



Montgomery County

FOREST CONSERVANCY DISTRICT BOARD

A Member of the Maryland Association of the Forest Conservancy District Boards

October 7, 2019

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board Members: Casey Anderson, Natali Fani-Gonzalez, Gerald Cichy, Tina Patterson, Partak Verma at MCP-Chair@mncppc-mc.org and

Montgomery County Board of Appeals members: John Pentecost, Chair, Katherine Freeman, Bruce Goldensohn, Mary Gonzalez, Jon Cook at BOA@montgomerycountymd.gov.

Re: **Zoning Application # H-131, Kingsview Station**

Dear Board Members,

The Montgomery County Forestry Board has learned that there is a zoning application in process for the subject property which is the home of the current Montgomery County Champion Black Cherry Tree (*Prunus serotina*). *We are writing to recommend denial of this application as currently designed.*

The tree on the property measures 95' high, with a canopy spread of 70' and a trunk circumference of 160", for a total point value of 273.

We have learned that the applicant has stated that this tree is in very poor shape, therefore not worth saving. They plan to take it down to accommodate their development plans of townhouses and some retail.

Several Montgomery County Forestry Board members have visited the champion black cherry tree in the last few months. A Board member who is a certified arborist found that, although this tree has some obvious problems, it remains a "magnificent tree"- and very well worth addressing and saving.

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Our arborist went on to say that “the tree could be pruned to remove the defective limbs with a high likelihood of failure.” Therefore, given the age of the tree and the 95’ height of the tree, any development on the site would mean incorporating the tree into the required open space to avoid future risk of falling limbs.

Our County Champion trees are not just winners of a contest for the sake of it. Our grand old trees not only awe, inspire and comfort our citizens, they provide food, shelter and nesting for many species of wildlife. Additionally, they more than carry their weight by absorbing more carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide and carbon monoxide and producing up to 600 times more oxygen than a 12” circumference tree.

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The fact is, several of Montgomery County's champion trees are in poor structural condition (as are many of our senior citizens). Restricting development around them is the best option to preserve their beauty and their contributions.

We are writing to ask that this up-zoning request be re-designed in order to preserve this Champion Black Cherry Tree. We also recommend that you engage the services of a tree risk assessment-qualified arborist to fully probe the lower stem and upper crown to determine the tree's structural quality.

Thank you for considering the input of the Montgomery County Forestry Board in this matter. Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

Most sincerely,

MONTGOMERY COUNTY FOREST CONSERVANCY BOARD

James W. Harris, Chair

Joli McCathran, Treasurer and
Champion Tree Team Leader

PS, our Board proposes exploring an alternative to the developer/applicant and the County: given the high density development surrounding this tract, this green and forested property seems ideally located for a neighborhood park which could offer a walking trail, play area, picnic areas and fenced off/restricted area to feature the champion black cherry tree as a centerpiece of "Black Cherry Park at Kingsview". Our organizations worked together in the past to create the Goshen Elm Conservation Park – perhaps we could do it again.

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