

Weaver, Richard

From: SteveHowie@aol.com
Sent: Wednesday, May 19, 2004 1:49 PM
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Subject: Re: Cabin Branch recommendation

I have read through the comments provided by Chuck Faller, and have re-reviewed the Master Plan with respect to them.

For the most part, the comments are positive and reflect what I feel would likely be the view of many, if not most, members of the Association.

However, I am concerned regarding one aspect of this pre-preliminary plan that seems to take variance from an important stated objective of the Master Plan, which explicitly stated the importance of providing a transition to the rural community of Boyds immediately to the south of Cabin Branch. This transition has been faithfully carried out through the proposed parkland on the "Reid Farm" (i.e., Tommy Linthicum's farm) south of West Old Baltimore and 121. This buffer presents a visual transition necessary to protect the character of the surrounding community.

As an explicit part of this transition, the Master Plan called for a landscape buffer along route 121 north of West Old Baltimore Road, and also recommended housing densities between West Old Baltimore and the original proposed intersection of Newcut Road extended with 121 to remain in the 2-4 du/acre. Combined, these would provide a smooth transition from the rural agricultural/low density communities into the higher density Clarksburg area.

It appears that these aspects of the Master Plan recommendations have been severely eroded: the current proposed pre-preliminary plan suggests residential development along 121 that challenges any suggestion of transition. The aforementioned 2-4 du/acre area includes high-density attached units--on high elevations that will dominate the vista of the approaches from the south. This will have a jarring visual impact that will undo much of the hard work that has gone into this specific aspect of the Master Plan.

As Chuck mentioned, the comments that he submitted have not been approved by the Clarksburg Civic Association general membership or executive committee.

The comments in this particular email, as well, are my own.

Clarksburg Civic Association
Planning Committee
March 28, 2004

The Clarksburg Civic Association (CCA) Planning Committee recommends approval of the Cabin Branch Preliminary Plan. John Carman has presented numerous Cabin Branch plans to the CCA Planning Committee over the last several years. Mr. Carman has also attended the CCA general public meetings during the past several years and has listened to the the members of the CCA express what is important to them in Clarksburg. It is the opinion of the CCA Planning Committee that these principles are fairly represented in the Cabin Branch Preliminary Plan.

The Cabin Branch area is to be a pedestrian and bicycle friendly village served by transit. This is a principle that is used throughout Clarksburg. To help make an area pedestrian friendly, there needs to be traffic calming built into the design. We fill this has been accomplished with the neighborhood grid pattern typical of traditional smaller towns along with the traffic circles and ovals on the arterial and State highways (MD 121). Note also that the arterial roads are boulevards with parallel parking which is also a traffic calming device and also allows a pedestrian to more easily and safely cross the road. Note that the ovals provide traffic calming by inserting a small curve into the road, but without narrowing the lanes. The curvature is not a circle, so there is no circulating pattern that a car needs to yield to before entering, but the curvature is the engineering device that should automatically slow traffic without adding danger. Since there is no narrowing of the lanes, this is also a safe for bicycling, which are also legal users of the road. One additional benefit is the interior of the oval provides space for landscaping. This can be used as a garden to beautify Cabin Branch. The interior of circles can also be used for such purposes.

Another traffic calming device designed into the Cabin Branch Preliminary Plan is numerous intersections with the arterial roads. This does provide intersections closer than each 600 feet. In fact, the distance between intersections is only 300 feet. This should be approved. The design feature also promotes the grid pattern that has been requested by both the Clarksburg Master Plan and the CCA.

The Cabin Branch Preliminary Plan provides for pedestrians by providing sidewalks. Pedestrians will be encouraged to walk to their neighborhood centers and parks. This preliminary plan provides small commercial centers and parks separated by no more than one-half mile. Therefore, most homes in Cabin Branch should be within a quarter mile of these centers and parks, which is easy walking distance for the average person.

There are numerous bicycle trails provided for in the Cabin Branch Preliminary Plans. These trails were required by the Clarksburg Master Plan and should be kept in this Preliminary Plan. However, the roads and streets in this plan should also be safe for bicycling due to the bicycle friendly traffic calming devices. As you know, the Master

Plan of Bikeways is currently undergoing revision. In this revision, Clarksburg Road (MD 121) should become a dual bikeway facility. It is expected that it will have both an associated bicycle path and either wide outside lanes or bicycle lanes. Please ensure the bicycle facilities that are likely to be approved in the Master Plan of Bikeways is also included in the Cabin Branch Preliminary Plan, there is an automatic procedure for amending the Cabin Branch Preliminary Plan, and/or require all future site plans to be in compliance with the soon to be update Master Plan of Bikeways.

The CCA Planning Committee supports the Cabin Branch Preliminary Plan's street network. We support the alignment for New Cut Road Extended where it stops prior to the environmental area. People going west on New Cut Road Extended can then go to the right to reach Clarksburg Road or to the left to reach Old Baltimore Road, then right to reach Clarksburg Road. This is a suitable compromise to leave intact the environmental buffer to the west.

The CCA Planning Committee approves the proposed intersection at New Cut Road Extended and I-270. As the Cabin Branch Preliminary Plan shows, there is an abbreviated cloverleaf that still allows traffic to enter I-270 from either direction on New Cut Road Extended and go either direction on I-270. The same is true in reverse for traffic getting off of I-270. The exit ramps from I-270 have square intersections with New Cut Road Extended and traffic lights at these intersections. This is excellent design. This is a safe design for bicycles and pedestrians using New Cut Road Extended since there will not be high speed merging traffic as with a traditional clover leaf. The proposed design controls traffic and makes it easier for drivers to look both ways and comprehend what traffic exists on New Cut Road Extended before proceeding. This design also minimizes the impact to the environmental area present at that future interchange.

The CCA Planning Committee is in favor of a major medical center such as a hospital being present in Cabin Branch. We are told that the present hospitals at Shady Grove and Frederick are being used to and beyond capacity already. A hospital in Clarksburg is very much needed for the future. For a hospital to be possible in Cabin Branch, an interchange is also necessary at I-270 and New Cut Road Extended. This would give a hospital quick access to the areas north and south of Clarksburg via I-270. New Cut Road Extended would give this future major medical center quick access to the rest of Clarksburg.

There is a residential neighborhood being proposed in the southwest corner of Cabin Branch. We note that Park and Planning Staff at one time wanted a street just east of Clarksburg Road be parallel with Clarksburg Road. The CCA Planning Committee is not in favor of such a street since that would promote pedestrian unfriendly and bicycle unfriendly high speed traffic through the neighborhood. The CCA Planning Committee supports the current Cabin Branch Preliminary Plan in a series of intersecting streets that also have curves that allow parallel traffic with Clarksburg Road, but has the traffic calming devices of intersections, turns, and curves built in. Such a network of streets will also provide a safe street for bicycling through the neighborhood. The Planning

Committee is also in favor of the bicycle path across the history area and school site at the northern end of this neighborhood to allow access to the school and across this area to the neighborhood north of the school site.

The CCA Planning Committee is in favor of this preliminary plan in placing parking lots as much as possible behind commercial buildings. This allows safer pedestrian access to commercial establishments and is more attractive than having parking lots between the streets and the commercial entrance ways.

The CCA Planning Committee is in favor of the MXPZ zoning near I-270. This is the zoning that allows the flexibility to the developer to provide a small town atmosphere with mixed housing and commercial properties that are pedestrian friendly. The MXPZ zoning also provides an extra review of the development plans for this area.

The CCA Planning Committee requests that the Cabin Branch area has numerous shade trees, perhaps as many as possible. This will promote the small town atmosphere of this community and have the added benefit of being environmentally sensitive.

In summary, the CCA Planning Committee supports the Cabin Branch Preliminary Plan. The Cabin Branch Preliminary Plan appears to provide for the goals that were stated in the Clarksburg Master Plan with modern and innovative solutions. This should provide a community that is relaxing to live in and a place visitors will want to come back to.