

PRELIMINARY PLAN HEARING BEFORE THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

**Goddard School (Thomas Building), DPA 08-2**

January 14, 2010

Dear Chairman Hanson and Members of the Planning Board:

My name is Dawn Dolan and I am a resident of Ashton Village directly adjacent to the Aston Village Center at the intersection of Rte 108 and New Hampshire Avenue. This is about a block from Sherwood High School and less than a mile from the Goddard School / Thomas Building site.

Not native to this area I came to DC for college and then moved to Montgomery County to raise a family in 1982. Nine years ago we chose to live in the Aston area in attempt to leave the crush of development in Bethesda – especially the constant noise, lights, and traffic congestion.

I have found that the choice to live here is a very deliberate decision for most residents. It is the pastoral setting and the accessibility of community and neighbors, while still within close reach of any number of services. In many areas this would be considered a “bedroom” community. We are passionate about maintaining this quality of life, preserving our rural setting, and strictly adhering to the intent of the Master Plan.

This particular site presents problems concerning the size of its development, the size and proximity of the parking lot to the adjacent townhouses, as well as the traffic impact on our already overtaxed roads. Specifically a 296-car lot seems excessive both in size and for logistic purposes. At this time there is no commercial space in Ashton/Sandy Spring of this scale.

Currently, when I attempt to leave my complex during peak hours, I am only able to maneuver right turns onto 108 without waiting 15-20 minutes for a “break.” I am unable to use Norwood Road to gain access to Dr. Bird for the same reason and must drive to the light at Dr. Bird in order to finally turn left to travel towards Layhill Road. A lot designed for this level of increased traffic at the intersection of Norwood & 108 will exacerbate this problem.

There is also a concern regarding the distance of the access between the planned site and the traffic light. Traffic to and from Olney, as well as to and from the large number of schools in a very constrained area has already created a tunnel of congestion between the lights on 108 at Norwood and Brooke Roads – and trying to gain access from Norwood to 108 requires quite a bit of patience.

The proposed proximity of approximately 78' between the parking lot and the adjacent townhouses is alarming. Living about 100 yards from Route 108 and the Ashton Village Center requires me to place three layers of window covering in my bedroom to keep transient light out at night. A night game at Sherwood (which cannot be seen from my home) significantly adds to this. At the proposed distance, providing a screen of trees at the Goddard School site will not alleviate this issue for adjacent residents.

We hope you will consider the impact on our community and neighbors as you consider your final disposition on the Goddard School (Thomas Building) plan. This is a rare jewel, one of the last respites, within Montgomery County and we truly wish to find a smart and reasonable compromise that supports the goals of all those involved. Thank you.

Respectfully,  
Dawn T. Dolan