

The three attached reports are:

- 1) A “lessons learned” case study analysis of research universities that have opened satellite campuses domestically and internationally (completed by Bolan Smart & Associates and Alvarez & Marshall commissioned by Planning);

- 2) A brief analysis with recommendations regarding the possibility of an enhanced University System of Maryland presence in Montgomery County (completed by Margrave Strategies, LLC commissioned for MCEDC); and
- 3) A MCEDC staff report on findings for a potential non-Maryland research university engagement.

As you know, federally driven research and talent have long been recognized as a foundational asset for Montgomery County's economy. The county is home to government labs, a major defense department medical center, and significant Federal agencies such as NIH and FDA, as well as unique non-profits like the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. These assets are accompanied by a strong private biotech sector, including globally recognized companies such as United Therapeutics, AstraZeneca, Novavax, Emergent BioSolutions, and GlaxoSmithKline, just to name a few.

Unlike other significant life sciences clusters around the United States, however, Montgomery County lacks a major research university. For years, community stakeholders, CEOs, and elected officials alike have raised the question of whether this lack of a graduate-level research facility inhibits our County's full economic potential.

In examining the three reports together, we have found that none of the reports provided conflicting information and, when considered as a whole, there are some consistent themes and takeaways. They include:

- Universities require compelling business reasons to open satellite locations. Absent a distinct need and rationale, there will be significant reluctance to make the critical long-term commitment;
- Montgomery County's federal labs are assets, but regulations around tech transfer are limiting local spinoff effects. Helping to successfully change these regulations to promote private sector partnerships could be attractive to attracting a major research organization;
- The University of Maryland, College Park is proximate to the County and has made major investments in the state's flagship campus and its adjacent Discovery District, with room to grow. The County should leverage the new Purple Line connection to connect, but not duplicate, the graduate-level research infrastructure at the main campus;
- One possible tool for mixing graduate-level academic research with private sector and federal research is through the creation of an institute or alliance;
- Replicating or tapping into the MPower platform, a partnership between the University of Maryland, College Park and the University of Maryland, Baltimore, provides an excellent framework, since the MPower institutions share the strengths of the private sector and federal labs in areas such as life sciences and technology, including cyber security, artificial intelligence, machine learning and data analytics;
- Industry partnerships are recognized as a valuable tool for universities across the globe but how they are embraced varies widely. It appears that few universities outside of the major life science clusters are partnering with private industry to advance R&D in life sciences-adjacent fields, and those that have are still in their early stages; and

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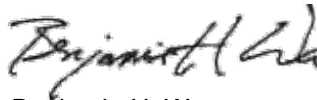
- Fostering several different industry-university alliances, institutes, etc. is a logical pathway to establishing a greater graduate-level research presence in Montgomery County, but our community and business leaders will need to be committed to a long-term creative outreach, substantial relationship building, and dedicate the resources necessary to develop a solid pipeline of potential partnerships.

We would be happy to discuss these issues further with you. If you should have any questions, please let us know.

Sincerely,



Casey Anderson  
Chair  
Montgomery County Planning Board



Benjamin H. Wu  
President and CEO  
Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation