

## Item 8 - Correspondence

**From:** [Elizabeth Comisarow Taylor](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [Pratt, Jamey](#)  
**Subject:** For Ashton Village Sector Plan Work Session #3 December 3, 2020  
**Date:** Friday, November 27, 2020 5:02:20 PM

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

Dear Montgomery County Planning Board,

While I have been a resident of various parts of Montgomery County for most of my life, I am now residing in a small home just north of Ashton, MD. I have followed the history of the county over many the years, as well as the future ideas for development. I do not resist the idea that Montgomery County population will continue to grow, and there needs to be increased residential opportunities. I *do* resist the developers request for increasing building heights, lengths and quantity of homes. Please for the rural and historic village of Ashton, MD, keep the developer to the current limits of building heights at 40 feet at mid-roof line, residential and commercial building lengths at 80 feet or less, and a FAR of .5.

There is nothing about this location that supports large development— road and commuter restrictions, little public transportation (one bus line running approximately 4 hours per day), and very few pedestrian friendly walking or biking areas. On the contrary, the on going and historic agricultural traditions and remaining historic homes would better situate this location for tourism, provided it were to remain more rural, and looking less like the cookie cutter homes of recent years that I've seen developed in this county.

Over developing the Southeast corner of Rt. 650-New Hampshire Avenue and Rt. 108-Olney Sandy Spring/Ashton Road would be a sad loss of opportunity to preserve one of our few remaining living history villages. There are currently quite an impressive number of relatives of the original settlers of this area that still maintain their family roots here in Ashton and the surrounding areas!

Please also keep in mind that the *Southwest* quadrant of that intersection is currently being developed with 20 plus town homes. I fear very many more on the *Southeast* quadrant would devastate the already crowded commuter situation especially with a high school just a fraction of a mile west of the intersection.

There are few remaining truly rural and historic areas in this county, I believe we need to preserve them, and preserving Ashton from over development, could be a novel and important step in that direction.

I know your job is difficult. I hope you can resist the temptation to approve overdeveloping this site, and help preserve it's living historic character.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Comisarow Taylor  
19050 New Hampshire Avenue

Brinklow, MD 20862

**From:** [rjoego@aol.com](mailto:rjoego@aol.com)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [county.council@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:county.council@montgomerycountymd.gov); [Pratt, Jamey](#); [Duke, Roberto](#); [Berbert, Benjamin](#)  
**Subject:** Ashton Village Center Section Plan  
**Date:** Monday, November 30, 2020 2:25:59 PM

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Thank you for this opportunity to comment further on the Ashton Village Center Section Plan as you gear up for the third work session. I am hopeful that as you come to the end of this cycle, you can agree on a final plan that recognizes the historically rural nature of our Ashton community and that does not open the door to development that not only changes that nature, but also adds to traffic congestion and increases the risks for drivers turning in and out of existing communities along route 108.

In particular, I have the following comments and concerns:

The density of the proposed development for the southeast quadrant and the size and type of buildings shown in the images proposed by the development in the October bus tour reflect a more suburban community.

Moreover, because FAR is allowed only in increments of 0.25, increasing FAR above the staff-supported 0.50 would necessarily be approval of a FAR of 0.75. Once granted, there is no requirement or guarantee that the developer will limit development to the discussed FAR of 0.55 if the final plan grants the 0.75 level. The resulting level of density does not reflect a rural community, but, again, reflects a more suburban community.

Although it is reasonable that there should be some flexibility in design elements and building materials, the type of images provided by the developer appear to be stock suggestions and would not bind the developer to any particular result. Other commenters are on record about the issues that have arisen with Thomas Village and Ashton Market developed without a community advisory committee. Such issues likely could have been resolved if there had been an implementation Advisory Committee with a meaningful voice in the development of those areas. Accordingly, I strongly encourage the Planning Board to provide for a community Advisory Committee with meaningful, legal authority to participate in the planning and implementation of the southeast quadrant so that all stakeholders' concerns about the proposed

development may be thoughtfully discussed and appropriately addressed before the final plan is submitted to the Planning Board. The benefit of an Advisory Committee will outweigh potential time and cost, if any, that the developer suggests.

As has been noted by other commenters, parking already is at a premium in Ashton. The proposed southeast quadrant development does not alleviate this problem, but further exacerbates it. Further, the developer proposes to solve the parking problem by building stacked parking under the proposed new commercial space. Not only is this type of parking truly not a rural design, but it is very questionable whether it would even be adequate to address the new commercial and residential needs (recognizing that most households have two, if not three cars) resulting from the proposed development.

The increased traffic resulting from the proposed development will overburden the currently heavily burdened roads in Ashton/Sandy Spring. Already residents in, and workers needing access to, communities along route 108 have difficulty entering and exiting those communities. The proposed increased commercial and residential development in the southeast quadrant will add to these problems. Moreover, it follows reason that the increase of traffic, and the difficulty of making turns into and out of communities along those roads during heavily trafficked time periods, will result in a significant increase in traffic accidents.

Finally, the County's Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan states that the County should "use design to shape Montgomery County as a collection of world-class towns, cities and rural villages, with neighborhoods that celebrate their history, geography, and culture." It also states that the County should "use form-based codes, design guidelines, and other innovative regulatory tools to ensure future developments across the county respond to their context through massing, architecture, public spaces, landscape, and street design." It is unclear how increasing the allowable density and building heights or reducing the detailed design guidelines achieves these goals. Nor is it clear how limiting community engagement will result in a plan that will be benefited from collaboration.

In sum, please keep the FAR at the level proposed by the planning staff, include the level of detail for the design guidelines as proposed and provide for a community Advisory Committee with the authority it needs to be a true partner in the development of Ashton.

Thank you for your consideration.

Elizabeth Osterman

**From:** [Zabe Thornton](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [Pratt, Jamey](#)  
**Subject:** Ashton sector plan  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 1, 2020 12:24:49 AM

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Dear Planners,

I have just read through the letters for your session on Thursday, and am both heartened and discouraged. Heartened because there were so many more letters from additional people echoing my thoughts and hopes for keeping development in the SE corner to something lower, smaller, and in keeping with a rural environment. Discouraged because so much of the developer's asks are for taller, bigger, more urban structures that seem so out of step with our community and the recommendations of your planners. Do the proposed structures look rural to you?! The planning staff put in so much time, as did members of the community, to make a plan that would reflect appropriate scale and design and our hopes and desires for the place we live in. They showed us lovely, appealing designs. Their recommendations are already a compromise - allowing more density than fits my personal concept of rural, but I hope that you will reward their work by respecting their recommendations. I don't know how many of you managed to visit my town, but there has been a lot of development recently - the CVS (not a lovely design), Thomas Village (no green space and out of scale for its neighborhood) and the coming Ashton Marketplace (which shoehorns 20 townhouses and 4 businesses in what used to be a restaurant and a vegetable stand). You can perhaps understand a certain concern that 150 new dwellings will not enhance an already clogged intersection in a area with very little public transportation. Especially since the road improvements that would support safety need to come from the State Highway folks, who are broke as it is.

At the community meetings I attended there was general agreement that what residents hoped for in the Master Plan was support for a more walkable, bikeable community, with more green space and design that maintains our unique historical and countryside character. Environmental concerns also came up, and we hope that green building and planning would play a significant role in what is to come, like dark sky lighting and permeable surfaces, siting that uses passive solar, etc., etc. I will be listening for you to show some understanding that Ashton shouldn't be just another overbuilt part of Montgomery County. And please include lots of good landscaping that invites citizens outside.

Yours,

Elizabeth Thornton




40 year farm dweller a mile up the road from the parcel under discussion

Be a force for good

**From:** [James Meehan](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair; Pratt, Jamey](#)  
**Cc:** [keepashtonrural@gmail.com](mailto:keepashtonrural@gmail.com); [ellencoleman141@gmail.com](mailto:ellencoleman141@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** Re...Correction  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 1, 2020 12:27:31 PM

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PLEASE note "level at 45 feet"  should read...  
...level AT 40 feet  in my first sentence!!!  
But am sure you caught my error before I did ...

-----Original Message-----

From: James Meehan <jimboesq@verizon.net>  
To: mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org <mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org>; jamey.pratt@montgomeryplanning.org <jamey.pratt@montgomeryplanning.org>  
Cc: keepashtonrural@gmail.com <keepashtonrural@gmail.com>; ellencoleman141@gmail.com <ellencoleman141@gmail.com>  
Sent: Tue, Nov 24, 2020 4:38 pm  
Subject: Ashton/SE corner development issue(s)...

In keeping Ashton rural, I strongly urge you all to keep the height level at 45 feet, the density at FAR 0.5, and the limit of 80 feet for commercial & residential buildings along RT 108 and New Hampshire Ave! Stay with your recommendations and let the developer use his "flexibility" on paint colors, landscaping design, number of residential vs commercial space, parking, etc...

Your/our main issue is the safety concerns and traffic congestion that anymore development will do to that 108/NH Ave intersection! Rt 108 is already one of the most dangerous roads in Maryland! As far back as 2008, both the State and County spoke about no new development at the SE corner without significant major road improvements! Why has this issue not been addressed yet; is it because the developer has agreed to pay for intersection improvements? Taking away 2/3 into/out driveways at the gas station, yet adding 3/4 more driveways along 108/NH Ave (not counting the new Ashton Market entrance) will not help traffic flow nor provide safer pedestrian situations. Speaking of foot traffic...as a 38 yr educator I can assure you that the HS kids will cross when/where they need to depending on their class/lunch/pm activity schedule. Still another issue is the Porter Rd/108 entrance into the 7-11 lot...will they eventually match up? With too many left turns on 108 without turn signals, how many more turns can that intersection handle, not to mention the quickly disappearing right hand merge lane going south on NH Ave.

I suggest the Board take a driving "field trip" (doesn't even have to be at rush hour) both in the am & pm going N/S on NH and E/W on 108 to experience what traffic would be like at the intersection with more congestion. As a 22+yr resident of Ashton, I am not exaggerating that back ups on 108 & NH will extend to Sherwood Elem/Ednor Rd/Mink Hollow Rd/Brinklow if the Board does not act prudently and with foresight.

Finally, again I strongly suggest a moratorium on the SE/Sandy Spring Bk site until effects of the Ashton Market/Porter Rd development can be properly evaluated with respect to traffic, road, and pedestrian safety...not to mention the developers' adherence to all county codes and guidelines...

...Please have a safe & happy THANKSGIVING!!!

