

Item 6 - Correspondence

From: [Emily Stuchiner](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Folden, Matthew](#)
Subject: Build the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now
Date: Tuesday, November 24, 2020 10:51:16 AM

[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,

Emily
Chevy Chase

From: [Cathy Martens](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Wright, Gwen](#)
Subject: Build the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now
Date: Tuesday, November 24, 2020 11:32:42 AM

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

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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.

Catherine C. Martens
4928 Sentinel Drive
Bethesda MD 20816

From: [Greta S](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Folden, Matthew](#)
Subject: Build the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now
Date: Tuesday, November 24, 2020 12:12:36 PM

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

This is a form letter - but it's important! In these pandemic times, we need more outdoor space!

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,

Greta Swanson
Chevy Chase, MD

From: [Alexa Stevens](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Folden, Matthew](#)
Subject: Build the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now
Date: Tuesday, November 24, 2020 1:03:20 PM

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

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

Alexa Stevens
Chevy Chase

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Carolyn Sherman](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Folden, Matthew](#)
Subject: Build the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now
Date: Tuesday, November 24, 2020 1:21:19 PM

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

To the Chairman and Planning Commission:

I'm writing in support of **completing the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now**! The community needs it, and there is no justification for waiting.

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. As Montgomery County tax-paying residents, we cannot imagine much that we would rather have our taxes support than parkland in this concrete-filled area.

Carolyn Sherman

4924 Sentinel Dr. #306

Bethesda, MD 20816

From: [Ursula Kelnhofer](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Folden, Matthew](#)
Subject: Build the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now
Date: Tuesday, November 24, 2020 4:53:28 PM

[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,

Ursula Kelnhofer
4940 Sentinel Drive, Bethesda, Md. 20816

From: [Leslie Wharton](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Folden, Matthew](#)
Subject: Build the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now
Date: Wednesday, November 25, 2020 10:39:39 AM

[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. **Not only is this essential to the integrity of our community and the protection of wildlife, the greenspace is critically important for the mental well-being of the seniors living in the development. Studies show that a natural environment reduces stress and improves the health of the elderly. I know, I am 69 years old and I find the trees, birds, squirrels and other wildlife in this area essential for keeping a positive and healthy outlook.**

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,

Leslie Wharton
4978 Sentinel Drive #501
Bethesda, Maryland, 20816

From: [Folden, Matthew](#)
To: ["Cynthia Green"](#)
Cc: [Dickel, Stephanie](#); [Hisel-McCoy, Elza](#); [Paul, Susanne](#); ["board@springfield20816.com"](#); [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: FW: Kensington of Bethesda--Comments from the Springfield Civic Association
Date: Wednesday, December 2, 2020 7:46:44 AM
Attachments: [SCA Comments to Planning Department1Dec2020.docx](#)

Dr. Green,

Thank you for your testimony. By copy of this email, I am forwarding your letter to the Planning Board Chair's office for inclusion in the public record.

Respectfully,

Matt

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

Please note that I will be out of the office from Monday, December 21, 2020 – Friday, January 1, 2021

From: cpgreen@verizon.net <cpgreen@verizon.net>
Sent: Tuesday, December 1, 2020 10:47 PM
To: Folden, Matthew <matthew.folden@montgomeryplanning.org>; Dickel, Stephanie <Stephanie.Dickel@montgomeryplanning.org>; Pfefferle, Mark <mark.pfefferle@montgomeryplanning.org>; Hisel-McCoy, Elza <elza.hisel-mccoy@montgomeryplanning.org>; Paul, Susanne <susanne.paul@montgomeryparks.org>
Cc: board@springfield20816.com
Subject: Kensington of Bethesda--Comments from the Springfield Civic Association

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

Dear Planning and Parks Staff,

On behalf of the Springfield Civic Association, I am submitting the attached statement to be included into the public record related to the upcoming hearing regarding the Kensington of Bethesda. We appreciate all the work you and your staff have done to review and enhance this plan.

Thank you.

Cynthia Green, SCA President

Springfield Civic Association

December 1, 2020

Comments on the Kensington of Bethesda and related issues regarding the Westwood Redevelopment

The Springfield Civic Association (SCA) represents a residential community of 650 homes surrounding the Westwood redevelopment area. Following are our major concerns with Regency Centers' current plans.

Issues related to the realigned Westbard Avenue

1. **Due to safety concerns, a traffic light is needed at the intersection of Ridgefield Road/5500 block of Westbard Ave. and the new realigned Westbard Ave.** Although the May 17, 2018 Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) traffic warrant studies determined that the traffic volume did not merit a traffic light, we are concerned about safety issues if there is no traffic light at this intersection. Although the speed limit is 25 miles per hour all along Westbard Ave., drivers consistently exceed the speed limit along this section. Currently, drivers heading toward River Rd. barely slow down to make a right-hand turn at the traffic light on the corner of the Westwood II building. Without a traffic light at the new intersection, drivers aspiring to go out to River Rd. will need to cross the traffic coming from River Rd. toward the shopping center and Massachusetts Avenue.
2. **Without a traffic light or even a walkway, pedestrians are expected to cross five lanes of traffic to reach the 23 Ride On bus and school buses.** During rush hour, with cars streaming non-stop on Westbard Ave., it too dangerous to cross the street. The omission of a traffic light and a crosswalk is not consistent with the county's important Vision Zero pedestrian initiative. Without a working traffic signal, we can predict that accidents will occur with the increased truck delivery and pedestrian traffic. There have been several accidents at the intersection of Ridgefield Rd. and Westbard Ave. due to students running to catch the school bus. In another case, a young biker was hit by a car at that intersection. It is a busy corner.
3. **The absence of a traffic signal creates a significant barrier to the neighborhood's use of public transportation**—i.e., the Ride On bus and the WMATA bus to the Metro. During rush hour, with cars streaming non-stop on Westbard Ave., making it too dangerous to cross the street, individuals will have to drive to the Metro or to work. The absence of a traffic signal undercuts the County's interest in having people use public transportation.
4. Another hazard is that the road curves and dips down the hill near the Kensington Senior Living building, **creating a blind spot as vehicles drive toward River Rd.** The delivery truck area is below the curve, blocking the sight line for drivers, bicyclists, and walkers to see the trucks in advance as they come out of the building. Although the Department of Transportation did a Sight Study of the trucks coming out of the building, **there was no Sight Study done of the**

vehicles passing the delivery area on the realigned Westbard Ave. With a traffic light at this intersection, the delivery trucks could emerge from the delivery entryway safely.

5. MCDOT's revision in the Preliminary Plan dated March 4, 2019 did allow for a second study to review the intersection. It states "9. The applicant must submit a signal warrant analysis to MCDOT for the future realigned Westbard Avenue intersections with Ridgefield Road and Street A (Westbard Circle) at least six months after and no later than one year after the issuance of the use and occupancy certificate for the commercial building (lot 1 block A) and realigned Westbard Avenue is opened. Prior to record plat for the commercial building, the applicant will bond for the traffic signal at both intersections. If MCDOT determines that a signal is warranted, then the applicant will construct and install the traffic signal(s) in accordance with MCDOT specifications. . . . 13. At the time Westbard Avenue is realigned, the applicant shall provide conduits at all proposed signalized intersections (Westbard Avenue at realigned Westbard Avenue and both intersections of Westbard Avenue at Street A (Westbard Circle))."

Once the realigned Westbard Ave. is completed and the River Rd. entryway at the 5500 block of Westbard Ave. is closed off, **Springfield residents will have to wait six to 12 months or longer before a traffic light is installed.** During that time our residents, especially school children, are at risk of vehicle accidents. In the longer term, construction of 34 townhouses on the Manor Care site plus the existing 25 homes will lead to total gridlock without a traffic light at the intersection.

6. **Stormwater management is essential.** At River Rd., the realigned Westbard Ave. will cross creeks on both sides of the road, located in the 100-year flood plain. We support the requests made by the Little Falls Watershed Alliance to ensure that the stormwater management (SWM) on the road and the site meet best practices and treat 100% of road runoff. The Alliance supports using Lot 24, Block D on the Manor Care site for SWM on the road; using Silva cells for all the street trees; installing permeable pavement on roads, sidewalks, and parking areas; and creating more infiltration on the medians and sidewalk areas.
7. **Underground utilities.** We are pleased to learn that the all utility wires must be put underground under the new realigned Westbard Ave. road. Ideally, the developer should put wires underground further along Westbard Ave., since it would enhance the appearance of the shopping center and the new commercial and residential buildings.

Issues related to the Kensington of Bethesda building

1. **The delivery loading entryway** on the realigned Westbard Ave. requires trucks to take a round-about route. The most direct entryway to the delivery loading dock would be for delivery trucks to come from the Beltway along River Rd. and turn onto the realigned Westbard Ave. However, delivery trucks cannot access the entryway because the barrier median strip does not have an opening in the street. Regency/Kensington estimates that 15 trucks per week will make deliveries to the assisted living facility. Their plan is to have delivery trucks coming from the Beltway and River Rd. to turn right on Goldsboro Rd. (a winding, two-lane road bordered by culverts with deteriorating issues), left onto

Massachusetts Ave. (a steep, two-lane road until it expands to four lanes at Sangamore Rd.), and then turn left up the hill on Westbard Ave. Massachusetts Ave. is not a desirable route to reach the Kensington of Bethesda because it is prone to flooding with heavy rain and the traffic is frequently backed up with trailer trucks heading toward Washington, DC. Regency's response was that they are "happy to explore the median break as part of its entitlement process, preliminary feedback from relevant agencies is that it may be unlikely to be approved."

2. **The building is too close to the flood plain.** At least half of the proposed building is located within the 50-foot stream buffer. The building footings should be set back at least two feet from the flood plain. The current plan shows a narrow walkway between the American Plant/Shorb property and the tall Kensington of Bethesda building. Whether the American Plant/Shorb property has granted Regency/Kensington a documented easement for the path is unclear. If the building remains on the property line, the Kensington staff would need an easement from the Parks Department to allow them to service the bioretention filters on the park side.
3. **Parking Issues.** At the Kensington public meeting, we were told there would be 130 parking spaces on site. But the plans show a **total of 91 parking spaces—26 at the Lobby Level, 25 at the P1 Level, and 40 at the P2 Level plus eight bicycle spaces.** Note that they expect to have 50 staff at peak times but only 40 parking spaces. We have heard that the county planners are reducing the parking spaces further below the 91 parking spaces. This location is not well served by mass transit. Regardless of the county planning standards, the building needs more parking spaces because many employees and visitors can only reach the facility by driving there. Also, some of the visitors may be unable to walk far, so having adequate parking spaces at the site is important. Parking at the shopping center is limited, and overflow parking is likely to park on nearby residential streets.
4. **High-quality ventilation system needed.** Kensington Senior Development needs to provide more information on its plans to ensure that the building will have a high-quality ventilation system. Current research has found that a major source of spreading the covid-19 virus is small droplets dispersed into the air. There are also concerns about the confined space in the residents' suites, which range from 305 square-feet to 605 square-feet, averaging around 400 square-feet. The facility has 112 suites, with a total capacity of 155 people.
5. **Fire safety.** It is essential that there are fire exits and doors at the ground level as well as a footpath around the building so residents and staff can exit the building quickly if necessary. In an emergency, fire trucks may need to use the footpath. Also, the footpath is needed to allow pedestrians to have access to the park and walkways along the Willett Branch Greenway Park.

Issues related to the Willett Branch Greenway Park

1. **Many issues still remain unresolved.** The Planning Department staff and other county experts have worked hard to analyze the many facets of the park, and they have provided useful suggestions to meet county requirements and address the challenges of a sloping hill in a flood plain. Some issues that will have to be resolved in the future:
 - a. The Parks Department plans to wait to work on the park until the other segments of the Willett Branch have been acquired, which could be years from now. To prevent erosion and create a green space, Regency will need to grade the land and plant grass and shrubs.
 - b. Currently the Kenwood Tributary flows under Ridgefield Rd. through a concrete pipe. To avoid erosion of the banks during heavy rains, the tributary needs to be daylighted to create a waterfall/water feature. This work must be done before the realigned Westbard Ave. is built so that construction vehicles can reach the site.
 - c. Before a use and occupancy permit for the building can be issued, the Parks Department and the Department of Permitting Services must certify that the dedicated land is stable enough to naturalize the stream and that heavy equipment can access the site safely.

Regency would greatly benefit from having a fully landscaped park area, making it a welcoming place for the residents in the senior living facility, local residents, and visitors.

2. **Inadequate space for outdoor recreation.** The Willett Branch Greenway Park is a major amenity that will greatly enhance Regency's properties. But other than the park, the Westwood development offers only the Springfield Neighborhood Park and the Civic Green at the shopping center for **outdoor recreation for the residents in the 190 multifamily apartment units, 72 townhouses in the shopping center, and 34 townhouses on the Manor Care site. The crowding may worsen if Regency adds more high-rises on the other side of Westbard Ave.**

From: [Deborah Schumann M.D.](#)
To: [Folden, Matthew](#); [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Westwood comment
Date: Monday, December 7, 2020 9:48:57 AM

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Kensington of Bethesda

Montgomery County had an opportunity to make the Westwood shopping centers better while also improving traffic flow and the environment in the surrounding area. Unfortunately, ideas from residents have not been given enough sway and the developers are doing what they want.

The idea of calling the new development Kensington of Bethesda is ludicrous. It screams out that the development is done by outsiders who don't even know that Kensington, Maryland is a town that was incorporated in 1894 and now abuts Chevy Chase and Bethesda.

What's wrong with keeping the name of Westbard or Westwood? This area is not Kensington. It is an insult to change the name: an insult to the Town of Kensington as well as to this area that has always been called Westwood or Westbard.

Deborah Schumann
6804 Tulip Hill Terrace
Bethesda, Md. 20816

From: [Lloyd Guerci](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Fani-Gonzalez, Natali](#); [Cichy, Gerald](#); [Patterson, Tina](#); [Verma, Partap](#)
Cc: [Melanie Rose White](#); [Cynthia Green](#); [Patricia Johnson](#); [Sue Schumacher](#); [David Forman](#)
Subject: Westwood Shopping Center Kensington of Bethesda Planning Board Dec. 17, 2020 Item 6
Date: Tuesday, December 15, 2020 10:50:40 AM
Attachments: [CCCFH comments on Kensington of Bethesda^J Planning Board Dec. 17 item 6.pdf](#)
[M-NCPPC Parks Kensington Bethesda concept plan.pdf](#)

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

Dear Chair Anderson and Commissioners:

Attached are the comments of the Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights, which include two attachments (a Concept Plan and a photo).

Thank you for considering these comments.

Lloyd Guerci

Vice-Chair

Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights

Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights

December 15, 2020

By email to mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org

Chair Casey Anderson
Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reedie Drive, 14th Floor
Wheaton, MD 20902

Re: CCCFH 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:

The Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights (CCCFH), which includes 18 communities in and around the Westbard sector that have about 20,000 residents, is providing these comments on aspects of the Kensington of Bethesda Site Plan application (820200200) and on the Preliminary Plan application (12017017A). Our comments will also address the Staff Report completed on December 4, 2020.

Brief Summary of CCCFH's Comments

CCCFH has a number of major concerns about the Kensington of Bethesda applications and the future Gateway to the Willett Branch Greenway Park.

1. Any Planning Board Resolution must have conditions based on demonstrated advanced planning of record that assure the Willett Branch Greenway which is to be a regional gem in the Montgomery County park and trail system can and will be built out without problems associated with the Kensington of Bethesda building or the parkland conveyance.
 - a. It is necessary to consider and come to a reasonable conclusion that a Greenway Trail in a likely location on the parkland conveyance parcel will readily connect to the other parts of the to-be built Willett Branch Greenway Trail, particularly as to the American Plant/Shorb property after it is daylighted.
 - b. It is necessary to anticipate that the Willett Branch will be dechannelized with some meandering curves added, that will raise the water level. Accordingly, the 100-year flood plain needs to be reestablished. Any Kensington of Bethesda building must be designed and built based on that revised 100-year flood plain.
 - c. It is necessary to anticipate naturalization of the Willett Branch later. Any Resolution must provide that before a use and occupancy certificate is issued for the Kensington property, the County and the Parks Department certify that the land/soils near the stream channel have adequate stability for removal of the concrete stream channel and

subsequent naturalization and for construction of a park, and that heavy equipment will be able to access and work effectively in the area with the proposed building Kensington building in place.

2. The plans need to be revised to move a wall of the Kensington building back from the parkland conveyance property line to ensure that the Greenway Trail will be wide enough for a comfortable and safe experience for pedestrians, joggers and cyclists, taking into account that the trail location will be dictated by the steep embankment descending to the Willett Branch and by the Kensington building.
3. The exterior of the proposed Kensington of Bethesda building needs to be modified and improved from the perspective of eyes on and from the park and so that the park feels like a public space.
4. The proposed Resolution conditions need to be modified to require that the parkland conveyance has in place typical facilities of a neighborhood green urban park, including a lawn area, landscaping, shaded seating and pathways, before a use and occupancy certificate is issued for the Kensington building/Lot 1 Block H.
5. Public open space requirements for the Kensington property need to be met.
6. In view of development changes in Westwood and Site Plan concerns, conditions to approval need to be revised.
7. A traffic light needs to be installed.

Introduction and Background

The area within the Westbard Sector Plan boundary has no M-NCPPC local, neighborhood or recreational parks. Sector Plan p. 48. The Westbard Sector Plan provides for the Willett Branch Greenway, which was envisioned as a regional gem in the Montgomery County park and trail system. Sector Plan p. 100; *see* pp. 13 (Concept Framework Plan), 22, 49, 50, 52, 59. “This innovative urban greenway corridor will celebrate Willett Branch as a unique natural feature in the Sector Plan area, connect residents to new and existing park spaces, and improve stormwater runoff into the Little Falls Branch.” *Ibid* at 100-101. The Greenway is to reveal and naturalize the neglected Willett Branch stream to create an open space corridor, providing the Westbard community with access to the stream, native wetland plants and forested areas. The Willett Branch Greenway eventually will be built along the Willett Branch, approximately from River Road to the Capital Crescent Trail. Sector Plan pp. 52, 48, 58, 86, 90; Staff Report p. 22.

An image of the Willett Branch as it existed when the plan was adopted and now exists, a straight concrete drainage channel (p. 57), and a rendering of stream naturalization, with some meandering curves of the stream bed are in the Sector Plan. (p. 12; *see also* pp 8, 12, 53, 76).

The Gateway to the Park and Adjoining Areas

One element of the Sector Plan's Willett Branch Greenway is at the intersection of Ridgefield Road (as realigned it will be known as part of Westbard Avenue) and River Road, on part of what is now known as the Westwood II property. Sector Plan pp. 10, 12, 53, referred to as the Gateway to the Park. The creation of a park in this area requires, in part, a land dedication of part of the Westwood II property to M-NCPPC. The gateway area is shown as the Parkland Dedication in the Staff Report at p. 17, Figure 7, and is referred to as the "parkland conveyance" *see* pp. 10, 21.

The parkland conveyance area to be dedicated for the Gateway to the Park is relatively small (0.64 acres), constrained and narrow. Viewed looking east from Ridgefield Road, at the back of the property is an approximately 350 feet long concrete retaining wall beginning at River Road and continuing to the American Plant/Shorb property. *See* Site, Grading & Utility Plan" 820200200-SP-006.pdf_V3, and Sector Plan pp. 82 – 83. In front of that wall is the Willett Branch. In this area the Willett Branch is far below the general land surface, and as a consequence, there is a fairly wide and steep embankment to the stream.

At the southern end of the retaining wall to the rear of the parkland conveyance, at American Plant, the Willett Branch enters a 250-foot tunnel under the American Plant/Shorb and Roof Center properties, from which it emerges to natural light near the back of the HOC building. *See* Sector Plan pp. 82-83.

The Willett Branch Greenway and Willett Branch stream restoration projects will be advanced incrementally, as parcels of property along the Willett Branch are redeveloped and acquired. In some segments, land areas may be improved before the stream itself is restored. Staff Report p. 21.

Elements of The Gateway to the Park and Parks' Staff's Concept Plan

The Gateway to the Park area, also referred to herein as the parkland conveyance, is on Lot 2 Block H. *See* Staff Report pp. 14, 17. Much of the parkland conveyance area where the Willett Branch parallels the proposed Kensington of Bethesda building is narrow—only 40 feet wide, from the stream to the proposed building. (*see* area to the east of "MB-5A") on drawing "Site, Grading & Utility Plan" 820200200-SP-006.pdf_V3.

A number of elements need to be included in this tight space, including from the Willett Branch, a substantial embankment that extends a considerable distance to the stream, which is generally far below the general land surface, a large outfall from a pipe originating in the former Manor Care area, vegetated areas, and a hard-surfaced trail (referred to as Greenway Trail) entering the area and roughly paralleling the stream. That trail is to connect to other segments of the Greenway Trail along the Willett Branch to be built in connection with future development or acquisitions.

Parks staff developed a Willett Branch Greenway Concept Plan for Park Dedication (referred to hereafter as Concept Plan) *See* accompanying document, the Concept Plan. The Concept Plan lays out the Greenway Trail, steep (2:1 slope) embankment regraded as it descends toward the Willett Branch, the Willett Branch itself and an outfall and rip rap relating to an underground pipe from the former Manor Care area.

CCCFH's COMMENTS

- 1 Any Planning Board Resolution must have conditions based on demonstrated advanced planning of record, that assure the Willett Branch Greenway can and will be built out without problems associated with the Kensington of Bethesda building or the parkland conveyance.

In the long term, per the Westbard Sector Plan, the Gateway Trail will extend from about Ridgefield Road and River Road to the Capital Crescent Trail. *See*, Sector Plan pp. 52; Staff Report p. 22.

As stated in the Preliminary Plan Resolution, "Future development must be designed and constructed to minimize adverse impacts on the future implementation of the Willett Branch Greenway." Para. 34.

As the Parks Department's comments to the DRC regarding the pending applications said:

This section of Willett Branch is a major gateway/entrance trailhead and potential focal point to the greenway. M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks has performance objectives for the overall Greenway . . . and this specific section of the greenway, including:

A hard-surface trail extends downstream from the intersection of Ridgefield and River Roads, offering a safe and convenient access for cyclist and pedestrians. This trail provides easy access to the Capital Crescent Trail, the Countywide Recreational Park, the HOC apartments, and the Westwood Shopping Center.

Several guiding principles emerge from the Sector Plan, the Preliminary Plan Resolution and Parks comments to the DRC, which must be considered now and are stated below. The Staff Report does not address them or address them satisfactorily. These concerns need to be addressed satisfactorily before the application is approved (subject to conditions).

- a. It is necessary to consider and come to a reasonable conclusion that a Greenway Trail in a likely location on the parkland conveyance parcel will readily connect to the other parts of the to-be built Willett Branch Greenway Trail, particularly as to the American Plant/Shorb property after it is daylighted.

It is necessary to ensure that a Greenway Trail on and subject to the constraints of the parkland conveyance parcel will be wide enough for multiple bikes and pedestrians, going in opposite directions, to pass each other easily and that it can readily connect to the other parts of the to-be-built Willett Branch Greenway trail, particularly as to the American Plant/Shorb property.

The Staff Report does not show where the Greenway Trail might be located on the parkland conveyance parcel (Lot 2 Block H), and does not mention how, if at all, such a trail would continue onto the American Plant/Shorb property when the Willett Branch is daylighted on that property, presumably in the context of future development, or whether the Kensington building would fit in (including the fact that it would be close to the Willett Branch, which drains much of Bethesda). On these shortcomings alone, the Planning Board should not approve the applications. This is not to say that the project will be rejected; it is to say that justification on feasibility, including feasible connectivity of the trail to the adjoining parcel, is absent, and adequate justification needs to be provided before Planning Board approval. We might add that

part of the analysis has been done by Parks staff—the Concept Plan—although it is omitted from the Staff Report.

- b. It is necessary to anticipate that the Willett Branch will be dechannelized with some meandering curves added, that will raise the water level. Accordingly, the 100-year flood plain needs to be reestablished. Any buildings, including the Kensington of Bethesda building, must be designed and built based on that revised 100-year flood plain.

The Sector Plan specifically calls for naturalization of the Willett Branch and contains a rendering of stream naturalization, with some meandering curves of the stream bed. p. 12; *see also* pp. 8, 12, 53, 76. In the context of the parkland conveyance, Parks staff's assessment was elevated water levels would likely follow naturalization. Hydrologically, naturalization including introduction of meanders slows the flow of a stream compared to flow in a concrete channel (the converse of stream channelization which speeds the flow of water), and in periods of heavy precipitation, water levels rise. Parks staff then delineated a new 100-year flood plain specifically shown on its Concept Plan for the Westwood II property. See Concept Plan.

It is shocking and unbelievable that the Staff Report states “there are no 100-year floodplains . . . on site.” Staff Report p. 24. This needs to be corrected and appropriate conditions need to be included in any approval by the Planning Board.

- c. It is necessary to anticipate naturalization of the Willett Branch later. Any Resolution must provide that before a use and occupancy certificate is issued for the Kensington building/Lot 1 Block H, the County and the Parks Departments certify that the land/soils near the stream channel have adequate stability for removal of the concrete stream channel and subsequent naturalization and for construction of a park, and that heavy equipment will be able to access and work effectively in the area with the Kensington building in place.

Kensington is going to turn over the parkland conveyance to Parks. The property should be in a condition that future naturalization of the Willett Branch is practicable, from the standpoints of the soils and the presence of a Kensington building. Space is very tight in the area where the proposed Kensington building approaches and meets the American Plant property and the Willett Branch now heads into a tunnel under the American Plant property. To make matters more complicated, there are very steep slopes to the stream. *See* accompanying photograph showing the slope of the embankment. All this makes naturalization far more difficult than it would be in an open plain.

When in the future naturalization of the Willett Branch occurs, will it be practicable remove the concrete culvert and to use heavy equipment behind the Kensington building to naturalize the stream? Before the building is approved, engineers from the County and Parks must certify that the land/soils near the stream channel have adequate stability for removal of the concrete stream channel and subsequent naturalization and that heavy equipment will be able to access and work effectively in the area with the proposed building Kensington building in place. This needs to be addressed now, before the building is built. If not, adjustments need to be considered.

- 2 The plans need to be revised to move a wall of the building back from the property line to ensure that the Greenway Trail will be wide enough for a comfortable and safe experience for pedestrians, joggers and cyclists, taking into account that the trail's location will be dictated by the steep embankment descending to the Willett Branch and the Kensington building.

Near where the Willett Branch now begins to be covered in a tunnel, one wall of the applicant's building would be up against the American Plant/Shorb property line without a setback. *See* Staff Report p. 17. From there, a major Kensington building wall would extend to the north-northwest, perpendicular to that property boundary. That wall, which would face approximately east-northeast, would be on the boundary to the parkland conveyance. *See* Concept Plan, above and to the right of "MB-5." The net result of having the latter wall there is that, in that particular area of the parkland conveyance, space will be too tight for a comfortable and safe Gateway Trail, which would be squeezed between the steep embankment descending to the Willett Branch and the Kensington building.

CCCFH's predicate concern is that space adjacent to Kensington's proposed building is inadequate for Greenway Trail users to have a good experience.

Specifically, the area from the top of the steep embankment descending toward the Willett Branch to the proposed Kensington building wall is only about 10 feet wide at the south end of the building near the words "top of planter" near "MB-5B" on M-NCPPC Parks Concept Plan. *See* "Site, Grading and Utility Plan," 820200200-SP-006.pdf-V3.

On trails, people do not want their arms against or near a building wall when they walk, and bicyclists do not want handle bars near a wall or fence. It is necessary to ensure that a Greenway Trail on the parkland conveyance parcel will be wide enough for bikes and pedestrians to pass each other easily. Space needs to be provided by setting back the building wall in the east-most area of the building. More shy distance space is needed for users of the to-be developed Greenway Trail.

Although we made these points on unduly tight space *twice*, once in our comments of August 30, 2020 at pp 4-5, and a second time in our comments of November 16, 2020 at p. 3. The Staff Report, in its discussion of concerns of matters raised by the community, beginning at page 24, does not address our concerns about space. The feel of a park trail near a tall masonry wall certainly was a major concern, as any trail user would appreciate. Moreover, staff most certainly had the information to understand the area at a detailed level, as they had the Parks department Concept Plan that took a hard look at the site and sketched out a possible layout. There being nothing in the record to address this significant articulated concern, the site plan application should be approved only if there is a condition that the building wall is moved back.

Separately, if the building wall is not moved back and if it is absolutely necessary, with no other practicable alternative, to service the bioretention filters from Parks property, any easement for servicing the filters must be narrowly tailored and preclude Kensington from arguing that the easement gives it any rights to specify what is done on Parks property.

3. The exterior of the proposed Kensington of Bethesda building needs to be modified and improved from the perspective of eyes on and from the park and trail and so that the park feels like a public space.

There is a considerable history of concerns over the appearance of buildings facing the Willett Branch Greenway. For example, when the Westbard Self Storage facility was before the Planning Board in December 2017, Commissioner Patterson expressed concern about the appearance of the building, which would face the Willett Branch, and the applicant was required to improve its appearance. As to Kensington of Bethesda, there are a number of comments of record, including from Parks and Planning staffs. *E.g.*, Parks comments to the DRC said M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks has performance objectives for the overall Greenway—including that buildings should not turn their back on the Greenway. But that is what the proposed Kensington building does.

Kensington would place major walls of its building on its property line with American Plant and on the property line of the parkland conveyance. As discussed above, the Greenway Trail is likely to be located very close to the Kensington building in most areas, and in the southern area near American Plant, essentially adjacent to the building, if the building wall is not moved.¹

A fundamental problem is that the building would sit too close to the trail. The building walls go up way over trail users' heads and would stand over anyone using the trail. It will look like a large, looming and hulking brick wall. It will have a cold, hard feel. The building scale against human scale is overpowering. People walking would feel like they were in a partial cement cavern and airflow would be stymied. This building will look massive placed so close to a trail that is on a low elevation. The Greenway will disappear visually. There will be no sense of place. This is dreadful. For trail users, it will not be a pleasant park-like experience; it will be something to get through. During this pandemic we have learned the value of open green spaces. In reality, the building should be moved back to allow for more space and bordering plants or trees should break up the solid length of wall.

Not surprisingly, the applicant's renditions and elevations in DAIC and partially copied into the Staff Report do not reveal what its building will look and feel like to walkers, joggers and cyclists on the Greenway Trail. Consider Figure 9 (p. 18) of the Staff Report, which reveals a moderately high, pale yellow building foundation on the stream side of the building. Trail users would see that. Figure 10 (p.19) is not helpful as it has a big gray blob obscuring part of the foundation. Much of the obscured part is what the pedestrian or cyclist would see.

The Staff Report deals with just one problem—parts of the building wall facing the Willett Branch do not meet the blank wall form requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. The report

¹ See Parks' Concept Plan. In the southern area of the parkland conveyance, just upstream of American Plant, the area from the stream to the proposed building wall is only about 20 feet wide. (This is at the south end of the building near the words "top of planter" near "MB-5B" on drawing "Site, Grading and Utility Plan.") This area of the Greenway Trail, close to the building, is as a practical matter a visual vantage point of most people walking or biking on the Gateway to the Park.

identifies the areas that do not. Figure 11 (p. 20). In Section 6, the Staff Report offers a justification for the failure to conform to the Zoning Ordinance.

As proposed, the eastern building façade along the Willett Branch Greenway is exposed as the terrain falls away . . . As a result of the physical constraint presented by this grade change, a 54-foot portion of the structured parking circulation ramp is at-grade with the parkland (behind the masonry façade). The Applicant proposes use of decorative architectural grilles over the masonry in this area, in a pattern similar to the window openings located elsewhere in the building, to provide visual interest along this portion of the facade facing parkland. Given the site constraints and efforts to activate the facade, Staff supports the Applicant's requested modification. [Staff Report p. 32, see p. 19]

There are many shortcomings with this proffered rationale. The grilles, over about 10 areas total, were added in response to comments without otherwise changing the building in those specific areas. But the use of grills on brick does not add depth or perspective to a human passing close to a wall. In fact, if the grills have a raised profile, people could run into them. Also, they do not solve the big brick wall appearance and massive elevation from the vantage point of a person walking or biking on the to-be built Greenway Trail.

The record is barren of consideration of alternatives, other than what the applicant offered and the staff acquiesced in on vague and conclusory visual interest grounds that do not address the nearby trail user. The Planning Department routinely lets the public know about the awards it gets, which no doubt are deserved. But no award-winning work was advanced here.

Architectural elements should be used to minimize the mass. Windows can be incorporated. Using windows in conjunction with natural green walls, intermittently spaced, might repress the claustrophobic feeling trail users will experience. The general sameness of the walls in color and texture add to the monotone massive volume of the structure. At the pre-plan submission community hearing, the developer said that they would be interested in exploring a green wall. Another design element of brick patterns that change color and depth could also help. We haven't heard anything about that possibility. A green wall, community art or other imaginative options would be more attractive and useful options were the building otherwise approved.

4. The proposed Resolution conditions need to be modified to require that the parkland conveyance has in place typical facilities of a neighborhood green urban park, including a lawn area, landscaping, shaded seating and pathways before a use and occupancy certificate is issued for the Kensington building/Lot 1 Block H.

The area within the Westbard Sector Plan boundary has no M-NCPPC local, neighborhood or recreational parks. Sector Plan p. 48. The Gateway to the Park, as a neighborhood green urban park, is both called for in the Westbard Sector Plan and strongly supported by the public.

CCCFH's major concerns include the condition of the parkland conveyance at the time of dedication to M-NCPPC/Parks, and the facilities on the property at the time of conveyance. Demolition and removal of the existing Westwood II structures was always expected of the applicant. The applicant took a hardball approach of a low-ball opening proposal of mere rough grading prior to the turnover of the parkland conveyance area to Parks. Parks made some, but not

enough, progress. The Staff Report under proposed conditions, says the applicant will now grade and stabilize the land with details determined under a Park Construction Permit². Staff Report p. 21.

When will the park on the parkland conveyance be built? The Staff Report says “once a critical mass of land is acquired for the Greenway, the Parks Department can begin detailed design and implementation.” p. 21. As the initial development presentation to the public occurred in February 2014 - seven years ago – and nothing has been built, it is reasonable to believe that the Greenway is unlikely to be built any time in the next 10 years, if ever.

Even if Parks wanted to develop the park with a year or so after the parkland conveyance is dedicated, there is the question of funding for a park. Our experience is that we cannot rely on county funds, which if anything may get tighter in coming years. About 7/10 of a mile away is the Willard Avenue Neighborhood Park, a part of Montgomery Parks, which has been expanded over time by acquisitions. One acquisition, in 1995, was a lot with a house. The house was and is to be demolished and the property converted to park uses that serve residents. But that has not happened in part due to lack of funds. The same funding problem could adversely impact construction of a neighborhood green urban park on the parkland conveyance.

The 1982 Westbard Sector Plan called for a park sometimes referred to as Springfield Park. Land was never acquired and the park was not built. Overall, this does not inspire confidence.

The public justifiably wants to use the Gateway to the Park area in the foreseeable, near-term future. The Resolution’s conditions of approval must require the applicant to provide a park-like setting that the public, including residents of Kensington of Bethesda, can enjoy.

Parks’ Energized Public Spaces Functional Master Plan (p. 29) and its Designing Public Spaces: Energized Public Spaces Design Guidelines (p. 40) inform what the Gateway to the Park, as a neighborhood green urban park (Sector Plan p. 53) should include: a lawn area, landscaping, shaded seating and pathways. As noted in the Guidelines, parks such as this serve an important role as gathering places for the community and accommodate activities, as well as offering outdoor places for area employees to have lunch. p. 40. Here, this would be a nice alternative to the nearby McDonalds.

Furthermore, seating and shade are required of Kensington on its property as part of public open space zoning requirements (Zoning Ordinance 59.6.3.6.B.1). The applicant would shift its public open space obligations from the Kensington parcel (Lot 1 Block H) off-site to the parkland conveyance, but conveniently drop the obligations for seating and shade. This is unacceptable. *See generally* Zoning Ordinance 59.6.3.6.C.1.

² Proposed Site Plan condition 14 (p. 10 in the Staff Report) does not expressly say that applicant will grade and stabilize the land. This sloppy drafting should be corrected to avoid problems in the future. Even if the conditions are clarified, a significant problem is that they do not provide for a park.

It is noteworthy that Kensington at times has purported to justify its unwillingness to contribute more than the dedication of land on this site to the Greenway in view of Equity One's \$500,000 contribution to the park, but that money is not part of the Preliminary Plan. It is solely a condition in the Site Plan for the Westwood I site across the road, and will not be paid until a use and occupancy permit is sought for the commercial building there. Private sector contributions to the greenway were contemplated in the Sector Plan p.101 and at the adoption of the Preliminary Plan, contributions to the creation of the park for the Westwood II site were to be determined at Site Plan.

Prior to the issuance of a final use and occupancy certificate on Lot 1 Block H, the applicant must be required to build a park with a lawn area, landscaping, shaded seating and pathways.

5. Public open space requirements for the Kensington property need to be met.

As noted in the Staff Report, based on the tract size the project is required to provide a minimum of 10% of the site area (3,226 sq ft) as open space. This cannot be accommodated on-site, it said, due to the dedicated land conveyed toward the future Willett Branch Greenway and realigned Westbard Avenue, so the applicant has proposed to provide the open space off-site in accordance with a provision of the Code. The staff supports the applicant's approach as follows. Because the applicant will convey approximately 27,888 sq ft of land to the Parks Department for the future Willett Branch Greenway and that conveyance includes improvements ranging from demolition of existing elements within Lot 2 Block H, environmental cleanup, and invasive species management to grading and stabilization of the parkland, prior to acceptance by Parks staff. In the view of the Staff Report, these improvements represent major contributions to the future Willett Branch Greenway. As conditioned, the Applicant's conveyance and parkland conveyance satisfy the Sector Plan recommendations and CRT zone off-site open space requirements. Staff Report p. 25.

The Staff Report provides credit for open space where credit is not due. The parkland conveyance was required by the Preliminary Plan. This is an example of double counting something. The conveyance was already required. There was no new consideration. Moreover, the Westwood I project will increase traffic, while the Westbard Avenue realignment will significantly facilitate entry and egress to Westwood I. And it involves a partial land swap with Regency giving up land at Westwood II and gaining land at the former Manor Care site, where it or a business venture partner may build townhouses. Also, the applicant was always going to do the demolition. Their griping with Parks' Quattrocchi was over grading, not demolition. Largely, this was in their interest. The applicant certainly did not want to demolish a Westwood II structure up to the property line for the parkland conveyance, and later after their building was built and occupied, watch a Parks' contractor swinging a big wrecking ball in the close space next to the Kenwood building and its residents. The environmental cleanup is not specified and invasive species management may end up being a short-term matter rather than ongoing maintenance. Grading and site stabilization are helpful, although not well articulated in the conditions.

Our concerns, above, were well known and should have been satisfied as part of the applicant's public open space obligations. This includes creating some open space by moving a wall back in the southern part of the site for a comfortable trail, and building an interim park until the

Greenway is built, not just stabilizing the site. We ask the Planning Board to include these as conditions.

6. In view of development changes in Westwood and Site Plan concerns, conditions to approval need to be revised.

The resolution in the Preliminary Plan needs to be updated.

The Preliminary Plan resolution (May 6, 2019) provides in part:

27. The Applicant must convey in fee simple to the M-NCPPC, at no cost and via plat at the same time as the first plat for Site Plan 820180190, the following areas for use as public park land for the Willett Branch Greenway, as shown on the Certified Preliminary Plan:

i. The portion of unimproved land at Lot 2, Block H, at the existing Westwood II Shopping Center and associated parking lot; and . . .

28. Prior to the first record plat for Site Plan 820180190, the Applicant must record a covenant to M-NCPPC for future conveyance in fee simple of the portion of land at Lot 2, Block H, currently improved with the existing Westwood II Shopping Center and associated parking lot. The covenant must be shown on the Certified Preliminary Plan and be recorded in the land records of Montgomery County.

Initially, Westwood I was going to be redeveloped before Westwood II. Paragraph/condition 28 of the resolution on the Preliminary Plan was written in that context. But Westwood I has been substantially delayed and Westwood II has been advanced.

To begin, the division of Westwood II into two lots needs to be completed. The site has not been replatted. Staff Report p. 13.

Second, in general, the conditions proposed in the Staff Report (pp. 10-11) need to be adopted.

Third, as discussed above, before a use and occupancy certificate is issued, the County and Parks must certify that the land/soils near the stream channel have adequate stability for removal of the concrete stream channel and subsequent naturalization and there is adequate room for naturalization of the Willett Branch with heavy construction equipment.

Fourth, prior to the issuance of a final use and occupancy certificate on Lot 1 Block H, the applicant must be required to build a park with a lawn area, landscaping, shaded seating and pathways. *See* above.

Fifth, proposed Site Plan condition 14 (p. 10 in the Staff Report) does not expressly say that applicant will grade and stabilize the land on the parkland conveyance. While the spirit is there, it might be helpful to clarify this.

The Resolution on the Preliminary Plan needs to be reevaluated to assure that the proper parties are named.

The Preliminary Plan referred to the applicant as Equity One (Northeast Portfolio) LLC. The owner of the assisted living facility is listed as Equity One. The developer is listed as Michael Rafeedie, Regency Kensington Bethesda Ow, 11921 Freedom Drive, Reston, VA.

Our concern is that the ultimate Planning Board resolution have operative effect to the correct party(ies).

7. A traffic light needs to be installed.

For the safety of ambulatory residents of the Kensington assisted living facility, the staff, visitors and the community at large, a fully-actuated traffic signal with pedestrian facilities, including push buttons for walk signals, painted crosswalks and pedestrian ramps, needs to be installed near the proposed Kensington building by the realigned Westbard Avenue and the 5500 block of Westbard Avenue (5500 block of Westbard Avenue between Ridgefield Road and River Road, referred to as Westbard Ave. Ext.)

At a minimum, there are several major issues that require a traffic signal study at the above location:

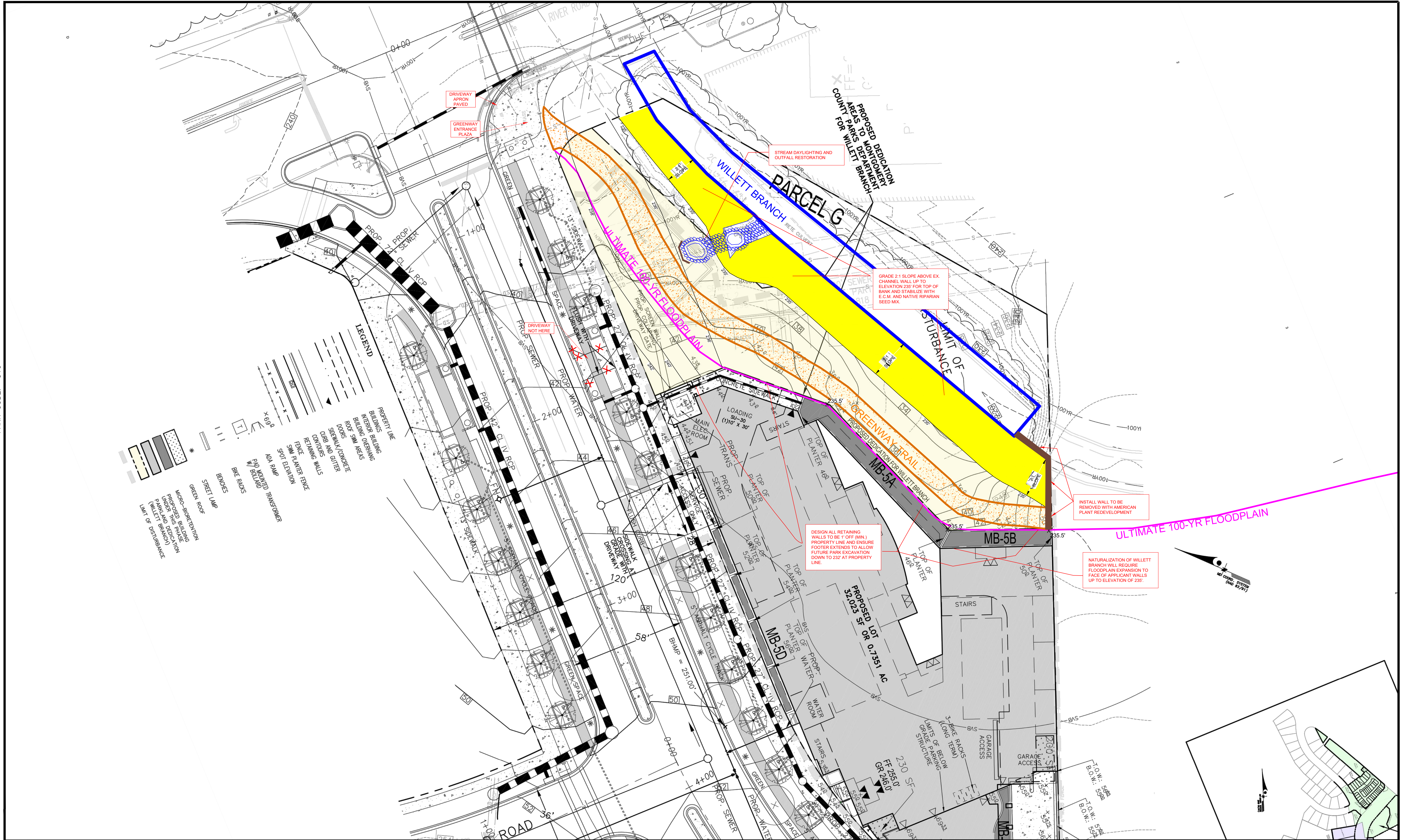
- 1) The Department of Transportation did a sight study of trucks coming out of the Kensington of Bethesda delivery truck area on Westbard Avenue, but they did not do a sight study for vehicles and bicyclists coming along northbound Westbard Avenue, heading towards River Road. Just past the parking garage entrance of the Kensington, the road curves and dips, creating a blind spot for those coming around that curve.
- 2) Vehicles coming out of the Westbard Ave. Ext. heading left towards River Road will have to cross five lanes of traffic if the driver wants to make a right-hand turn onto southbound River Road. This turn will be right in front of the Kensington. Given the volume of traffic expected on northbound Westbard Avenue, this could result in numerous traffic accidents, upsetting for the drivers and residents in the Kensington.
- 3) Although the volume of traffic turning to and from the Westbard Ave. Ext. will not be as great as that going into and out of the North Access of the Westwood Shopping Center, a warrant study for the interruption of continuous traffic at the intersection of Westbard Ave. Ext. and Westbard Avenue should be done after the realignment of Westbard Avenue and the completion of the Kensington. Community members should not have to wait several years for Regency to reevaluate “the signal warrants following completion of the Westbard Shopping Center Development” per the planner’s report.

CCCFH supports the traffic signal at Westbard Avenue and the 5500 block of Westbard Avenue (5500 block of Westbard Avenue between Ridgefield Road and River Road) as expressed in Phyllis Edelman’s letter to the Planning Board.

Very truly yours,

Lloyd Guerci, Vice-Chair

CITIZENS COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS



<div>Designer's Name</div> <div>Address</div> <div>City/State/Zip</div> <div>Telephone Number</div>		<div>DESIGN</div> <div>Landscape Architect Date Checked By:</div> <div>Architect Date Checked By:</div> <div>Engineer Date Checked By:</div> <div>Drawn by Date Checked By:</div>		<div>Professional Certification. I hereby certify that these documents were prepared or approved by me, and that I am a duly licensed professional engineer under the laws of the State of Maryland.</div> <div>License No. _____</div> <div>Expiration Date _____</div> <div>PROFESSIONAL STAMP</div>		<div><div>The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission</div><div>Montgomery County Department of Parks 9500 Brunnet Avenue Silver Spring, Maryland 20901 (301) 495-2535</div></div>		<div>REVIEW AND APPROVAL</div> <div>Project Manager Date</div> <div>Construction Manager Date</div> <div>Park Manager Date</div>		<div>ISSUED FOR PROCUREMENT ON _____</div> <div>REVISIONS</div> <table><thead><tr><th>Rev. No.</th><th>Date</th><th>Description</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr><tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr><tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr></tbody></table>		Rev. No.	Date	Description										<div>WILLETT BRANCH GREENWAY CONCEPT PLAN FOR PARK DEDICATION</div> <div><div>0102040</div><div>1:240</div><div>Feet</div></div> <div>SCALE: 1"= 20'</div> <div>Liber Folio</div>		<div>SHT. # X of X</div> <div>PLAN VIEW</div>	
Rev. No.	Date	Description																									



From: [LYNNE BATTLE](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Fani-Gonzalez, Natali](#); [Cichy, Gerald](#); [Patterson, Tina](#); [Verma, Partap](#)
Cc: [Folden, Matthew](#); [Dickel, Stephanie](#); [Jenny Sue Dailey](#); [Marnie Shaul](#); [Susan S](#)
Subject: Westwood Shopping Center Kensington of Bethesda, Planning Board, December 17, 2020, Agenda Item 6
Date: Tuesday, December 15, 2020 11:29:13 AM
Attachments: [Lynne Battle's Testimony on Kensington.pdf](#)

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

Dear Chairman Anderson and Commissioners,

Attached are my comments which I will deliver to the Planning Board hearing on Thursday, December 17 in the matter of the Kensington Senior Living Project, part of the Westwood Shopping Center redevelopment.

Your consideration of these comments is much appreciated.

Lynne Battle
5157 Westbard Avenue
Bethesda, MD 20816

TESTIMONY OF LYNNE BATTLE AT THE DECEMBER 17, 2020 HEARING ON THE KENSINGTON OF BETHESDA SITE PLAN

I am Lynne Battle, a resident of Westbard Mews, and am directly impacted by the construction of the Kensington of Bethesda Senior Living Facility whose site plan application (820200200) is being considered today.

My primary focus will be on the Willett Branch Greenway Park which will be immediately adjacent to and behind the Kensington Senior Living Facility. The creation of the Willett Branch Greenway was a major recommendation of the Westbard Sector Plan and, indeed, the single most important public benefit envisioned as a result of the entire Westbard Development Project. The preliminary plan for this development included a requirement that the developer would make a parkland conveyance to the Parks Department of Lot 2 Block H to be used as a critical part of the Willett Branch Greenway Park. This requirement was tied to the entire redevelopment project including the Westbard Shopping Center and planned townhouses on the opposite side of Westbard.

Today, the site plan before you relates only to the Kensington of Bethesda Senior Living Project which is proposed under the standard method, under which a minimum of 10% of the Site Area must be Public Open Space (Zoning Ordinance Section 59.4.5.3.C). Kensington claims this is impossible and proposes to provide open space off-site under the Off-Site Options of the Zoning Ordinance (Section 59.6.3.6.C.1). It plans to fulfill its obligation by “making public park public open space improvements in an area...near the applicable master plan area.” (Zoning Ordinance Section 59.6.3.6.C.1).

While we would prefer to see Kensington create the beginning of the Greenway by naturalizing the stream and building the park on the dedicated property, we would find Kensington’s open space proposal acceptable if the public park improvements would ensure that the area improved would be attractive, usable, and enjoyable for the public. This would require significant landscaping including shrubs and flowers, the provision of seating and shade that could be removed when the Greenway is constructed so the public would find the space both open and inviting in the meantime. It is not sufficient for the developer to demolish structures, grade and stabilize the land and spread grass seed. Those efforts would

not be considered adequate for public open space on-site and should not be sufficient improvement for public space provided off-site.

Furthermore, the requirement of removing structures, grading and stabilizing the land were already conditions of the preliminary plan for the entire project. Kensington MUST do more to satisfy its off-site option and to ensure that the public does, indeed, have the benefit of attractive open space usable for enjoyment NOW, not after a number of years when additional land might be available for the creation of the Greenway Park. Failing to set such a requirement will effectively relieve Kensington of the obligation to fulfill its open space requirement now.

Secondly, the Staff Report requests that the developer “explore opportunities to daylight and enhance the Kenwood tributary as part of their land conveyance...” (Staff Report, p. 22) which is consistent with the Sector Plan recommendation that future improvements “Artfully reengineer and enhance the existing water features on the east side of Ridgefield Road as an amenity..” (Sector Plan, p. 76) As Kensington constructs this facility and as Westbard Avenue is being realigned, this is the moment for the creation of a small waterfall feature that would set off the beginning of the Greenway Park and create an appealing entrance. As the new road is rebuilt, it will be constructed over the Kenwood branch stream which flows into the Willett Branch. If such a water feature is not constructed at the time of Kensington’s development of the Senior Living Facility and the realignment of Westbard Avenue, it will be virtually impossible to be created at a later date. Kensington MUST do its part to create an impressive and inviting entrance to the Willett Branch Greenway Park, and this is the moment to ensure the public derives its promised amenity.

Finally, it is obvious that Kensington should not be permitted to allow the footing for its building to extend into the dedicated parkland. Its facility must be entirely on its remaining property rather than encroaching on the property conveyed for parkland. Kensington must also accept the floodplain that will result from a naturalized Willett Branch. In constructing the newly aligned Westbard Avenue, the developers should treat all of its stormwater to avoid massive floods of dirty water into the Willett Branch during storms.

Thank you for your attention today and I hope that the future of the Park can be assured by the Board’s firm insistence on these essentials so the

public does indeed receive the one significant benefit we were promised:
the Willett Branch Greenway Park.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lynne Battle
5157 Westbard Avenue
Bethesda, MD 20817

From: [Rachel Toker](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Folden, Matthew](#)
Subject: Build the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now
Date: Tuesday, December 15, 2020 11:46:01 AM

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

Dear MCP,

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,

Rachel Toker
Wyoming Road
Bethesda, MD 20816

From: [Juanita Hendriks](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#); [Sarah Morse](#)
Subject: Letter in support of Greenway Little Willett branch/ River Road
Date: Tuesday, December 15, 2020 11:53:33 AM

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

Dear Planning Board,

Sometimes one needs to leave their community to see what's in the wider world. It allows one to look with fresh eyes upon return to the home. I was fortunate to travel to Seoul, Korea in 2012. Seoul is a mega city--- concrete, skyscrapers, futuristic metro, and lots, and lots of people. In 2005 they dug up a highway that went through downtown (formerly a stream), and convert it to a city amenity: a river walk like they have in San Antonio, TX, or even a little closer to us, the canal walk Frederick, MD. In Seoul, Korea, Cheonggyecheon stream area is dynamic: there are many places to cross over (using stepping stones in the river or bridges) from side to side. There are places for buskers to play music. There are park benches for people to rest and watch passersby parade along the stream. And it's all accompanied by the sound of water.

I've attached a video so you can see what a completely developed stream walk amenity might look like.... but even if the Little Willett/ River road greenway amenity doesn't match Cheonggyecheon in its breadth, that's ok. Just having a naturalistic path that can develop over time will be tremendous. Let yourself be carried away through the videos of what other cities have created... we can start small but build toward these types of places that will let our community interact in this newly created public space.

Please demand that the Greenway be included as part of what the **developer** must complete to win the county's approval for its building development.

Cheonggyecheon Stream

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACYrDQXX0yU>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ko_gzcFW14 San Antonio, TX River Walk

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eVbQriULS1g> Frederick, MD Canal walk

Thank you,

Juanita Hendriks
5421 Wehawken Rd
Bethesda, MD 20816

From: [Suzy Kelly](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Folden, Matthew](#)
Subject: Build the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now
Date: Tuesday, December 15, 2020 12:22:06 PM

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

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

Suzanne Kelly
4808 Jamestown Rd
Bethesda, MD 20816

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

From: [Lara Harvey](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Folden, Matthew](#)
Subject: Build the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now
Date: Tuesday, December 15, 2020 12:33:33 PM

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

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

Lara Harvey
5228 Baltimore Ave, Bethesda, MD 20816

From: [Alex woldemicael](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Folden, Matthew](#)
Subject: Build the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now
Date: Tuesday, December 15, 2020 1:35:43 PM

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

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

Alex Woldemichael
5153 Westbard Ave.
Bethesda, MD 20816

From: [EMILIA MENOCAL](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Folden, Matthew](#)
Subject: Build the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now
Date: Tuesday, December 15, 2020 1:42:52 PM

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

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

Emilia Menocal

Ilia Menocal
5215 Westbard Av.
Bethesda, MD 20816
202-297-2422 (C)

Sent from my iPhone

From: [David Pistenmaa](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Folden, Matthew](#)
Subject: Build the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park now
Date: Tuesday, December 15, 2020 1:52:57 PM

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

To Whom It May Concern,

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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I live along Willet Branch where the stream changes from a concrete channel to a natural stream. The natural appearance makes all the difference in the world. It would be wonderful to see the concrete channel near River Road returned to its natural form. Thank you for your work on this and your commitment to parks in Westbard,

David A. Pistenmaa
5210 Willet Bridge Ct.
Bethesda, MD 20816
214-435-6172

From: [Michael Wolfson](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Willett Branch Stream Valley Park
Date: Tuesday, December 15, 2020 2:37:26 PM

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

Chair Casey Anderson,

Thank you for holding a public meeting on Thursday to discuss the Sector Plan for the Westwood II Center redevelopment. Living less than half a mile from the proposed development site, this is of high importance to me. My family frequently uses Montgomery County public parks, including the Capital Crescent Trail, and the parks are one of the major reasons we moved to this location five years ago.

As I understand the proposed plan, the developer will carve out space for the eventual Willett Branch Stream Valley Park, but will leave the land undeveloped. While this will ultimately be a boon, it begs the question of how long it may take the County to develop this park. Since the developer will be required to clear this land anyways before handing it over to the County, it only makes sense to require the developer to deliver a fully landscaped park to enable residents (including those of the developer's proposed assisted living facility) to use it immediately. Please consider adding this requirement to the plan.

Thank you for your continued support of our little community and our parks.

Michael B. Wolfson
5151 Westbard Avenue

From: [Phyllis Edelman](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: December 17, 2020, Item #6, Kensington of Bethesda
Date: Tuesday, December 15, 2020 3:44:10 PM
Attachments: [2020-12-17 Kensington of Bethesda PEdelman copy.docx](#)

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

Dear Casey,

Attached please find my comments on the need for a traffic signal at Westbard Ave. near the Kensington of Bethesda entranceway.

Many thanks,
Phyllis Edelman
5810 Ogden Court
Bethesda, MD 20816
Predelman@gmail.com

Sent from my iPad

**Item 6. Westwood Shopping Center/ Kensington of Bethesda
Planning Board hearing on December 17, 2020**

Phyllis Edelman—Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights, 5810 Ogden Court, Bethesda, MD 20816 Email: predelman@gmail.com

Dear Chair Anderson, Vice-Chair Fani-Gonzalez and Members Cichy, Patterson, and Verma:

I am speaking on behalf of the Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights, an umbrella organization representing 19 communities in the southwest portion of Montgomery County. I am a resident of Springfield, one of the CCCFH member communities.

From the beginning of the Westbard Sector Plan, community members asked for a senior living facility to replace the Manor Care facility across the street from where the Kensington of Bethesda will be built. Presumably, community members wanted a facility where they or their elderly family members could live nearby. With prospective ties to our nearby communities, it is very important that future residents of Kensington of Bethesda feel safe whether walking on our streets or driving nearby. A traffic signal just a few feet south of their front door, on realigned Westbard Avenue where it meets with the 5500 block of Westbard Avenue, [which I will refer to as the Westbard Avenue Extension (Ext.)], will ensure the safety and well being of the residents, their visitors and staff.

Traffic Signal Needed

We need a traffic signal for vehicles and pedestrians at that intersection as well as a marked crosswalk on Westbard Avenue when Westbard Avenue is realigned. Please remember that in accordance with the Westbard Sector Plan approved in 2016, the residents of the 5500 block of Westbard Avenue can petition the county to close off their block — except for emergency vehicles—by River Road. Consequently, the current traffic volume (just under 10,000 vehicles per week and 330 trucks) on the 5500 block will be diverted to the realigned Westbard Avenue, creating a greater flow of traffic that vehicles to and from Westbard Ave. Ext. would have to cross over or turn into. (Note: It is understandable that during the actual building of the realignment much of this traffic may seek alternative routes to get to and from Massachusetts Avenue, which is the ultimate route for many, however, once realigned, much of this traffic is expected to return.)

According to the Westwood Signal Warrant Study dated June 12, 2018 for Westbard Avenue and the North Access, it indicates that the driveway intersection meets the warrant for interruption of continuous traffic. Although the volumes would not be the same for the Westbard Ave. Ext. side street, it stands to reason that the same warrant may be met with the intersection of the realigned Westbard Avenue. This would ensure that the side street, Westbard Ave. Ext., would not have excessive delays due to the heavy volume on the major street. We are therefore requesting a traffic study be done with projected volumes to determine if a signal is warranted at this intersection. Waiting for the developer, Regency, to reevaluate “the signal warrants following completion of the Westbard Shopping Center Development,” per your December 4, 2020 report is unacceptable to the nearby communities and the residents who currently patronize Westwood I.

When the Springfield community agreed with the developers and the planners to realign Westbard Avenue, the objective was to protect the Springfield community from the excessive traffic the new development would generate. The realignment was not intended to put the entire Springfield community as well as residents from nearby communities at risk because of interrupted traffic flow along Westbard Avenue.

Vehicular Safety

Ridgefield Road is a major road in the Springfield community, a community with more than 650 homes. Although it is on the north side of community, because of the way the internal roads are designed, many of the streets on the south side of Springfield, those closest to Massachusetts Avenue, also flow into Ridgefield Road. The Springfield community, as well as the neighboring community, Wood Acres, consisting of more than 400 homes, uses Ridgefield Road as an exit and entrance to access shopping at Westwood I, the Kenwood Shopping Center along River Road and other commercial establishments along River Road.

Consequently, traffic engineers should have reviewed the following:

1. Number of vehicles that turn right from eastbound Ridgefield Road onto the current Westbard Avenue, headed to Westwood I shopping and Massachusetts Avenue. Those vehicles will still be turning right – from the Westbard Ave. Ext. onto Westbard Avenue to shopping at Westwood I and Massachusetts Ave.
2. Number of vehicles going straight from the current eastbound Ridgefield Road towards River Road. Those vehicles will be turning left from Westbard Ave. Ext. onto realigned northbound Westbard Avenue, crossing

at least two lanes of traffic – maybe five – if they will be turning right onto River Road.

3. Number of vehicles going north along Westbard Avenue, turning left onto westbound Ridgefield Road. Those vehicles will be turning left from northbound realigned Westbard Avenue to Westbard Ave. Ext. crossing at least two lanes of traffic.

4. Number of vehicles going straight from River Road, up Ridgefield Road and crossing Westbard Avenue to get into the Springfield community. These vehicles will be turning right from the realigned Westbard Avenue onto Westbard Ave. Ext. and most likely left onto Ridgefield Road.

Without a signal at this intersection, MCDOT is setting up a dangerous vehicular situation for members of the Springfield and Wood Acres communities, residents of the Kensington of Bethesda and members of the 34-townhouse community that is planned for the former Manor Care site across the street from the Kensington of Bethesda. Numerous vehicles will be attempting to enter or exit from Westbard Ave. Ext. to access Westbard Avenue and River Road, a set-up for potential accidents just a few feet south of the entrance to the Kensington of Bethesda.

In addition, while the Department of Transportation did a sight study for trucks coming out of the Kensington of Bethesda delivery truck area, they did not do a sight study for the vehicles, bicycles and walkers coming along northbound Westbard Avenue heading towards River Road. Just past the parking garage entrance of the Kensington, Westbard Avenue, as shown on the plans, will curve and dip, creating a blind spot for those coming around the curve. It could be difficult for vehicles and bicyclists to stop in time as trucks depart from the service area. With a traffic signal at Westbard Ave. and the Westbard Ave. Ext. this potential safety hazard will be ameliorated.

Pedestrian Safety

In addition to the need for a traffic signal for vehicular safety, it is also needed for pedestrian safety. Pre-pandemic there was a school bus stop at eastbound Ridgefield Road, in the Springfield community, just before the intersection with Westbard Avenue. While elementary school children are most likely to be met by a responsible adult at the bus stop to help them cross Ridgefield Road or Westbard Avenue, the same is not true for middle and high school students. Twenty to 30 young people spill out of these buses at one time. Some of the students head west, up Ridgefield Road, others head onto the 5500 block of Westbard Avenue and others head across Westbard Avenue and south towards

the Westwood Tower apartments. I don't think you need to be told how unobservant these students are as they cross Westbard Avenue even with a traffic signal at that corner. In the mornings, with students running to catch the school bus, there have been several accidents at this corner. Without a traffic signal, there is a greater likelihood of more accidents between vehicles and young people, a situation that does not align with the county's Vision Zero pedestrian initiative.

Besides the young people, older ambulatory residents of the Kensington of Bethesda may want to walk within Springfield, especially if they have ties to the neighborhood. Having a traffic signal and a crosswalk outside the facility will ensure their safety as well.

In addition, one of the rare positive outcomes of the Covid-19 pandemic is that more people are walking in our communities. Springfield is within walking distance of the Capital Crescent Trail and crossing Westbard Avenue is required in order to get to the trail either via River Road or walking through the Kenwood community across River Road. People are most likely to walk the shortest distance to get to the CCT and that, too, requires a signal and crosswalk at Westbard Avenue and the Westbard Ave. Ext.

Bicycle Safety

Another side effect of the pandemic has been more bicyclists on our streets and many of these also head to the CCT. And, with a cycling lane along Westbard Avenue, presumably it will be safer for more people to bicycle from nearby neighborhoods. For cyclists coming northbound along Westbard Avenue, not having a traffic signal at Westbard Avenue and the Westbard Ave. Ext. creates a dangerous situation. If they don't see vehicles turning left from the Westbard Ave. Ext. towards River Road or if the vehicle drivers don't see them, especially if the driver is planning on turning right at River Road, this could result in a serious accident.

Vehicle Recount Warranted; Actuated Signal Requested

For all of the reasons above, we hope the MCDOT will reconsider its decision not to put a traffic signal on Westbard Avenue at the Westbard Ave. Ext. and to consider reevaluating the signal warrants after Kensington of Bethesda is built and Westbard Avenue is realigned, rather than waiting until the completion of the Westbard Shopping Center. While we want a count of traffic as discussed above, we recognize that at this time, in the midst of a pandemic, the vehicular counts may not be accurate, however, a projection of proposed volumes can likely be made using previous traffic counts. Public school students are attending virtual

school, so there are no school buses running and many people are working from home and therefore not commuting. If additional volume data is required, we request that as soon as our world gets back to some sort of “normal,” that a count of vehicles be done.

At the very least, we hope you will consider a fully-actuated signal at Westbard Avenue and Westbard Ave. Ext. Vehicles waiting to turn from Westbard Ave. Ext. to Westbard Avenue or those along northbound Westbard Avenue waiting to turn left onto the Westbard Ave. Ext. could then activate a signal. In addition, pedestrian facilities including push buttons for walk signals, painted crosswalks and pedestrian ramps can also be installed. Keep in mind, however, that with at least 155 residents in the Kensington of Bethesda, followed by additional families in the 34 townhomes across the street and later redevelopment of the Westwood I site with 190 apartments and 72 townhomes, this traffic signal may have to be permanently activated.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,
Phyllis Edelman
On behalf of the CCCFH