

September 28, 2021

Office of the Clerk of the County Council  
Donna J. Brown, Clerk  
14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive  
Room 2198  
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

**Re: Prince George's County Countywide Sectional Map Amendment**

Dear Honorable Councilmembers:

North College Park Citizen Association (NCPCA) is a community-based resident association serving the communities of north of MD 193. NCPCA's mission is to provide for and promote the health and safety and welfare of the residents of north College Park area and of the surrounding communities, and to perform such acts as directly or indirectly promote the interests of the corporation or its membership.

NCPCA is concerned the proposed zoning will intensify the density and traffic in our community. We are also concerned about the current infrastructure's ability to serve those who are current residents, as well as those to come. Within College Park, the proposed countywide map amendment includes three transit-oriented centers. One transit-oriented zone along US 1 (Route 1); another transit-oriented zone on the existing WMATA Metro Greenbelt Station; and the third centers on MD 193 University Boulevard.

We are particularly concerned with the increased traffic on Route 1 that new transit-focused development will bring. Throughout College Park, portions of Route 1 have a proposed Regional Transit-Oriented Low Intensity and Local Transit-Oriented zones.<sup>1</sup> A purpose of the transit-oriented zoning is to provide "walkable and bikeable areas that are well-connected to a regional transportation network through a range of transit options."<sup>2</sup> However, this does not address the present dangers on Route 1. A report from AAA Mid-Atlantic found that Prince George's County is the most dangerous place to drive or walk in Maryland, with several accident-prone areas on Route 1.<sup>3</sup> In the past 15 years, more than a dozen individuals have been killed on Rt. 1. Transit-oriented zoning will only increase the traffic and intensity on Route 1.

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<sup>1</sup> Near 10300 Baltimore Avenue to 8150 Baltimore Avenue. *Proposed New Zone Comparison Map*, ZONINGPGC.COM, <http://zoningpgc.pgplanning.com/zoning-swipe-tool/> (last visited Sept. 19, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> An Ordinance Concerning the Zoning Ordinance of Prince George's County for the Purpose of Replacing the Zoning Ordinance of Prince George's County, being also and the same Subtitle 27 of the County Code, with a new Zoning Ordinance, CB-013-2018 (2018) (To be codified in Sections 27-4204(c)(1)(B), 27-4204(f)(1)(B)) [hereinafter "CB-013-2018"].

<sup>3</sup> Neal Augenstein, *Prince George's Remains Deadliest Md. County for Traffic, Pedestrian Deaths*, WTOPNEWS.COM (Jun. 24, 2021), <https://wtop.com/prince-georges-county/2021/06/prince-georges-remains->

As such, we are requesting a neighborhood conversation overlay zone (NCO). An NCO Zone is used to preserve the features and character of established neighborhoods and to promote new development that is compatible with the existing neighborhood character. An area seeking an NCO Zone must meet the description of Section 27-4403(a)(3) of the zoning rewrite. We believe the area of North College Park meets those requirements. We ask the County Council and the planning board to add to the work agenda of the Prince George's County Planning Board of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission a neighborhood study to begin the process of creating an NCO for North College Park.<sup>4</sup>

We echo the concerns of other community organizations regarding the transparency of this process. We are particularly concerned about the public's ability to participate in the zoning process and how the county will phase in the application of the new zoning code. The new zoning ordinance becomes effective after the County Council approves the Countywide Sectional Map Amendment (CMA). However, developers can elect to use the standards of the old zoning code.<sup>5</sup> Development and permit applications submitted and accepted before the effective date of the new zoning code can proceed as described in the old zoning code.<sup>6</sup> And, at any stage of the development, a developer may elect to be assessed using the new zoning ordinance.<sup>7</sup>

How are citizens to distinguish which developments have elected to continue under the old zoning protocol from those that have elected to use the new zoning protocol? The Council nor the Planning Board have described how it will inform the public about which zoning protocols are applicable to which developments. The new and old zoning ordinances differ in procedural requirements. The differences in procedural requirements will impact the public's ability to be informed and to participate. Thus, the public needs to know to which properties the old zoning standards are applicable. The council and the planning board must create a process to identify which properties are subject to the old zoning code and which are subject to the new zoning code.

Finally, the zoning code does not address the need for improved code enforcement, particularly where the property has been "mansionized" and used as a rental property. The goals of the Zoning Rewrite will only be meaningful with improved enforcement of the zoning code. Recently, NCPCA reached out to our City Council and the County Council about code violations at a mansionized property in the North College Park community. We seriously question if

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[deadliest-md-county-for-traffic-pedestrian-deaths/](#); *Fatal Crashes by Mode Type*, VISION ZERO PRINCE GEORGE'S DATA & TRENDS, <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/80b949a1b7f94194af19aad1a2702d0a> (last visited Sept. 19, 2021); *Vision Zero Prince George's High Injury Network for Pedestrian and Bike Crashes*, <https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/35907/Vision-Zero-High-Injury-Network> (last visited Sept. 19, 2021).

<sup>4</sup> CB-013-2018 (to be codified at Section 27-4403(a)(2)).

<sup>5</sup> CB-013-2018 (to be codified at Section 27-1703, 27-1704).

<sup>6</sup> CB-013-2018 (to be codified at Section 27-1703, 27-1704). The new zoning ordinance does not define or describe an "accepted application."

<sup>7</sup> CB-013-2018 (to be codified at Section 27-1704(f)).

NCPCA had not contacted our elected officials that the county's processes would have identified and remedied the violations efficiently and effectively.

We thank you for your time and consideration. We urge you to remember this tool should be used to serve all, but first and foremost the taxpayers.

Respectfully,

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Cc: College Park City Council  
Senator Jim Rosapepe  
Delegate Ben Barnes  
Delegate Mary Lehman  
Delegate Joseline Pena-Melnyk