



Sandy Spring-Ashton Rural Preservation Consortium

We are pro-Master Plan, not anti-development

MCCF Community Hero Award, January 2009

www.ssarpc.org -- SSARPC, Post Office Box 518, Ashton, MD 20861

January 10, 2010

Chairman Royce Hanson
Montgomery County Park and Planning Commission
9797 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20901

Re: Sandy Spring, Case 120090230 (Thomas Building, Goddard School)

Dear Chairman Hanson and Members of the Planning Board:

While our group, the Sandy Spring Ashton Rural Preservation Consortium (SSARPC,) is not opposed to the addition of a school to the Sandy Spring Village Center, we are opposed to the Preliminary Plan of a large building and two-level parking structure, known as the Thomas Building, proposed to house the Goddard School and additional office and retail space. The size and mass of this building and its parking deck would occupy nearly all of the available site, and is out of character with Sandy Spring's rural historic center

The January 4, 2010 Preliminary Plan shows a three story building along Route 108 with a two level parking deck behind it which would approximately quadruple the amount of parking currently on the site. The combined mass of this development (86,077 square feet) would be completely out of character with Sandy Spring's historic rural village center because the building, parking deck, and storm water management would be shoe-horned into the site, destroying all of the trees and leaving little space between it and neighboring residences. The SSARPC Steering Committee believes that there are two reasons the Preliminary Plan should not be approved:

First, the proposal is not consistent with the Rural Village Overlay Zone because it does not meet the purpose clause of the zone, which is:

(a) "Preserve and enhance the rural village character of the Sandy Spring and Ashton village centers by ensuring an attractive and traditional pattern of houses, commercial establishments, open spaces and their relationship to roadways."

(b) Encourage a compatible relationship between new or expanded houses or businesses and traditional neighboring structures that reflects the best of local village character, particularly in terms of scale, siting, design features, and orientation on the site." (Sec. 59-C-18.181)

Next, the proposal is not in conformance with the 1998 Sandy Spring-Ashton Master Plan where it says that the entryway to this "unique rural community" is to be maintained. There are several

references in the Sandy Spring-Ashton 1998 Master Plan that speak specifically to the importance of the rural entry to this historic area. The proposed Thomas building sits exactly at the entryway from the west. The proposal does not fit into a rural setting.

The Plan calls for:

- (a) “The entries create attractive entrances to the village centers and help establish the character of the area.” (p. 29)
- (b) In speaking about growth of the commercial density, “However, in these village centers such increases need to be balanced with the Plan intent to maintain small scale of existing centers.” (p. 31)

Even the Design Guidelines (p. 36) list as the first two elements to

- Preserve the rural entry experience along MD108, Brooke Road and Norwood/Dr. Bird Road.
- Provide the critical rural setting for the Sandy Spring village center right at the edge of the village.

Finally, the importance of the rural entry experience was recognized in the 1980 Plan and remains an important theme of the 1998 Plan. (p. 29)

It is the hope of the SSARPC Steering Committee that the Board will not approve the Preliminary Plan for the Thomas Building unless it is scaled back from what is currently proposed so that it reflects the traditional small scale village design called for in the Master Plan.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Layton and Donna Selden
Co-chairs Sandy Spring Ashton Rural Preservation Consortium