



November 12, 2024

Via email: MCP-Chair@mncppc-mc.org

Mr. Artie Harris, Planning Board Chair  
Montgomery Planning Board  
2425 Reedy Drive, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Wheaton, MD 20902

RE: Bethesda Sector Minor Master Plan Amendment  
Planning Board Hearing Dec. 2, 2024

Dear Mr. Harris,

I am writing the Planning Board on behalf of St. John's Episcopal Church, located at the gateway to Downtown Bethesda. Church representatives participated in several work sessions and listening sessions offered on the Bethesda Minor Map Amendment and shared concerns at those sessions with planning staff and in a September 12<sup>th</sup> letter to the Planning Board.

St. John's, located at the corner of Wisconsin Avenue and Bradley Lane, has been an important part of the Bethesda community since 1874. Today, our church is a vibrant, *growing* religious community, with more than 1,000 members, including hundreds of families and parishioners of all ages. We have a very active and engaged community that has a proud history of supporting Bethesda and greater Montgomery County by incubating important community service organizations such as Nourishing Bethesda, Bethesda Cares, and Montgomery Hospice, which got their start in our facilities.

At the beginning of the Minor Plan Amendment process, it came to our attention and to our surprise that if the development cap was reached, St. John's could no longer add any Floor Area to our facilities despite the zoning and density changes addressed in the 2017 Bethesda Downtown Plan. We understand this to be the case for all properties in the Bethesda Sector Plan, not just ours. St. John's needs the ability to modernize and expand its facilities to meet the needs of its parish and ministries.

Our concern was that the plan amendment focused more on developer needs and building roads and parks. Bethesda needs much more than that to be vibrant community. The needs of small business, non-profits, organizations for the arts, and houses of worship also need to be addressed. These operations need to be able to continue to grow and thrive, supporting and benefitting the greater community.

St. John's also supports its neighbors. Residents expressed concerns at the listening sessions about controlled growth, increased traffic, and lack of affordable housing. With many of our parishioners living in the greater Bethesda area, we welcome the work of planning staff and the Planning Board to address these as well.

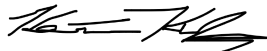
We reviewed the October 2024 draft Minor Master Plan Amendment for the Planning Board hearing. **We understand that the plan amendment recommends removal of the development cap, implementation of additional development controls and increase in the PIP payment to over \$15.57 per square foot of floor area. St. John's wants to go on the record supporting these proposed**

St. John's Church, Norwood Parish  
6701 Wisconsin Avenue  
Chevy Chase, MD 20815

**changes.** In expressing this support, St. John's assumes the technical changes to the CR zone which may come later in the implementation phase do not adversely affect the typical expansion needs as a church.

We look forward to working with the planning staff, Planning Board and County Council as this minor map amendment proceeds through to approval and implementation.

Regards,



Kevin Kehus

Senior Warden

CC:

Elza Hize-McCoy email [elza.hize-mccoy@montgomeryplanning.org](mailto:elza.hize-mccoy@montgomeryplanning.org)

Sheila Temourian, St. John's Chancellor

Janet Hall, Junior Warden

Suzanne Welch, Property Co-chair

Cindy Gibson, Councilmember Friedson's Office