

## **Item 6 - Correspondence**

**From:** [Patricia Johnson](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [Folden, Matthew](#)  
**Subject:** Build the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 15, 2020 5:28:53 PM

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

The Sector Plan shows a Gateway Park for the new Willett Branch Stream Valley Park at the corner of River and Ridgefield Roads where the new Kensington Senior Living development is proposed. As part of the Westwood II Center redevelopment, the developer should be required to deliver a fully landscaped park with a water feature incorporating the Kenwood Tributary where it enters the Willett Branch. It will be a little oasis of green in an area that is almost entirely paved over.

The formation of the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park and naturalization of the creek is the major amenity in the Sector Plan. While Montgomery Parks has stated that they will not begin working on the new Park until all the parcels are acquired, the community should not have to wait so long for this bit of green. Building the gateway park must be part of this new development.

Thank you for your work on this and your commitment to parks in Westbard,

Patricia and David Johnson  
5301 Oakland Road  
Chevy Chase, Maryland 20815

**From:** [Sarah Farnsworth](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [Sarah Morse](#)  
**Subject:** Support a new park for the Westwood II Center Development,  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 15, 2020 5:32:24 PM

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

Dear MCP-Chair,

I am writing in support of the request that MCP begin to build the park conveyed to it under the development agreement for Westwood II Center Development concurrently with the construction of the Assisted Living Center on Westbard Avenue near River Road. It will be cost saving to prepare the greenway conveyed to the park service now in the expectation of the future conveyance of the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park land and to conduct the initial building of the Greenway while the Assisted Living building is going up. By doing the work now, building the small water feature where the Kenwood Tributary joins the Willett Branch and creating a small waterfall in the gateway park when the building is constructed and the road is re-aligned, will save future funds and traffic headaches as it will be difficult to do later as the Kenwood Tributary runs under the road. The work needs to be done concurrently with the building of the Assisted Living Facility to save money and future traffic aggravation if it is left to be done later.

Thank you.

Sarah Farnsworth  
4922 Greenway Drive  
Bethesda

**From:** [Wong](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#); [Folden, Matthew](#)  
**Subject:** Westwood Center II project comment  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 15, 2020 5:55:31 PM

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

I write to request that the Planning Board require that, as part of the Westwood II Center redevelopment project, the developer should be required to deliver a fully landscaped Gateway Park for the future Willett Branch Stream Valley Park.

The Sector Plan contemplates a Gateway Park for the new Willett Branch Stream Valley Park at the corner of River and Ridgefield Roads where the new Kensington Senior Living development, which will be almost entirely paved surfaces. The developer should be required to deliver a 100% complete, fully landscaped park with a water feature incorporating the Kenwood Tributary where it enters the Willett Branch. It will be a little oasis of green in an area that is almost entirely paved over.

It is unacceptable that the Gateway Park be left in an un-landscaped state until all the parcels along the Willett Branch are acquired. This could take years. Accordingly, because this is the principal "amenity" provided by this project, the developer should be required to deliver a complete, fully landscaped Gateway Park at the same time as the current building.

Thank you for considering this comment.

Best regards,  
Brian Wong, Green Acres

**From:** [mikeljfrazee@soleng.com](mailto:mikeljfrazee@soleng.com)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [Wright, Gwen](#)  
**Subject:** Build the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 15, 2020 6:43:05 PM

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

The Sector Plan shows a Gateway Park for the new Willett Branch Stream Valley Park at the corner of River and Ridgefield Roads where the new Kensington Senior Living development is proposed. As part of the Westwood II Center redevelopment, the developer should be required to deliver a fully landscaped park with a water feature incorporating the Kenwood Tributary where it enters the Willett Branch. It will be a little oasis of green in an area that is almost entirely paved over.

The formation of the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park and naturalization of the creek is the major amenity in the Sector Plan. While Montgomery Parks has stated that they will not begin working on the new Park until all the parcels are acquired, the community should not have to wait so long for this bit of green. Building the gateway park must be part of this new development.

Thank you for your work on this and your commitment to parks in Westbard,

Mikel Frazee  
5149 Westbard Avenue, Bethesda, MD 20816

**From:** [patriciamikel@verizon.net](mailto:patriciamikel@verizon.net)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [Folden, Matthew](#)  
**Subject:** Build the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 15, 2020 6:46:54 PM

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

The Sector Plan shows a Gateway Park for the new Willett Branch Stream Valley Park at the corner of River and Ridgefield Roads where the new Kensington Senior Living development is proposed. As part of the Westwood II Center redevelopment, the developer should be required to deliver a fully landscaped park with a water feature incorporating the Kenwood Tributary where it enters the Willett Branch. It will be a little oasis of green in an area that is almost entirely paved over.

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Thank you for your work on this and your commitment to parks in Westbard,

Patricia Eanet  
5149 Westbard Avenue, Bethesda, MD 20816-1413

**From:** [John Frink](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [Wright, Gwen](#)  
**Subject:** Build the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now. Why wait?  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 15, 2020 7:14:06 PM

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

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Please stop the pave it over status.

The formation of the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park and naturalization of the creek is the major amenity in the Sector Plan. While Montgomery Parks has stated that they will not begin working on the new Park until all the parcels are acquired, the community should not have to wait so long for this bit of green. Building the gateway park must be part of this new development.

Thank you for your work on this and your commitment to parks in Westbard,

John Frink  
4507 Cumberland ave  
Chevy chase md 20815

Sent from my iPad

**From:** [Susan S](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [Dickel, Stephanie](#); [Folden, Matthew](#); [Pfefferle, Mark](#); [Hisel-McCoy, Elza](#); [Mortensen, Paul](#); [Kronenberg, Robert](#); [Gatling, Tsaiquan](#); [Cole, Jai](#); [McArdle, Erin](#); [Quattrocchi, Dominic](#); [Paul, Susanne](#); [Frank, Andrew](#); [LYNNE BATTLE](#); [Jenny Sue Dailey](#); [Marnie Shaul](#); [Sarah Morse](#); [lgjreg@hotmail.com](#); ["Cynthia Green"](#); [Patricia D Johnson](#)  
**Subject:** Testimony for the Kensington/Westbard Planning Board Hearing December 17, 2020  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 15, 2020 7:43:05 PM  
**Attachments:** [Westbard Study Group Testimony on Kensington-Westwood II 12-17-20.pdf](#)

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

Dear Chair Anderson and Members of the Planning Board,

Attached please find the testimony of the Westbard Study Group for the Planning Board hearing on the Kensington/Westbard project to be held December 17, 2020.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Susan Spock  
5206 Albemarle Street  
Bethesda, MD 20816  
301.229.4501  
[susanspk@verizon.net](mailto:susanspk@verizon.net)

Jenny Sue Dunner  
5315 Dorset Avenue  
Chevy Chase, MD 20815  
301.657.3568  
[jennysuedailey@aol.com](mailto:jennysuedailey@aol.com)

Lynne Battle  
5157 Westbard Ave  
Bethesda, MD 20816  
301.365.3218  
[lbattle273@gmail.com](mailto:lbattle273@gmail.com)

Marnie Shaul  
5509 Uppingham ST  
Chevy Chase, MD 20815  
301.913.5973  
[marnieshaul@gmail.com](mailto:marnieshaul@gmail.com)

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**Testimony on the Staff Report on the Westwood Shopping Center Preliminary Plan Amendment  
#12017017A and Kensington of Bethesda Senior Living Site Plan #820200200**

**Submitted by the Westbard Study Group for the Planning Board Hearing 12.17.20**

The Westbard Study Group has already submitted comments on the plans at issue that we hope you will review. This testimony addresses a few of those comments that we—and others—have raised several times, but were not addressed in the Staff Report. We therefore respectfully request that the Board review them to ensure that the Kensington project will further the Willett Branch Greenway Park, and not impede it, as required in the Preliminary Plan p.8.

It feels a bit ironic that this project has arisen at the same time—in fact this hearing is on the same day—that the Planning Board is working on Thrive Montgomery 2050, which promotes the Complete Communities concept. When the Board approved the Westbard Sector Plan it envisioned Westbard as, in effect, a Complete Community. The Willett Branch Greenway with its naturalized stream was central to that vision, linking the Westbard shopping district to the Capital Crescent Trail, so that walkers and bikers could easily access the area's shops and services without a car. The entire area was meant to provide better and more equitable access, vibrant social interaction, an improved environment, and a healthier lifestyle.

**Since the inception of the Westbard Sector Plan, the County Council, Planning Board, Parks and Planning Staffs, and community have shared one common goal: to see the completion of the Greenway to provide needed connectivity and a sense of place to the Westbard district and make it a model for the county and the country.**

We are therefore distressed that the Kensington project, located at the very Gateway to the Greenway, will not be furthering this goal in any substantial way. The building is large, extending farther into the stream buffer than the current building on the site, reducing the land for the park. The back of the building is a parking garage, rather than the cafes and shops that were initially envisioned. Worst of all, the park itself remains a very distant dream.

**We urge the Board to take the long view. Please contemplate the importance of placemaking on this site for the future of the park and the area as a whole. Consider the precedent your decision is setting here—not only for Westbard—but for all other future “Complete Community” projects that may arise. Unless connective parks and trails are elevated in importance—are given the support they require in the planning process—they will not be built.**

**1. The construction of a water feature where the Kenwood tributary flows into the Willett Branch should be a condition of the Kensington Site Plan**

The Kenwood tributary runs along River Road, and goes under Ridgefield Road (later to become the realigned Westbard Avenue), where it is then channeled into the Willett Branch on the other side. Ever since it began planning the Greenway, the Parks Department intended the tributary to surface after crossing the road and then become a waterfall down the steep hill into the stream at the beginning of the park on the Kensington site. The Appendix to the Westbard Sector Plan drafted in 2015 and finalized in 2016, p.65, makes this clear in its recommendations for the Westwood II site [typos corrected]:

- Daylight the currently piped tributary to Willett Branch.



- Provide artful conveyance for the daylighted tributary channel. Full buffer for the tributary is not recommended at this location.
- Exposing channel would provide environmental enhancement over existing condition.
- The drop in elevation from existing tributary to the mainstem channel bottom would allow for elements such as a waterfall.
- Site would benefit from the ambient sounds of water.
- Allowing development nearby, such as a pocket park for seating/dining at this particular setting, provides a dramatic/dynamic landscape feature celebrating the watershed.

Although we again raised the water feature at the Board's hearing on the road abandonment on November 19, 2020, and the Chair stated it would be reviewed at this hearing, the Staff Report does not fully address it. The Report p.22-23 merely notes the Parks Department's request that the Kenwood tributary be daylighted, and states that the Applicant will not comply.

**Here is the critical point: when Westbard Avenue is realigned, it will be constructed directly on top of the Kenwood tributary, which would have to be rechanneled. This would be the perfect time—and probably the only practicable time—to daylight the water feature and create the waterfall.**

The water feature is a critical piece of the park. It not only provides the benefits listed above; it is a signature element of the Greenway, as it would make its Gateway more appealing, inviting, and memorable. Further, as the Greenway will not be completed for many years, construction of the water feature is a signal to the community that the county is behind making the Greenway a reality and that the Westbard developers are doing something to benefit the community at large.

Kensington asserts that because this is a standard method project, it should only be required to dedicate the land. The Staff Report describes the preparation of the land for transfer to the Parks Department as if it is a tremendous burden, and that we should expect nothing more. This is not persuasive, for the following reasons:

1. The land dedication benefits Kensington. This land is completely useless to Kensington: it is steep and in the flood plain of the naturalized Willett Branch, so it cannot be used as a building site. Once the land is dedicated, Kensington will be able to stop paying taxes on it, and will not have to maintain it, even though the park will primarily benefit its residents, staff, and visitors.
2. Although Kensington must remove hardscape, grade the land, and take other steps to prepare the surface for transfer to Parks, that is not unusual. Any land dedication requires proper preparation, and in any case, much of that work would be necessary here in order to construct the residential care facility on the very narrow site.
3. The dedicated land is not just a contribution from the Kensington site, but the Preliminary Plan required it as a contribution from the entire 23-acre Westbard development, along with the realigned road. It therefore does not solely burden Kensington.
4. Kensington's lawyer has frequently cited Regency's expected \$500,000 contribution to the park as a reason to avoid contributing further to the Greenway. Be very clear: this sum has nothing to do with the Kensington site or the Kensington company. It was not mentioned in the Preliminary

Plan, but was only a condition of the Site Plan for the construction of the commercial building across the street on the Westwood I property.

The Greenway has always been part of this project, and the Board's intention that developers participate in its creation has always been clear. Therefore, we strongly believe that the developers should be required to daylight the Kenwood tributary and create the water feature at the same time that they prepare this site and construct the realigned Westbard Avenue.

## **2. Kensington should provide some plantings and seating in its open space until the Greenway is built**

The Staff Report also allows Kensington to (double) count the dedicated land to satisfy its 10% open-space requirement. While the patch of green on the property currently contains trees, flowers, and shrubs, the Staff Report states that when it transfers the property to the Parks Department, Kensington need only cover it with grass seed. The zoning ordinance 59.6.3.6.C.1 requires more than a grassy area to satisfy 10% open space requirement. Shade and seating are needed.

The construction of the Greenway will not occur until most, if not all, of the many essential parcels are assembled. As you might imagine, this is disappointing to the community. In the interim, we would like to see at least small shrubs and plantings, seating, and shade in this Gateway area to make it more attractive and provide a usable open space for what may be years until the park is completed. This should be a relatively minor cost, and it seems petty that Kensington is unwilling to provide it, particularly as its own staff, residents, and visitors will benefit most.

## **3. Bikers and walkers on the Greenway will be hindered by the bottleneck at the southeast corner of the Kensington building**

We join the Parks Department and other community members in asking that the proposed building be set back around the southeast corner—another issue the Staff Report did not address. As currently designed, the Greenway trail will not only be very steep as it passes directly adjacent to the building at that corner, but will also be narrow. In order for pedestrians and bikers to pass comfortably and safely, more space is needed. We do not understand why a setback was not conditioned in the Staff Report, when bike and pedestrian safety and convenience are so paramount for this Board.

In a related issue, we still do not understand how fire access will take place on the southern and eastern sides of the building. To the south, the building will be constructed up to the property line with the American Plant business. The fire plan shows access from that adjacent property, where there is currently a fence. What is the concept? Will there be—or is there—an easement allowing access? Will the fence be removed? Could any later construction on that property impede fire access to the Kensington building? We have no idea. Similarly, fire access to the building on the east side will have to be on park property, which is not ideal. See the fire access shown on the plan here:

<https://eplans.montgomeryplanning.org/UFS/31880/91557/13-FDA-820200200-001.pdf/13-FDA-820200200-001.pdf>

## **4. 100% stormwater management (SWM) is needed on Westbard Avenue to protect the park**

Proper SWM is critical along the realigned Westbard Avenue, as it will directly affect the health of the Willett Branch and the success of the park. Untreated water will pollute the park and adversely affect the wildlife there.

We joined the Little Falls Watershed Alliance to raise this issue at the November 19 road abandonment hearing, and the Chair said it would be better raised at this December 17 hearing instead, but the Staff Report does not address it.

First, note that the Sector Plan p. 58 states: "To maximize potential benefits, SWM treatment should be done on-site wherever feasible, and the use of waivers should be limited." In the Preliminary Plan p.3, the Board referred to DPS approval of the road dated 2/27/19, which states:

you must continue to look for ways of providing additional ED and structural treatment, with the goal of achieving full stormwater management compliance, and reflect these in the stormwater management concept revision to be submitted at the time of Site Plan application. Any proposed treatment located within the public right-of-way must be acceptable to MCDOT.

At the hearing on the road abandonment, the Applicant's lawyer dismissed any further need for SWM, stating that there was no way to accommodate SWM "uphill." That is absurd. The developer should ensure that as little untreated stormwater as possible would flow downhill into the newly created Willett Branch park, possibly damaging the park and its environment. The abandoned triangle of land noted in the abandonment hearing as Lot 24, Block D (shown on Figure 6, p. 16 of the Kensington Staff Report) is a perfect place for SWM, and approval should be conditioned upon utilizing it for that purpose.

There are also other ways to treat the road runoff, including using Silva cells instead of tree boxes, installing permeable pavement wherever possible, and creating more infiltration with environmental site design making use of the medians and sidewalk areas for micro-bioretenment. We ask that the Board ensure that as much as possible is being done for SWM on the road.

We are pleased that the Staff Report shows that some of our other concerns have been met. But we would very much appreciate having the Board address these overlooked issues, which are critical to the success of the Gateway and public enjoyment of the area.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Sincerely,

Susan Spock  
Lynne Battle  
Jenny Sue Dunner  
Marnie Shaul

**From:** [Lynn Gallagher](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [Folden, Matthew](#)  
**Subject:** Build the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 15, 2020 9:13:32 PM

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

The Sector Plan shows a Gateway Park for the new Willett Branch Stream Valley Park at the corner of River and Ridgefield Roads where the new Kensington Senior Living development is proposed. As part of the Westwood II Center redevelopment, the developer should be required to deliver a fully landscaped park with a water feature incorporating the Kenwood Tributary where it enters the Willett Branch. It will be a little oasis of green in an area that is almost entirely paved over.

The formation of the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park and naturalization of the creek is the major amenity in the Sector Plan. While Montgomery Parks has stated that they will not begin working on the new Park until all the parcels are acquired, the community should not have to wait so long for this bit of green. Building the gateway park must be part of this new development.

Thank you for your work on this and your commitment to parks in Westbard,

Lynn Gallagher  
5710 Gloster Rd  
Bethesda MD  
20816

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Rynnie Cotter](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [Folden, Matthew](#)  
**Subject:** Build the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 15, 2020 9:41:21 PM

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

Good evening,

I'm writing tonight in regards to the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park.

The Sector Plan shows a Gateway Park for the new Willett Branch Stream Valley Park at the corner of River and Ridgefield Roads where the new Kensington Senior Living development is proposed. As part of the Westwood II Center redevelopment, the developer should be required to deliver a fully landscaped park with a water feature incorporating the Kenwood Tributary where it enters the Willett Branch. It will be a little oasis of green in an area that is almost entirely paved over.

The formation of the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park and naturalization of the creek is the major amenity in the Sector Plan. While Montgomery Parks has stated that they will not begin working on the new Park until all the parcels are acquired, the community should not have to wait so long for this bit of green. Building the gateway park must be part of this new development.

Thank you for your work on this and your commitment to parks in Westbard.

Rynnie Cotter  
5026 Allan Road  
Bethesda, MD 20816

**From:** [Richard-Carol SCHLEICHER](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [Folden, Matthew](#)  
**Subject:** Build the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 15, 2020 10:21:28 PM

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The Sector Plan shows a Gateway Park for the new Willett Branch Stream Valley Park at the corner of River and Ridgefield Roads where the new Kensington Senior Living development is proposed. As part of the Westwood II Center redevelopment, the developer should be required to deliver a fully landscaped park with a water feature incorporating the Kenwood Tributary where it enters the Willett Branch. It will be a little oasis of green in an area that is almost entirely paved over.

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Thank you for your work on this and your commitment to parks in Westbard,

Richard and Carol Schleicher  
6103 Wynnwood Rd  
Bethesda, MD 20816

Sent from my iPad

**From:** [Robyn Miller-Tarnoff](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Subject:** Willet Branch Greenway Gateway Park  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 15, 2020 11:50:20 PM

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

Dear Planning Board,

I am writing to show my support for a landscaped Gateway Park with a water feature for the Willet Branch Greenway as part of the development requirement.

As a homeowner in the Westgate neighborhood, the Greenway is important to me. I feel strongly that the gateway park should be built at the same time as the new development. I don't want to wait 10 or 20 years for our new park. The pandemic has underscored the importance of outdoor space. Please build the park now.

Additionally, I encourage you to require the developer to provide landscaping and a water feature for the Kenwood tributary when they remove the asphalt and regrade the property before conveying it to Parks. It won't cost them much, but the value to our community is huge.

Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Robyn Miller-Tarnoff  
5102 Newport Avenue  
Bethesda, MD 20816

**From:** [DJS](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [Folden, Matthew](#)  
**Subject:** Build the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now  
**Date:** Wednesday, December 16, 2020 8:11:55 AM

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

The developers of the proposed senior living facility that is adjacent to the Kenwood Tributary of Willett Branch should be required to finish a water feature with landscaping as part of their building project.

The senior facility will benefit, and the neighborhood will benefit. We all need greenspace.

The formation of the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park and naturalization of the creek is the major amenity in the Sector Plan. While Montgomery Parks has stated that they will not begin working on the new Park until all the parcels are acquired, the community should not have to wait so long for this bit of green. Building the gateway park must be part of this new development.

Thank you for your work on this and your commitment to parks in Westbard,

YOUR NAME Deborah Schumann  
ADDRESS 6804 Tulip Hill Terrace, Bethesda, Md. 20816



**From:** [Jill Lucas](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [Folden, Matthew](#)  
**Subject:** Build the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now  
**Date:** Wednesday, December 16, 2020 8:27:28 AM

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Thank you for your work on this and your commitment to parks in Westbard,

Jill Lucas  
5315 Albemarle Street  
Bethesda, MD 20816

**From:** [Page Winstead](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [Folden, Matthew](#)  
**Subject:** Build the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now  
**Date:** Wednesday, December 16, 2020 9:16:37 AM

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

Dear Planning Board,

My grand children live next to the Willett Branch and love to play in the stream. I am urging you to please vote on landscaping the park at Westwood II sooner rather than later in this project. We have a treasure in this creek system and need to allow people to use green space now more than ever with covid and with the increased appreciation we all have gained for our natural environment.

The Sector Plan shows a Gateway Park for the new Willett Branch Stream Valley Park at the corner of River and Ridgefield Roads where the new Kensington Senior Living development is proposed. As part of the Westwood II Center redevelopment, the developer should be required to deliver a fully landscaped park with a water feature incorporating the Kenwood Tributary where it enters the Willett Branch. It will be a little oasis of green in an area that is almost entirely paved over.

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Thank you for your work on this and your commitment to parks in Westbard,

Page Winstead  
5505 Kirkside Drive  
Chevy Chase, MD 20815

**From:** [Pamela Raymont-Simpson](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [Folden, Matthew](#)  
**Subject:** Build the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now  
**Date:** Wednesday, December 16, 2020 10:38:28 AM

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Thank you for your work on this and your commitment to parks in Westbard,

Pamela Simpson  
125 Grafton Street  
Chevy Chase, MD

Sent from Pamela's iPhone

**From:** [Elliot Maxwell](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [Wright, Gwen](#); [emaxwell@erols.com](mailto:emaxwell@erols.com)  
**Subject:** Build the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now  
**Date:** Wednesday, December 16, 2020 10:38:43 AM

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

I am writing to support the development and landscaping of the gateway park by the developer so that it will be completed at the same time the building is completed. While I recognize that the full development of the greenspace will not be completed for some time, the developers will have the benefit of the building when it is complete—but the community will have virtually no green environmental benefit for many years. Building the gateway park must be part of this new development.

I have lived in this area for close to 30 years and have walked on almost every street and by-way. We need green space now and new places to enjoy the outdoors. We should have the benefits of this green space at the same time the developers have the economic benefits which they will achieve with the completion of the building.

One reason for living in Montgomery County is the hope that enlightened regulation will ensure that economic development goes hand in hand with the fostering of the environment and the creation of an enhanced community. Your work is crucial to this hope.

Elliot E. Maxwell

4701 Willard Ave Apt 1736

Chevy Chase, MD 20815

**From:** [Sarah Morse](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [Riley, Mike](#); [Paul, Susanne](#); [Dickel, Stephanie](#); [Wright, Gwen](#); [Folden, Matthew](#)  
**Subject:** LFWA Comments Kensington of Bethesda Senior Living Site Plan #820200200  
**Date:** Wednesday, December 16, 2020 11:00:50 AM  
**Attachments:** [LFWA Comments Site Plan 820200200 December 14 2020.pdf](#)

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

Please find attached comments from the Little Falls Watershed Alliance regarding Kensington of Bethesda Senior Living Site Plan #820200200 and Westwood Shopping Center Preliminary Plan Amendment #12017017A

Thank you for your attention to this,  
Sarah Morse  
Little Falls Watershed Alliance

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Sarah Morse

*Support your local watershed group. Visit Little Falls Watershed Alliance online - [www.LFWA.org](http://www.LFWA.org)  
Find us on [Facebook!](#)*



# LITTLE FALLS WATERSHED ALLIANCE

## EDUCATION - ACTION - STEWARDSHIP

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December 14, 2020

Testimony on the Staff Report on the  
Westwood Shopping Center Preliminary Plan Amendment #12017017A and  
Kensington of Bethesda Senior Living Site Plan #820200200  
Planning Board Hearing 12.17.20

Little Falls Watershed Alliance (LFWA) is an environmental stewardship group for the Little Falls watershed located in the Bethesda Chevy Chase area and upper NW DC. We were founded in 2008 by a group of neighbors who wanted to ensure that the beautiful natural areas in our watershed were protected and improved so they would continue to delight residents for generations to come. From our first meetings in neighborhood living rooms, we have grown to more than 2,800 members and have tackled trash, habitat restoration and other issues related to the health of our parks and natural areas.

In 2013, we were excited to support a planning department proposal to naturalize the Willett Branch and create a new stream valley park in the Westbard Sector. After many, many hours of meetings, creek tours, and public outreach, the park became the central unifying theme of the Westbard Sector Plan approved in 2016 and a central element for all new development in the Westbard Sector. The Kensington of Bethesda property is the second parcel to be developed under the new Sector Plan. The first parcel, Westbard Self Storage, conveyed parcel 177 (located on the banks of the Willett Branch) to Parks and great care was taken in designing the interface with the storage facility and the new Park. Further, the storage building is to be built entirely outside the stream valley buffer.

Kensington of Bethesda Senior Living is the first “residential property” to submit redevelopment plans. It will be located at the Gateway to the new Willett Branch Greenway and the units, and its common areas will overlook the new park – a huge amenity for the residents. When the graffiti is gone and the concrete is removed, the residents will have front row seats for the sparkling new creek and natural areas. What is now something that can best be described as “urban blight” will be replaced by green space, trees and a lovely trail paralleling the waterway. The Gateway Park will welcome walkers and bikers and provide a shady respite from the surrounding urban buildings. It will provide valuable outside open space for the residents of the new building and the community. **It will be the first example of the wonderful vision that THRIVE has for our County - a walkable urban area with a commitment to physical, mental and environmental health.**

It is important that we get this right. This property sets a precedent for development to come.



Below, to refresh your memories are pictures of the Willett Branch as it is today at the Westwood Center II.



**Figure 1: Kenwood Tributary outlet to the Willett Branch at River Road, adjacent to the Westwood Center II parking lot**



**Figure 2: Looking downstream from the Westwood Center II parking lot towards American Plant.**



And below is the vision for the new Willett Branch, described in the Sector Plan is “the crown jewel of the Westbard area.” The pictures on the left are the Willett Branch, on the right are pictures from actual urban stream restorations in other parts of the country.

### Vision: Turn This....



### ....Into This



REAL ESTATE MANAGEMENT SECTION – PARK DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

3

The park, the naturalized stream and the trails will serve generations of county residents. Hopefully our children’s grandchildren will be enjoying the fruits of our labor. The whole project is a crown jewel for Montgomery County. Building it is an awesome responsibility. Our comments are offered with this in mind.

### **Micro-bioretentions are a Good Choice for Stormwater Management**

We are very happy to see that the applicant was able to achieve 100% stormwater management using Environmental Site Design (ESD) and is not employing any structural methods. We would like to commend them for their extensive use of micro-bioretentation planters. These planters will allow the stormwater runoff to soak into the soil and recharge the ground water, preventing flooding and helping to maintain a healthy base flow for the new creek. We were very pleased to see that the applicant is using 24-inch underdrains. These large gravel bases for the planters will further improve the infiltration rates. In addition, the planters will provide native vegetation to the site and will look attractive alongside of the building.

While we agree with the DSP comment that applicant should try to find more places to use green roofs, we do not recommend that green roofs replace micro-bioretentations. While green roofs treat stormwater runoff, they do not allow it to infiltrate. Maximum infiltration should be the goal of this project as it is right up to the 100-year flood plain. It only takes one big storm to show what happens when there isn’t enough infiltration in the stormwater management system. We support the DPS request to see how the runoff from the green roofs will be tied into the micro-bioretentation planters. This is an important step in the treatment plan and allows the green roof runoff to soak into the ground.



## **The Gateway Park with a Water Feature and Landscaping Must be a Condition of Approval**

The Sector Plan shows a Gateway Park for the new Willett Branch Greenway at the corner of River and Ridgefield Roads. This park will be a little oasis of green in an area that is almost entirely paved over. It will create a sense of place for the area and serve as a powerful educational tool for the community on the history of Westbard. With the naturalized stream, it will be a model for the nation on urban stream restoration. We understand that the entire park cannot be created with this development – all of the parcels are not in place. **But, we need the Gateway Park with a daylighted Kenwood Tributary, landscaping and benches, now. If there is one thing that the Pandemic has shown us, it is the value of outdoor spaces for our physical and mental health.**

An important part of the Sector Plan is daylighting the Kenwood Tributary where it meets the Willett Branch and creating a waterfall-like feature at that juncture. This is not a hard sell if you recall the Figure 1, the picture of the confluence of the waterways. The best time to create this feature is concurrent with the road alignment and the construction of the new building. The Kenwood Tributary runs under River Road, and will have to be redirected when the road is moved. It runs under the asphalt of the parcel being conveyed to the Park. The area will already be torn up and the heavy equipment needed to dig out the creek will be onsite. **The incremental costs of daylighting while the road is being constructed and the pavement is being removed is small. The benefits to the community are huge.**

The staff report argues that conveying the land to the Parks Department graded and covered with grass seed is all that the applicant should be required to do to meet their obligations for open space; we respectfully disagree. The staff report implies, in fact, that the applicant is maybe even overly generous with the donation, citing the square feet donated (27,888) and the requirement for open space (a mere 3,226). This is specious. The land dedication is not that significant when one examines the usefulness of the property being donated. In truth, the applicant reaps great benefits from the donation as

- 1) the dedicated land is unbuildable as it is entirely in the flood plain and in the stream buffer,
- 2) once conveyed, Kensington will not have to pay taxes or do maintenance on this land, and
- 3) **most important, Kensington will get a beautiful County Park right in their backyard.** Their facility has no open space. The park is their backyard - a place for their residents and employees to enjoy a picnic, walk or break. They have designed their building with outside terraces so that their residents can sit and have a meal or snack with a view of the park. A park and stream at their back door add considerable value to the property as countless hedonic studies have shown. It will be a selling feature in years to come.

Kensington has much to gain from the new park. They can and should do better for the community. It is in both theirs and the community's interest that this park be created as soon as possible. **We ask that the developer be required to create the water feature and provide landscaping for this park as a condition to satisfying their requirement for providing open space.**

## **Walking/Biking Path is Not Inviting: The New Building Should be Moved Back from the Property Line**

This is not the building we were promised or the park we expected. The Sector Plan showed a building with shops and cafes abutting the trail, places to sit, and trees on either side of the Greenway trail. In the Preliminary Plan, we were shown a mixed-use residential building that transitioned seamlessly with the park. Needless to say, it is quite disappointing that an assisted-living facility is going there instead. However, that does not excuse the design or the huge walls right up to the trail's edge, without even a shoulder to stand on to let people pass.

The building's parking garage is on ground level and there are 54-foot windowless walls along the trail, as the applicant has asked for a transparency waiver. With the 90-foot Kenwood Building on the other side of the creek, these walls create a scary canyon-like corridor, not an inviting Gateway Park. The path itself may also feel dangerous. **With the steep banks of the creek on one side and the huge building walls on the other side, it is easy to envision a situation where pedestrians are pushed up against the wall or down the steep bank by people passing aggressively.** It is hard to imagine fire and rescue vehicles navigating the building.

Parks create a sense of place and community. They are necessary for our physical, mental, and environmental health. Just as the entrance to the Capital Crescent Trail in Bethesda is wide and inviting with plazas and a double path for the first 100 yards, so should it be for this park. **Moving the building away from the new trail is a priority and must be a condition for approval.**

### **100% Stormwater Management (SWM) for Westbard Avenue Should be Required**

The issue of stormwater management for the new road was raised at the November 19 road abandonment hearing. At that time, Chair Anderson said that it was not relevant for the abandonment hearing, but that it could and should be handled at the December 17 hearing. The road was given an 84% waiver for stormwater management despite the fact the runoff from the road will flow directly into the Willett Branch. If there is one source of rainwater runoff that should not be given a waiver, it would be the road directly uphill from the new creek. Toxic chemicals and debris from the road surface are a major source of pollution. And as we all have observed in recent storms, the volume and velocity of stormwater runoff entering a creek will seriously blow out the its banks. It is not in the best interest of anyone to have the health of our new creek compromised this way by stormwater. The new creek will serve us for generations. It needs to have the best start possible.

In 2018, LFWA hired an engineering firm to study the preliminary plans and offer suggestions on how to achieve 100% stormwater management on the site without reducing the footprint of the development. They found that with use of more micro-bio-retentions, permeable pavement and other small ESD, that a large waiver was not necessary. We submitted the study to both the applicant and the Department of Permitting. The applicant was still granted the waiver, but was instructed by DPS

to look for ways of providing additional ESD and structural treatment, with the goal of achieving full stormwater management compliance, and reflect these in the stormwater management concept revision to be submitted at the time of Site Plan application. Any proposed treatment located within the public right-of-way must be acceptable to MCDOT.

At the hearing on the road abandonment, the Applicant's lawyer dismissed the possibility of doing SWM on the abandoned road pieces stating it wouldn't work to treat the stormwater as it was "uphill." That shows a regrettable lack of understanding of stormwater management. Uphill water is treated and infiltrated so that it does not flow downhill and into the creek. The more water that can be infiltrated uphill, the less to treat further down in the treatment train. The abandoned triangle of land noted in the abandonment hearing as Lot 24, Block D (shown on Figure 6, p. 16 of the Kensington Staff Report) is a perfect place for SWM.

The applicant must also consider other ESD including installing permeable pavement wherever possible on roads, sidewalks, and parking areas, and using the medians and sidewalk areas for micro-bioretenion. **We ask that the Board ensure that more is being done for SWM on the road, including requiring that applicant to use the abandoned road site for stormwater management.**

## **Silva Cells for Street Trees**

We would like to remind the Board the Preliminary Plan specifically requires that the developer use Silva Cells or similar modular suspended pavement systems instead of tree boxes. This would apply to the street trees shown by the new road.

*F. The Streetscape shall utilize techniques such as Silva Cells, continuous soils panels or other techniques subject to MCDPS approval, which will maximize the available spaces for root growth and/or SWM features as applicable, as shown on the Certified Site Plan. (Staff Recommendations, 10, f – page 13)*



**Cross section of Silva Cells**

The use of suspended pavement, rather than traditional tree boxes, encourages maximum tree growth and survival. The suspended pavement allows the tree roots to spread out under the pavement, which allows the roots to function properly. The modular building blocks can contain unlimited amounts of healthy soil beneath the paving while supporting traffic loads and accommodating surrounding utilities. The high quality, uncompacted soil allows the trees to grow, as well as manages the rate, quality and volume of stormwater. We would like to see this type of planting system across the entire county.

**More than anything, we want the Willett Branch Greenway Park to be the jewel of Montgomery County** envisioned by the Sector Plan. We want it to thrive and delight future generations. We want the country to see what Montgomery County can do for urban stream development. But we need every project to be the best it can be for this to happen. We have one chance to get this right for the Gateway Park.

Thank you for your work on this,

Sarah Morse  
for the Little Falls Watershed Alliance

**From:** [Patricia Johnson](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Subject:** Comments: Kensington Senior Living (Kensington of Bethesda)  
**Date:** Wednesday, December 16, 2020 11:58:53 AM  
**Attachments:** [Untitled 3.pdf](#)

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December 16, 2020

By email to [mcp-chair@mncppc-md.org](mailto:mcp-chair@mncppc-md.org)

Chair Casey Anderson  
Montgomery County Planning Board  
2425 Reddie Drive, 14th floor  
Wheaton, Maryland 20902

Re: Comments on Kensington of Bethesda (Westwood II), Preliminary Plan and Site Plan, Planning Board Agenda of December 17, 2020, Item 6

Dear Chair Anderson and Commissioners:

I would like to share my concerns on the aspects of the Kensington of Bethesda Site Plan Application (820200200).

This building, known as Kensington of Bethesda is to be constructed on the edges of two residential neighborhoods; Springfield and Kenwood (across River Road). The structure is to encompass 106,000 square feet and be 75 feet in height. That height actually is higher at 82 feet when measured at different grades. This will be a residential care facility with 155 beds. The architecture purports to blend with the residential areas in proximity with features of a New Urbanist Style , Roman Classist embellishments, Parisian Town Roofscapes and Pergolas and Trellises to soften its appearance near normal sizes single family homes.

In fact, this is a huge dense building that looms over any homes that are near which are at regulated heights of 35 feet or less. It is also at The Gateway to the Willett Branch Greenway which was to be a regional focus of the Westbard Sector Plan. The architects drawings shows a large expanse of green in the area that faces River Road which is designated the Gateway to the Park and Trails. It is of concern to many that there is no mention of landscaping, or creation of any park like setting in the specs of this development. What we are presented with is a huge hulking block of a building whose “architectural embellishments” are dwarfed by its volume.

Also, in this time of a pandemic, when seniors account for 30% of the 300,000 + deaths of Covid in this country, congregate living has to redesigned with more open space. The number of balconies or plazas architecturally depicted are too small to create a healthy environment. Outside space should be reconsidered. and be of optimal importance. Which brings into context the lack of green space around the building. Also there is a lack of circulation around the property given the fact that the property is in the stream buffer and the building is right up

against the property line at the American Plant property. The building should be moved back from the Parkway conveyance property line to make sure the Greenway trail will be wide enough for comfortable use and a safe experience for trail users that are on bikes or walking.

The situation of the building should be modified and improved so that the park envisioned can actually be seen by the residents. There has to be landscaping planned so that that area of parkland conveyance has a modicum of an urban park including a lawn, landscaping , shaded seating and pathways. This green urban park will be the first thing people see as they drive up the newly aligned Westbard Ave to the Westwood Shopping Center development. This building, as it is planned, looks like it will sit in cement and gravel .

Where the building is situated right next to the proposed two way trail is narrow and the walls loom up like a cavern. The building needs to be moved back and landscaping of trees, bushes and plantings need to soften the tall monotonous walls that will loom over pedestrians as they use the Greenway.

The building turns its back on the Park and the proposed grills are not an architectural element that will ease the looming features of those walls. The lack of variety can be changed with windows and green walls alternating to break up the solid hulking structure. Also architectural changes in color and brick patterns can help this structural unattractive appearance.

The building needs to be set back from the property line, landscaping needs to be introduced and where the solid length of wall that borders the trail, there should be variations that ease the impact of this looming structure on those that circulate around it. Also to reiterate, more open space in the building itself with more balconies and the ability to be actually sitting outside in green space is a healthy solution for those that must be confined to one of those 155 beds. A healthy lifestyle, as mentioned so often in Thrive Montgomery has a strong emphasis on greenspace. This unattractive building could benefit from that premise.

Sincerely,

Patricia D. Johnson  
5301 Oakland Road  
Chevy Chase, Maryland 20815