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Communities Ask for Revisions to Proposed Bethesda Downtown Plan

Implement development in stages, convert parking lots into parks

Bethesda, Maryland -- January 18, 2017 -- Fifteen local governments and community associations, representing 10,000 downtown Bethesda area households, submitted a joint letter yesterday to the Montgomery County Council. Organized by the Coalition of Bethesda Area Residents (CBAR), the letter asks for revisions to the proposed Bethesda Downtown Plan.

Residents and community leaders worked for several months to develop specific and actionable recommendations to achieve the following goals: prevent further **traffic congestion**, relieve **school overcrowding**, assure **public safety**, allow for **compatible development** near residential neighborhoods, and develop meaningful **shared public spaces and parks** to serve the growing population. The recommendations are presented in a 10-page explanatory letter, a matrix of proposed line-by-line changes to the Plan, and a letter of endorsement signed by life members of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad.

"This letter represents a thoughtful and serious effort by area residents who acknowledge that change, in the form of redevelopment, is inevitable and can be desirable," said Mary Flynn, founder of CBAR. "However, the proposed Bethesda Downtown Plan has serious flaws. Together we offer specific suggestions that advocate for community well-being within the context of major redevelopment."

Highlights of community recommendations include:

- Balance growth by implementing development in **stages**, with periodic community impact analysis, to ensure infrastructure development keeps pace with growth
- Ensure compatibility with supporting neighborhoods by **concentrating heights** near transportation hubs, and limiting heights and uses for properties confronting existing homes
- Convert the following County-owned surface parking lots into **mixed-use and recreational parks**: those behind and adjacent to the Farm Women's Market, and those east of Wisconsin Avenue between Woodmont Triangle and East Bethesda

- Use the County's recently approved student generation rates to update the Plan's **public schools** projections, and account for the cumulative impacts of other area master plans whose children are also within the B-CC public schools cluster: Chevy Chase Lake, Westbard, and Lyttonsville
- Ensure **public safety** by rejecting mixed used zoning for fire and rescue facilities, which if allowed, may increase response times and constrain the ability to expand emergency services in the future

The letter with its attachments are online at <http://cbar.info/joint-community-letter/>.

The Council's Planning, Housing and Economic Development (PHED) Committee will begin considering the Planning Board's draft of the Bethesda Downtown Plan on Monday, January 23.

ABOUT CBAR

The Coalition of Bethesda Area Residents (CBAR) is a grassroots organization that advocates for a beautiful and economically vibrant downtown area that is supported by livable communities. CBAR encourages citizen participation in the planning process through enhanced access to public information and community support.

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