

Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights

June 22, 2017

Council President Berliner
Council Vice President Riemer
PHED Chair Nancy Floreen
Councilmember Elrich
Councilmember Hucker
Councilmember Katz
Councilmember Leventhal
Councilmember Navarro
Councilmember Rice

Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue, 4th Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Council President Berliner, Vice President Riemer, and Councilmembers:

I am writing on behalf of the Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights, an umbrella organization of 19 communities, in support of CBAR's positions regarding the Bethesda Downtown Plan, as stated in their letter to you of June 15, 2017 (attached). In addition, CCCFH specifically and unequivocally supports the detailed letter from the Chevy Chase West Neighborhood Association regarding the likely effects on Somerset Elementary School of heights above those zoned for properties south of Bradley Boulevard (attached).

Despite its recent reconstruction, Somerset ES is now at more than 115% of capacity. For the next two school years, MCPS predicts it will be at 119.6% of capacity. MCPS's conservative projections show the need for significantly more space continuing over the next five years, the limit of their projections. The Bethesda Downtown Plan, meant to last 20-30 years, does not consider the effect of zoning changes on Somerset ES, which serves the children of six of our current members: Chevy Chase West, Drummond, Somerset, Chevy Chase Village, Friendship Village, and Kenwood.

CCCFH is aware that school capacity is a countywide issue. The zoning changes for properties south of Bradley, which are within the plan area, include height increases above current heights for every rental property – several hundred units – ranging from 40-133% (i.e., from 30, 40, or

50 feet to 70 feet). As a result, the number of rental units could double, and the number of elementary school-age children from all housing (affordable and market rate) will increase.

This zoned increase will add a significant number of MPDUs simply because there can be more units overall. Adding bonus height for more than 15% MPDUs will only increase the stress on a school with one of the smallest tracts in the county, with no room to expand, and no room for portable classrooms without significant loss of outdoor area.

In light of these realities, CCCFH joins CBAR and CCW in supporting as part of the ZTA a map that delineates the area in which specified properties are eligible for an MPDU height incentive, and language that allows for enhanced public benefit points for properties that are not eligible for the height incentive, making it easier for these properties to reach the required number of points for their CR or CRT zoning. For our members, removing height incentives and increasing benefit points will reduce the pressure on Somerset ES for all children regardless of their type of housing while encouraging property owners to consider additional affordable housing. It may also help to reduce the possibility of a development moratorium within the school district.

These are all desirable results for the community at large. We join our neighbors in CCW and CBAR in requesting that you include the provisions outlined above in the ZTA.

Respectfully submitted,



Harold Pfohl, Chair
Citizens Coordinating Committee
On Friendship Heights

c. Jeff Zyontz
Naomi Spinrad
Mary Flynn
Lynn Balzer-Martin
Debrah Shaver
James Nelson

Representing the Citizens Associations of Brookdale, Chevy Chase Village, Chevy Chase West, Drummond, Friendship Heights, Glen Echo Heights, Green Acres-Glen Cove, Kenwood, Kenwood Condominium, Kenwood House Cooperative, Kenwood Place Condominium, Somerset, Springfield, Sumner, Sumner Village Condominium, Westmoreland, Westbard mews, Westwood Mews, and Wood Acres