



Howard County Citizens Association

Since 1961...

The Voice Of The People of Howard County

Date: 30 August 2016

Subject: Your Decision on the Settlement of Savage Land Swap We Hope is NO

Dear Allan,

The Howard County Citizens Association (HCCA) vehemently opposes the potential land swap to facilitate the development of the Settlement at Savage Mill. HCCA has been very involved with the Savage community, especially on this proposed development. There are many reasons why we are strongly opposed to this project and the latest potential land swap proposal. Our concerns focus on transparency and a failure to include the community in discussions with the developer over an issue as important as swapping precious parkland in the residents' attempt to lessen the impact on the environment—both natural and historic.

We strongly urge you to:

- Involve the community in any discussions on the particulars of a land swap to prevent community angst and potentially save the developer time.
- Make any swap more equal, using only the developer's contract purchase property, not the Mill's.
- Explore having DPZ encourage density to be transferred OUT of the developer's contract purchase property, reducing the overall density.
- Request rezoning of any parkland the developer may receive from R-20 to R-H-ED to make it a unified parcel. Alternately, do not exceed 7 units per any acre, a density consistent with the covenants for 35 units on 5 acres...
- Require the developer to reduce the total number of units and to return to the drawing board to put forth something which actually meets the intent of the R-H-ED zone. Do not let a hypothetical density number dictate the outcome of this project.
- Encourage the developer to increase the value of a smaller number of homes by creating a truly environmentally rich environment—like nothing seen elsewhere.
- Adhere to, rather than ignore, the Maryland DNR directives for procedures to protect endangered, rare, threatened, and declining species.

- Adhere to, rather than ignore the advice of the Soil Conservation District in order to maintain soil stability and reduce erosion.
- Insist on a storm water management plan which will take into consideration both the quantity and quality of water retained on the site.
- Do not agree to waivers which endanger future residents, such as private alleys which fire trucks are unable to negotiate, just to enable a developer to have the density number he desires.

Several HCCA Board members have participated alongside Savage residents in various meetings and can confirm, as neutral parties that Bozzuto has ignored the advice of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and the Design Advisory Panel (DAP) to meet with the community. To HCCA's dismay the HPC indicated that since they are only an "Advisory Board" the developer does not have to adhere to their requests. This apparent lack of enforcement and accountability is why citizens wanting to participate in the development process are baffled with the process. It is why HCCA is strongly recommending that both the HPC and the DAP become a "Regulatory" body to provide greater authority than the current designated "Advisory" Boards." When the Developer finally did meet after the DAP stating the need, Bozzuto presented 5 options from which the community did choose one of the options with an alternate. The Developer chose to ignore the outcome and then decided to submit something quite different to DPZ. Obviously the community was not happy with the Developer completely ignoring a potential plan.

It is difficult to understand why the County would give up so much public parkland for the benefit of a developer's bottom line? It appears that the numbers are being manipulated to make the deal look like an even amount of land is being swapped. On closer examination the developer gets to use and return significant amounts of currently forested land—after it has been stripped, re-graded, and planted with saplings OR covered with impervious asphalt surfaces. This is hardly best practice. The County has an obligation to the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund to use the land for the purpose for which it was intended—for the public good, not to facilitate a private development.

Why should the County yield on every point, approve every request, or give public land for private benefit. The County's yielding to Bozzuto's ever-growing demands has yielded a higher profit development at the expense of both the Savage Community and the Howard taxpayer community. There is no justification for what appears to be a "taking" by the developer.

An additional looming consideration is just how many "do-overs" does the developer receive from the County? The processing and reprocessing of plans which lack sufficient detail, fail to meet regulatory standards, or obfuscate important issues are costly of DPZ staff time. There is no

motivation for developers to submit complete, accurate, well-designed plans if they know that DPZ will fix them for them. There should be no unwritten practice wherein a developer's proposal is approved after a certain number of revisions, regardless of the quality of the submission.

In conclusion, the proposed land swap if approved would be an accident waiting to happen which the community and the county cannot afford to experience. As Ben Franklin stated, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." We hope your decision will be "NO" to the land swap as the proposed development is nowhere near ready for prime time especially given the aforementioned reasons and concerns.

Sincerely,

Stu Kohn
HCCA, President