



HCCA

Howard County Citizens Association

Since 1961... The Voice of the People of Howard County

Susan Garber, Board member, speaking on behalf of the HCCA in opposition to CB 7-2021

We find the **timing of yet another change to the TOD zone extremely objectionable**. It's especially inappropriate to request this almost doubling of maximum height while the General Plan Revision process is underway. The HoCo by Design process would be undermined by locking in higher density at all TODs (along the Route 1 Corridor when many other changes --including those in CB 8-2021 are also being requested).

It's particularly problematic given the Route One Corridor still lacks a comprehensive plan, despite numerous false starts, and this change would further exasperate the lack of infrastructure (which is more than schools).

Another timing issue is whether future estimates of need are being overestimated. The State announced a reduction in commuter train routes due to a lack of ridership because of Covid. Now Covid may not last forever, *please God*, but you can't ignore the fact that the change to working from home rather than commuting to an urban center may be here to stay.

We ask: Why put the tallest buildings in Howard County at these TOD locations? Why a 180 foot maximum here when the tallest buildings in Columbia are by contrast 147 feet?

The TOD Zone was created to encourage the development of multi-story office centers near MARC stations. While at a site *nearby*, Anne Arundel County recently made a very lucrative office space deal with Microsoft, but Howard County continues to play around with *residential* development!

We urge you to reject this request at this time--**there is NO urgency**. The applicant simply wants another deal to lock down this potential bonus. The ZRA *application* actually requested a 200 foot maximum, boldly stating this didn't necessarily mean an increase in density. Just how dumb do they think elected officials and we, the public, are?!

The application also implies 'affordable housing' possibilities. Please do NOT be fooled by this disingenuous argument. I personally attended the public presentation for this entire project at its start (when the County was asked to fund the multistory parking lot needed to free up use of the street level parking lots for development.) At the time the

presenters bragged they foresaw apartments here would be the most expensive in the metro area, “even greater than at Montgomery County’s Symphony Hall project”.

The term Transit Oriented Development was created and popularized by Peter Calthorpe and described in his book *The Next American Metropolis, Ecology, Community and the American Dream*. What the County envisions for TOD Districts is far from the original precept. Calthorpe focused on improving the suburbs of metropolitan areas by incorporating the urbanism that makes communities socially vibrant and alive. By urbanism he did not mean downtown city densities with high-rise buildings. He meant the qualities of community design which establish diversity, pedestrian scale and public identity regardless of location or density.

Calthorpe saw the opportunity to develop such communities around existing transit stations. His plans and illustrations show 5 story office and apartment buildings with street level retail closest to the station and lower buildings, mostly residential, beyond.

It is shocking to see how an admirable original concept has been lost !!

Please vote NO on CB 7-2021.

On a personal note, my husband and I once lived in what is today still the tallest building in College Park. We chose the 7th floor of the 15 story building, specifically because this is the limit for a hook and ladder rescue. **That** building overlooked a national park. Residents of **this** would-be tallest building in Howard County can choose a view of the trash transfer station, mulch pile, salt dome, an auto graveyard **or** the Maryland Correctional Institute for Women. Keep in mind also this refers to any building within 750 feet of the train station--the length of 2 and a half football fields. Larger TOD sites could potentially have *several* such high-rises.

We suggest that before proceeding, DPZ research whether regulations regarding the height of buildings near NSA are still in effect, and whether any of the northern TOD locations have a restriction on building height due to proximity to BWI.

Remember to keep in mind that approval would affect ALL of the TOD sites, not just this one striving to be seen from the BW Parkway while sitting 40 feet below Route 32. And let's keep in mind that our roads in the corridor are already overcrowded. And hiking and biking to the station by non-residents of this facility is NOT a reality. Nor does this TOD include amenities like a grocery store or pharmacy. Residents will still need to drive their vehicles to Savage and along Route One to acquire necessities.