

Good evening Irina,

My husband and I attended the Attainable Housing Strategies Meeting in July and I'd like to share some of our thoughts with you prior to the GOCA meeting in the coming week. We are currently out of town and unable to participate.

We are strongly against most of the proposal and feel the close neighborhood feel we have all enjoyed and helped developed the past 3-4 decades (at least) will be ruined. Please see below:

**Pros:** we understand there is a housing crisis for middle income housing (\$400,000 homes). Duplexes, tris and quads in some areas along Georgia Avenue, or 108, would work well. Stacked flats -- not so sure. Duplexes may also work well replacing some very old and run down homes on Norwood or Dr. Bird and elsewhere in Olney, Sandy Spring, Ashton or Laytonsville. There are condos in Olney readily available for sale often that are under \$400,000 and townhomes in the \$400-500,000 range also available. So MoCo's statement that nothing is available below \$600,000 is not accurate.

There are many places in Montgomery County where the proposal will work on a much larger scale and we strongly urge the County to seek other locations that will remedy the crisis much more quickly.

**Cons/Concerns:**

People moved to Olney because of it's "rural" feel. While Olney has grown immensely in the past 30+ years, the area has grown to a size that long-time residents can accept. Most Olney residents do not want Olney to become a Rockville, Silver Spring, Gaithersburg, etc., which is what the County is proposing.

As we know, higher density -- especially along public transportation lines -- brings more crime. We already need to get Metrobus and the Ride On to stop making Prince Philip Drive and Medstar it's last stop at 2:00 a.m. My guess is that almost no one who lives or works in Olney is taking the bus at 2:00 a.m. -- especially along Prince Philip. We, along with our

neighbors have had some of those late bus riders try to break into our homes. The police said there is a continued problem which already exists because Metro brings people from D.C. or the D.C./Montgomery County line who are drunks, on drugs or homeless and just ride the bus all night. They get off the bus at the last stop -- the Hospital -- this is not acceptable. Bringing higher density to Olney will only increase crime attempts and people who do NOT live in Olney to Olney for purposes that are not positive for anyone.

We realize that the County's answer is to build where public transportation already exists. While that makes sense for new homes that will be built on a major corridor, it doesn't make sense for the neighborhoods and back roads (in most cases). Instead, why not increase public transportation to other areas in upper Montgomery County?

We moved to Olney because we loved the area, but also because we had to move further out in order to afford a home. It meant we had longer commutes -- that's life. I worked two jobs for many years in order to live in Olney. There is no reason those seeking to buy a home in the \$400k range can't move to Boyds, or Laytonsville, Damascus or Poolesville. The County should increase their bus routes to those areas and make those areas much more accessible to those this proposal is trying to assist.

People bought in a particular neighborhood or street in Olney because of Olney's Master Plan or because of a new development's plan. It is not acceptable for the County to decide they are going to change that plan and mix up the neighborhoods or existing back roads with private homes.

The County is suggesting any homes with 500 feet of Georgia Avenue could be re-zoned to include tris and quads. This measure will effect some homes in established neighborhoods (like Hallowell) -- not just individual homes along Georgia. The County should only re-zone the homes along the growth corridor with a Georgia Avenue address (or 108, etc).

Traffic -- obviously traffic will increase -- for those who still commute from or through Olney, an increase in traffic is not wanted. Parking, as mentioned at the meeting, will also become a major problem in many neighborhoods. The type of duplexes that were proposed showing

parking in the back of the home look fine on paper. However, in reality, the parking pad behind the home MAY have space for two or three cars. In reality, each side of the duplex will probably house a minimum of two drives and possibly four. Those well-planned parking places in the rear won't be of any help for the additional three or four cars belonging to the homeowners that will now be parked on the already crowded and narrow streets.

Home Values -- there is no doubt that if a duplex is plopped into the lot across from us our home values will drop. Taking that lot out of the scenario, if a duplex is plopped into Olney Mill, or along Bowie Mill or similar older developed area/neighborhood, the home values will drop. Actually, the home values will probably drop in the majority of neighborhoods that receive a duplex -- certainly not ALL locations, but most.

School boundaries -- people moved to certain neighborhoods in Olney so that their kids could go to certain schools -- especially certain high schools. Increases density will more than likely shift the school boundaries.

### **Suggestions:**

**Put this matter on a ballot -- this is not an issue to be decided by the County Council.**

Encourage developers through tax incentives or other creative ways to develop middle income housing in Rockville, Gaithersburg, Poolesville and locales by building in existing available (or soon to be available) lots, such as the former White Flint Mall in Rockville, the former Lakeforest Mall in Gaithersburg, the former Vitro site in Aspen Hill -- all of which are near public transportation. These locations could provide MANY homes much more quickly than waiting for sales of individual homes and building duplexes by onesies and twosies in existing neighborhoods. This will also put the responsibility on the successful developers who will still make plenty of money and not individual homeowners who will suffer decline in home values. We feel the County is "sticking it" to the little guys and not the multi-millionaire developers.

**Existing farmland** -- rezone farm land so that when sold, either another farmer takes over the land or middle income housing must built. STOP re-zoning so that there can be another brewery or wineries -- nothing against either, but there is certainly not a

"liquor crisis" like there is a housing crisis. There are plenty of breweries/wineries nearby. Park and Planning mentioned that revenue from taxes received for home sales/purchases are way down. My guess is that they could earn that revenue back quickly if they stopped allowing breweries and wineries in the place of attainable housing.

I'm sure other people can come up with some suggestions as well. Please share with your fellow members of GOCA, the Park and Planning Board, the public, Councilmember Luedtke's office and elsewhere.

I really appreciate your help and the help of GOCA's in trying to keep Olney the lovely place that it is. We welcome some growth, but NOT the type of growth being proposed.

Thank you!

Mary Jane Geraci and Bob McNally