

Item 7 - Correspondence

From: [Folden, Matthew](#)
To: [Karen Storms](#)
Cc: [Dickel, Stephanie](#); [Hisel-McCoy, Elza](#); [Kronenberg, Robert](#); [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: RE: Concern about placement and size of proposed Housing Opportunities Commission Headquarters
Date: Tuesday, October 13, 2020 10:45:15 AM

Ms. Storms,

Thank you for your reply. By copy of this email, I am forwarding your concerns to the Planning Board Chair's office for distribution to the Commissioners ahead of Thursday's public hearing and inclusion in the public record. I will also forward your email to HOC and the applicant team so that they can respond to the points you raised as part of their forthcoming site design and architectural mandatory referral submittal.

Staff looks forward to reviewing the details of that mandatory referral and further coordination with you and your neighbors.

Respectfully,

Matthew Folden, AICP | Planner Coordinator
DownCounty Planning Division
301.495.4539 | matthew.folden@montgomeryplanning.org



WE'VE MOVED!
THE NEW PARK AND PLANNING HEADQUARTERS IS NOW LOCATED AT
2425 REEDIE DRIVE, WHEATON, MD 20902

From: Karen Storms <karenstorms@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 13, 2020 10:28 AM
To: Folden, Matthew <matthew.folden@montgomeryplanning.org>
Subject: Re: Concern about placement and size of proposed Housing Opportunities Commission Headquarters

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Mr. Folden,

Thank you so much for your reply. I am deeply appreciative that my concerns are included in your staff report. It shows my government is listening, and that means a lot.

I know that many of the residents of the Octave are worried about the impact of the proposed HOC headquarters on our home, but for whatever reason, did not make their concerns known as I did. Several of us participated in the Public Community Meeting in August, and many voiced their concerns there, but I fear those concerns did not reach you, and to my knowledge there is no record of the issues we brought in that meeting.

I do hope to listen to the public hearing, however depending on what time it happens, I might

not be able to attend or testify.

So, I'd like to condense my main concerns here:

I am not opposed to a building on this plot, and I am in fact happy that such a vital community service will be my next door neighbor! However, it is the overall height and footprint of the building that worries me.

- I fear that the narrow alley between our buildings will make living on that side of the Octave undesirable, will lower our property values, create higher turnover in the building, and possibly lead some owners to default on their condo fees.
- I worry about how we will handle the trucks used for move-ins & outs, repair vehicles and other contractors either for the building as a whole or contractors working directly for a resident. Scheduling these sorts of necessities may become onerous if not nearly impossible to coordinate in such a tight space. This would undoubtedly not only adversely affect the Octave, but also the HOC as their services might also be hampered by unforeseen trucks in the alley.
- I worry about the safety of residents who are walking into the building after dark - I for one would likely never use the back doors after dark as I would feel very vulnerable and hidden walking between the HOC & the garage. But this also means my walk from the Metro will be longer, as I will have to walk around the HOC to the front doors.
- Finally, and this is the least of my concerns, our roof deck will now look out onto HVAC units and the side of the HOC building, making one of our nicest amenities undesirable. Who would want to hang out on a roof deck like that? Again, this will make the Octave a less desirable place to live and could affect property values adversely.

Again, I deeply appreciate your attention to my concerns. I sincerely hope that changes can be made to the design of the HOC building that will alleviate at least some of my worries.

I hope to be a good neighbor to the HOC, and that the HOC will be a good neighbor to us.

sincerely,

-Karen

From: Folden, Matthew <matthew.folden@montgomeryplanning.org>

Sent: Monday, October 12, 2020 12:12 PM

To: karenstorms@hotmail.com <karenstorms@hotmail.com>

Cc: Kronenberg, Robert <robert.kronenberg@montgomeryplanning.org>; Dickel, Stephanie <Stephanie.Dickel@montgomeryplanning.org>; Hisel-McCoy, Elza <elza.hisel-mccoy@montgomeryplanning.org>

Subject: RE: Concern about placement and size of proposed Housing Opportunities Commission Headquarters

Ms. Storms,

Thank you for your comments on the Site Selection Mandatory Referral application for the proposed HOC Headquarters Office Building. I have addressed each of the points you raised as part of my staff report analyzing the site selection and have copied the responses below for your reference.

- **The proposed commercial use is not acceptable given the predominance of residential uses in the surrounding vicinity.**

The blocks surrounding the Site contain a great diversity of uses, both public and private. These include several multifamily apartment buildings and townhouses, but also include a Montgomery County Courthouse, a YMCA Multi-Generational Center, and numerous office buildings one block away along Spring Street, Georgia Avenue, and Colesville Road. As the Sector Plan identified this area of downtown Silver Spring as appropriate for “transitional mixed use,” the location of the HOC Headquarters use will readily fit into the surrounding uses.

- **The building is too large for the Site and will negatively impact the adjacent Octave Condominium building, located immediately to the east of the subject property, and will create a closed-in, claustrophobic feel on Second Avenue.**

Staff appreciates the concern about the proximity between the existing Octave building and the future HOC Headquarters building. As with any infill development in downtown Silver Spring, staff will review the forthcoming Mandatory Referral for building and site design with this issue specifically in mind.

- **The location of the building will make entry into the Octave Condominium less safe by eliminating the clear line of sight present within the existing parking lot.**

Again, Staff appreciates the concern regarding safe access both to the selected Headquarters site and the associated impact on the Octave. Staff will be reviewing this and other issues at the time of both the forthcoming Mandatory Referral application for building and site design and subdivision application.

Additionally, the staff report is available in its entirety here:

https://montgomeryplanningboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Item7_201015_MR2021002-Staff-Report.pdf

If you are interested in participating in the virtual public hearing this week, please register to testify no later than noon on Wednesday at: <https://montgomeryplanningboard.org/meetings/signup-to-testify/>

Please contact me if you would like to discuss this project further.

Respectfully,

Matthew Folden, AICP | Planner Coordinator
DownCounty Planning Division
301.495.4539 | matthew.folden@montgomeryplanning.org



WE'VE MOVED!

THE NEW PARK AND PLANNING HEADQUARTERS IS NOW LOCATED AT
2425 REEDIE DRIVE, WHEATON, MD 20902

From: Karen Storms [<mailto:karenstorms@hotmail.com>]

Sent: Wednesday, August 19, 2020 8:43 PM

To: Smith, Will Senator <Will.Smith@senate.state.md.us>; Charkoudian, Lorig Delegate <Lorig.Charkoudian@house.state.md.us>; Moon, David Delegate <David.Moon@house.state.md.us>; Wilkins, Jheanelle Delegate <Jheanelle.Wilkins@house.state.md.us>

Subject: Concern about placement and size of proposed Housing Opportunities Commission Headquarters

Greetings Senator and Delegates,

Thank you for taking the time to read my email.

I am deeply concerned about the proposed new **Housing Opportunities Commission headquarters** planned for the corner of 2nd Ave & Fenwick Ln in Silver Spring. It is slated to be built right next to The Octave condominiums, and will certainly reduce the property value of those units facing the new building, if not the entire building, and perhaps the Alexander House & Elizabeth House apartments across the way as well.

The proposed building is simply too large for the parcel size given its proximity to a residential building in a primarily residential block.

Below are my main areas of concern:

1. This is primarily a residential block within an urban vicinity. I'm sure when this parcel was originally zoned, it was zoned for commercial use & office buildings. The Octave condos were repurposed from an old office building. But nearly all the surrounding buildings are now residential. The land use that would have been appropriate when the area was largely commercial, is no longer acceptable.
2. The building proposal (attached) is too large for the site, given the residential use of the surrounding land. Nearly every square inch of land will be covered by the new building's footprint, crowding the Octave, and leaving only a cramped one-way driveway between it, the Octave, and the adjacent parking garage. The Octave residents' windows on the East side of the building would look directly at a wall, blocking almost all of the natural light from entering their units. Even the view from the Octave's roof terrace would be blocked by the HOC building.
3. Not only does the new building encroach too close to the Octave condos, it will create a crowded corridor between it and the tall apartment buildings across from it on 2nd Ave. (Alexander House & Elizabeth House) This will create a closed-in, claustrophobic

feel on this block of 2nd Ave.

4. This will also make entry into the Octave less safe from the rear doors (facing 2nd Ave). Currently, the parcel is used as a surface parking lot. There is clear sight from the road to the doors from both 2nd Ave & Fenwick Lane. If the HOC building is built as planned, residents returning to the Octave after business hours will be completely blocked from view if they enter from the back door. Even if they use the front doors, when walking from the South on 2nd Ave (as you would come from the Metro), they would be quite visually isolated in that one block stretch of 2nd, making getting to the front door a little less safe as well. It would feel a bit like a wide alley instead of an urban residential street.

While I am sympathetic to the scarcity of land in Silver Spring for new development, this simply seems like a bad fit. It is more than a little ironic that building the new Housing Opportunities Commission headquarters on this plot would so adversely impact the homeowners and renters already living there.

with great appreciation,

-Karen Storms (she/her)

1320 Fenwick Lane, #400, SS MD 20910

240-281-3415

<HOC_Headquarters_Office_Building_-_Mandatory_Referral_-_
_Public_Community_Meeting.pdf>