

Item 8 - Correspondence

From: [rg steinman](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Testimony: Silver Spring Fiber Hub, Mandatory Referral No. MR2024018
Date: Monday, July 22, 2024 10:21:29 AM
Attachments: [Mandatory referral testimony \(rg-FINAL\)^J Jul2025.docx](#)

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Dear Commissioners,
Please find my attached testimony for the July 25, 2024 Silver Spring Fiber Hub, Mandatory Referral No. MR2024018.
Thank you for taking my comments into consideration.
~ rg Steinman
9009 Fairview Rd
Silver Spring, 20910

July 25, 2024

Subject: Silver Spring Fiber Hub, Mandatory Referral No. MR2024018

To: Montgomery County Planning Board Commissioners
From: Roberta G (rg) Steinman & John Parrish

Dear Commissioners,

We are Woodside Park residents, and we live on Fairview Road, a block down the street from the proposed Fiber Hub. I, and several other Woodside Park residents, have had considerable correspondence with The Montgomery County Department of General Services (DGS) regarding the proposed Silver Spring Fiber Hub. I sent a copy of some of these correspondences to Mr. Gatling, the planning staff lead on this project, though I did not get a response from him.

We have 2 corrections to the staff document and 5 additional comments, concerns, and recommendations regarding the proposed Silver Spring Fiber Hub project.

1. Staff Report (SR), page 1: "*No community correspondence has been received for this Application.*"

The community has been corresponding with county officials on this matter, and we were not aware that this information was not being communicated with Planning staff. This is the website we were told to go to for answers to the questions and concerns we raised with Fiber Hub staff: [Please review questions and answers from the meeting here](#).¹ Perhaps these communications were never shared with Planning Staff, though they should have been.

2. SR, page 9: "*The Site itself does not contain any significant or specimen trees...*"

In fact, we have measured the dbh for each tree on the property, and there are 3 specimen trees on this site: #55, Black Walnut - 46" dbh; #62, Tulip Poplar – 38" dbh²; #56, Tulip Poplar – 32" dbh. There is a 4th specimen tree immediately adjacent on Park property, #70, Black Locust – 31" dbh.

At the May 22 zoom meeting, the abutting neighbor requested that the Black Walnut tree be removed. **We adamantly oppose removal of this tree.** It is unnecessary and it would be a significant loss. This Black Walnut is a specimen tree with a 46" dbh. It is the largest and oldest tree on the property, and as such, is the ecologically most valuable tree on the property. Removing this tree flies in the face of Montgomery County's climate and urban tree canopy goals. The tree is not on the neighbor's property, though some limbs overhang their property. If any of these limbs are unhealthy and/or pose a safety hazard, then removal of the offending limbs would be acceptable. Otherwise the Walnut tree should remain unharmed.

3. **LANDSCAPE CONCERNS/SCREENING:** SR, page 8: "*The Project will add twelve (12) Arborvitae trees in addition to native ground cover and canopy trees...*" Page 10: "*The Parks Department provided feedback on the proposed landscape plantings to ensure appropriate native species are used.*"

Screening Recommendations: We applaud the original decision not to plant Leyland Cypress (X *Cupressocyparis leylandii*) to screen the building. However, the attributes that make the Leyland Cypress a **poor choice also apply to Green Giant Arborvitae.** Green Giant Arborvitae is susceptible to breakage and disfigurement (bowing and bending out) from ice storms and wet snow. And it is an unnatural hybrid (*Thuja standishii* (Japanese Arborvitae) X *T. plicata* (Western Red Cedar) that would not be able to occur otherwise and is **not native anywhere.** Green Giant quickly grows very large, 40 to 60 feet and a width of 12 to 18 feet, and becomes a problem when planted in a space that is inadequate for the tree's full size.

For screening we recommend evergreen trees native to our region, including Eastern Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), and American Arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis*). Some hardy non-native evergreen species to consider include White Spruce (*Picea glauca*) or Norway Spruce (*Picea abies*). All these trees are long-lived and have proven to be well adapted to our climate and soils. Installing plants that are 6-8 ft tall would ensure that privacy screening would be achieved quickly.

¹ [Q and A fiber community meeting 5_24_24 updated 6_5_24.pdf\(montgomerycountymd.gov\)](#)

² The 32" dbh measurement for tree #62, Tulip Poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) in the Forest Conservation Exemption pdf is incorrect.

4. LANDSCAPE CONCERNS/GROUND COVER WITHIN FENCED AREA:

The power point presentation from the Silver Spring Fiber Hub Mandatory Referral Community Meeting on May 22, 2024³ indicated a plan to plant a ground cover consisting of 10,200 non-native *Pachysandra procumbens*, which, following our comments, they changed to a native ground cover, *Packera aurea*. However, planting 10,000+ of anything creates an uninteresting monoculture of little ecological value. Ten thousand *Packera* doesn't provide a diversity of ecological benefits or wildlife value throughout the seasons. Please reconsider a diversity of native species for ground cover outside the fenced area, as recommended below in the discussion of landscape concerns outside of fenced area.

5. LANDSCAPE CONCERNS/GROUND COVER OUTSIDE OF FENCED AREA:

SR, page 10: “*The Parks Department provided feedback on the proposed landscape plantings to ensure appropriate native species are used...*”

SR, page 13: “*The open space on the site is located towards the rear of the Property, which provides a linear buffered transition between the Subject Property and the surrounding neighborhood. Further, the landscape design provides evergreen and native canopy trees onsite which complement the existing trees adjacent to the site and cumulatively provide a dense and diverse planted buffer.*”

Again, regarding the plan to plant 10,200 *Packera aurea* (Golden Ragwort) for ground cover outside the fenced area, we concur with staff's recommendation for a “**diverse planted buffer.**” **We recommend planting a diversity of native species that will thrive under the site's shady conditions and that will integrate well with Fairview Urban Park and provide seasonal interest as well.** Our recommendations include the following perennial native ground covers that thrive in shady areas: White Wood Aster (*Eurybia divaricata*), Schreber's Aster (*Eurybia schreberi*), Bluestem Goldenrod (*Solidago caesia*), Orange Coneflower (*Rudbeckia fulgida*), and Golden Ragwort (*Packera aurea*). Importantly, these flowering native plants support local pollinators – bees and butterflies – and ensure the resilience and health of our local ecosystem and create beauty for all to enjoy.

Native trees and shrubs to plant outside fenced area, to further enhance and diversify the native ground cover plantings

Approximately half the site's 15,360 sq ft area will be outside the fenced perimeter. This leaves a considerable area to populate with a diversity of native trees and shrubs. There are a number of hardy native trees and shrubs that are well-adapted to this site's shady, woodland conditions that we recommend for planting outside of the fenced area.

LIST OF RECOMMENDED NATIVE SHRUBS AND TREES

These are the locally native trees and shrubs that we recommend for planting outside of the fenced area at the rear of the property, behind the building.

Shrubs/Small Trees

Fringetree (*Chionanthus virginicus*)
American Hazelnut (*Corylus americana*)
Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*)
Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*)
Black Haw Viburnum (*Viburnum prunifolium*)

Trees

Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)
American Holly (*Ilex opaca*) [already many on the site]
Sweet Bay Magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*)
Black Gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*) (NOTE: This is the official tree of Montgomery County)
Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*)
Willow Oak (*Quercus phellos*)

³ You can view the presentation from the May 22 Community Meeting [here](https://montgomerycountymd.gov/DGS/Resources/Files/OPD/240522_SilverSpringFiberHub_CommunityMtg_for_website.pdf).
(https://montgomerycountymd.gov/DGS/Resources/Files/OPD/240522_SilverSpringFiberHub_CommunityMtg_for_website.pdf)

Planting native trees is critically important for the protection and restoration of urban biodiversity. In addition, native trees, both large and small, provide a host of valuable ecosystem benefits: they sequester CO2 from the atmosphere, filter pollutants from the air, cool the air with their transpiration, act as a windbreak, provide shade cover, and enrich the composition and texture of the soil; they are integral to the water cycle, infiltrating water into the soil and filtering runoff; and they provide a source of food for wildlife, including nectar, pollen, nuts, and berries, as well as habitat and refuge for wildlife. The beauty, peace and serenity that these trees provide are also vital for our health and quality of life. **Because native plants evolved with our local climate, soil types, and wildlife, they are low maintenance, require far less water, and provide vital food and shelter for wildlife.**

We advocate the planting of appropriate native plants to protect and restore urban biodiversity and ecosystem health both for the benefit of wildlife and for the well-being of the human communities. We would be happy to discuss native planting choices with Montgomery Parks staff.

6. WE ADVOCATE FOR THE LOWER UNFENCED PORTION OF THE SITE TO BECOME A PART OF FAIRVIEW PARK

Along with others in the Woodside Park neighborhood, **we advocate that the unbuilt portion of the area in the lower, unfenced part of the site, become part of Fairview Urban Park.** The 30x30 sq ft building can fit entirely within the existing parking area. Given that the site area is considerably larger (15,360 sq ft) than the planned Fiber Hub building, we recommend that the unused portion of the property become part of Fairview Urban Park.

As the plan entails the removal of a considerable amount of impervious surface area, (at the May 22 meeting, we were told it was 40%), and since no hard structures are being built in the storm water management area, whatever rainfall there is will naturally infiltrate into the newly created planting area. This unfenced area will essentially function as part of the park; hence, it makes sense to simply fold it into Fairview Urban Park.

7. PROPOSED SIDEWALK IS UNNEEDED AND UNNECESSARILY ADDS MORE IMPERVIOUS SURFACE

SR, page 3: *“The Applicant is encouraged to improve Fairview Road, a Neighborhood Street, with a six-foot-wide (6 ft) sidewalk and a sixfoot-wide (6 ft) street buffer along the Site frontage. The Applicant is strongly encouraged to extend the sidewalk to connect with the existing sidewalk on Spring Street, approximately 95 feet to the south.”*

A 6 foot-wide sidewalk already exists on the other side of Fairview Road, opposite the hub. It serves the office buildings on that side of the street and the adjacent townhouses. This sidewalk also connects to two crosswalks that allow people to safely cross Spring Street and Fairview Road

It doesn't serve any purpose to build a 6 foot-wide sidewalk on the other side of Fairview Road along the site frontage, and then extend it 95 feet to meet the Spring Street sidewalk. The only people that will be coming to the hub are the service and maintenance people, and they will be driving to and from the site, as clearly stated in the staff report on page 13: *“All trips made to the Site will be made by contractors or employees and they will arrive at the Site by personal or corporate vehicle.”* A 6 foot-wide sidewalk with a 95 foot extension to Spring Street serves only to increase imperviousness and would negate the positive environmental benefits of the planned removal of a considerable amount of impervious surface area, and reduces green space as well.

IN CONCLUSION

- Plant a diversity of native plants – ground cover, herbaceous layer, shrubs and trees
- Retain the specimen Black Walnut tree
- Incorporate the lower, unfenced portion of the site into Fairview Park
- Do not build a 6 foot-wide sidewalk frontage, or the 95 foot sidewalk extension to Spring Street

Respectfully submitted
Roberta G (rg) Steinman & John Parrish
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From: [David Remes](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Coello, Catherine](#)
Subject: Fiber Hub
Date: Tuesday, July 23, 2024 3:31:07 PM

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To the Members of the Planning Board:

I'm a resident of Woodside Park. I live on Noyes Drive near the intersection of Noyes and Fairview Road, near the site of the new fiber hub, which is to be built across the street from 8905 Fairview Road.

Kudos to the Montgomery County Department of General Services for dedicating this derelict parcel to a good public use. I write to address transportation and sidewalk issues flagged on page 3 of the Staff Recommendations:

In conformance with the 2024 Complete Streets Design Guide, the Applicant is encouraged to improve Fairview Road, a Neighborhood Street, with a six-foot-wide (6 ft) sidewalk and a six-foot-wide (6 ft) street buffer along the Site frontage. The Applicant is strongly encouraged to extend the sidewalk to connect with the existing sidewalk on Spring Street, approximately 95 feet to the south. (Para.7)

A sidewalk along the Site frontage is unnecessary because "only authorized employees and contractors [will] have access to the hub, and parking spaces will be provided for them inside the gate." (Recommendations, page 9.) Authorized employees and contractors who visit the hub on foot will be able to use the sidewalk on the frontage of 8905 Fairview Road directly across the street. In that regard, there is no sidewalk on the far side of the hub with which a new sidewalk would connect. There is, however, a sidewalk directly across the street, on the 8905 side of Fairview Road, with which the existing sidewalk does connect.

Parks suggests "expanding the project scope to include a 12-foot-wide curb cut and drive apron on Fairview Road to allow for the future repositioning of maintenance access and potential provision of ADA parking for park users to Fairview Road Urban Park from Fairview Road instead of the current locations along Spring Street." (Para.10) Running a sidewalk to Spring Street would come at the price of paving an impermeable surface over open soil and grass. That would be a gratuitous intrusion, given that the sidewalk itself is unnecessary. Parks' suggested course, intended to facilitate "future" and "potential" (Para.10) development, is premature at best, needlessly increasing the overall cost of the project, diverting resources that could be used for more immediate needs, and disrupting traffic along Fairview Road and Spring Street before there is an actual need.

Thank you for your consideration,

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