

# Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights

April 21, 2016

Dear Association Member,

The Montgomery County Council is scheduled to vote on the Westbard Sector Plan on May 3. Representatives to the Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights (CCCFH), which includes 19 associations (listed on the bottom of our letter head), and CCCFH officers think now is a good time to review who CCCFH is and to report back to you on our activities over the past years on the Westbard Plan and to provide our general assessment of the plan the Council will be considering.

CCCFH seeks to represent the interests of its 19 neighboring associations interested in land use issues affecting Friendship Heights and surrounding communities and to coordinate their actions on such issues. The Board of each neighborhood association appoints delegates to represent it at CCCFH and those delegates reflect the views of their respective community associations. With that representative framework, CCCFH has sought over recent years to reflect the coordinated views of its 19 member associations and to ensure that any development be as favorable and attractive as possible to the surrounding communities with maximum positive amenities.

CCCFH has been meeting once a month for more than two years to discuss the Westbard plan and develop strategies to get our communities' voices heard. Specifically, we developed and voted on positions to present to various decision-makers. We attended many public meetings and work sessions, testified at hearings, and scheduled individual meetings with public officials. Representatives to CCCFH also spoke on behalf of their individual associations and as individuals. In addition, CCCFH sponsored an online petition to the County Council that was circulated to residents in our member communities and about fifteen hundred residents signed it. Others have expressed their views as well.

The first months were focused on the Planning Department. Representatives went to the charrettes the Planning Department held in the fall of 2014 and met individually with the Planning Department Director and her key staff to discuss our concerns about height and density, schools, traffic, and amenities such as green space and naturalizing of the Willet Branch.

When the Planning Department sent a draft plan to the Planning Board, we again attended public meetings and testified on the plan. The Planning Board transmitted a draft plan to the County Council in December, 2015, and we again attended public meetings, testified before the County Council and met with individual county council members to discuss our concerns, especially about transitions to residential neighborhoods near proposed development.

About 10 years ago CCCFH began to prepare for the eventual review of the Westbard Master Plan. It sponsored a survey of residents in our associations to learn what they wanted in Westbard. Of the 4600 households surveyed, almost 1500 responded. Three major findings

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

came out of that survey: that Westbard ought to remain a neighborhood shopping area; a revised retail business mix seems appropriate; and high density residential development is not desired but some lower density development appears more acceptable. CCCFH contracted with Catholic University to produce a plan for Westbard based on these findings, and the Catholic University 2008 plan was a resource for the Planning Department when it began its work.

The plan that the County Council will be voting on is a compromise of different interests (developers, neighborhoods and interests promoted by advocacy groups) and Council priorities about amenities such as green space and naturalizing the Willet Branch. The County Council took a straw vote in March, 2016 and in an unprecedented move, reduced density and reduced heights, especially adjacent to single family homes and townhouses. This action contrasts to what it has done in other master plans, where density was frequently increased. Although CCCFH representatives would prefer less density and lower heights, it is generally agreed that the compromise plan reflected in the straw votes substantially improves the draft Plan sent to the Council. CCCFH appreciates the Council's receptiveness to our associations' concerns. Much of what is discussed in this letter is on the Montgomery County Planning Department site.

After the Council votes, your representatives will be carefully following the site plans developers submit to Montgomery County and making sure that the heights proposed and amenities included in their plans conform to what is expected. In addition, your representatives will encourage monitoring of traffic and school capacity when projects are developed. As CCCFH has done since 1973, it will continue to be the voice of the community associations on land use issues beyond Westbard and it strives to maintain positive relationships with the planning board, council members, and their staffs to achieve that end.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lloyd Guerci". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Lloyd Guerci  
Chair

cc: County Council President Nancy Floreen and Councilmembers Roger Berliner, Marc Elrich, Tom Hucker, Sidney Katz, George Leventhal, Nancy Navarro, Craig Rice, Hans Riemer