

Testimony of Elaine Amir
On Behalf of Johns Hopkins University
In Support of the Gaithersburg West Master Plan
March 26, 2009

My name is Elaine Amir and I am Executive Director for Johns Hopkins Montgomery County in the Office of the Provost. I work in the Shady Grove Life Sciences Center and have lived just a mile away for the past 22 years.

I am speaking today in favor of the proposed Gaithersburg West Master Plan.

Johns Hopkins leadership is encouraged by the new thinking that the Gaithersburg West Plan represents. With our new president on board, as of March 1st, we are examining all possible ways in which the university can increase collaboration with schools, businesses, local government agencies, hospitals and federal research labs to engage Hopkins public health and medical expertise and research in the County.

This plan presents a great opportunity to expand upon the visionary work of former County leaders who turned the field next to Shady Grove Hospital into a world-renowned genomic research center. Some twenty years later, it is our turn to be the visionaries ... to turn a car-centric, suburban office park into a walkable, transit-oriented, community where researchers at universities, private companies, and government labs can work together every day, advancing healthcare research to benefit our community.

For this transformation to take place, we need to create the kind of town center that will attract and retain biotech companies and the “creative class” that they employ. It’s about providing the environment where discussions that result in the “next great thing” happen regularly – over coffee or while waiting in line to pick up dry cleaning. It’s up to us to create this environment.

Recently our Superintendent of Montgomery County Schools, remarked that students graduate from MCPS, get accepted to colleges all over the country and do not come back. Hopkins professors in Baltimore say the same thing – that students leave with diplomas in one hand and one-way tickets to Palo Alto and Cambridge in the other. Other areas are more inviting for them. This is a “brain drain” for our region.

We all lose when these “best and brightest” minds go elsewhere. And we all lose when the companies that could employ them choose to go elsewhere as well, taking County and State tax revenues with them.

Ultimately, the Gaithersburg West Master Plan is about much more than buildings and density. It's about collaborative efforts in education, economic development and workforce development.

This new and transformative plan gives us a chance to bring our best and brightest home to live, work and to make science history.

This will happen only if we create the right kind of environment, We are uniquely positioned in this community to retain and bring together the human resources and capital resources we already have in order to benefit the County and the world through better pharmaceuticals, public health interventions, better medical devices, and better processes that take discovery and innovation out of the labs and into our homes. We need to advance the vision that our County initiated more than 20 years ago.

The proposed Gaithersburg West Master Plan is essential to this vision.

Thank you.

Testimony of David McDonough

Johns Hopkins University

In support of the Gaithersburg West Master Plan

March 26, 2009

Good evening, my name is David McDonough of Johns Hopkins University and I am here to speak in support of the Gaithersburg West Master Plan.

We at Hopkins, the largest private employer in the State of Maryland and the Nation's leader in federally funded research for the past 28 years strongly support this plan, with accommodation for height and density modifications at LSC Belward. This plan is a solid framework for a World Class 21st Century Center for Science, Education and Healthcare. This Science Center will serve as an engine for jobs and prosperity both in Montgomery County and the Nation, and it will be a great place to live, work and play for both our current residents, and most importantly for future generations.

Recently Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernake stated that the future of the American Economy will be built on the foundation of Great Technology, Great Universities, and Great Entrepreneurs. This Master Plan brings together exactly these three key factors of production right here in Montgomery County, right here in the Shady Grove Life Sciences Center.

I come here tonight to support the Science Vision, the Land Use Plan, and the CCT embodied in this plan.

1. Science Vision: We have the greatest individual science assets in the nation with our federal labs, universities, and bioscience businesses, right here in the County. However, we are not close to achieving our potential. What is missing is connectivity, collaboration and community across these discrete sectors. We are missing the physical proximity that exists in Cambridge, Mass, and the business community that exists in Silicon Valley. The Science Vision embodied within this plan will enable us to achieve our potential.
2. Land Use Plan: For the past 40 years, the I-270 Corridor Cities have been planned as the County's Commercial Core. The Shady Grove Life Sciences Center has been the heart of this I-270 Corridor. The proposed smart growth, transit oriented, high density mixed-use sustainable land use plan is simply a recognition that we need to move to new town centers within this corridor to manage growth and preserve open space. This land use plan will create a great place to live, work and play.

3. Mass Transit: Less than 12 months ago gasoline was priced at \$4.00 a gallon. Anyone who had access to mass transit used it. Filling your gas tank at \$50 to \$75 was not fun. The CCT is key to the Master Plan. The density of the master plan is key to the viability of the CCT.

In today's highly competitive global economy, embracing the status quo is not acceptable. If we in the United States seek to maintain our leadership position as the world's strongest economy, with the world's highest standard of living, we must act as world leaders. We must craft long term plans for the 21st Century. This plan is the embodiment of smart growth, transit oriented, mixed use, sustainable planning principles. It supports the growth of science, education, and healthcare in Montgomery County. It creates high paying jobs. It improves the quality of life, recreation opportunities, and transit options, while protecting and enhancing the existing neighborhoods.

As stated by a Board Member, I encourage you to "listen to both the voices of today and the voices of the future" and move this plan forward. Thank you.