



Tamarack Triangle Civic Association

Silver Spring, MD 20904

March 31, 2025

Montgomery County Planning Board
Attn: Artie Harris, Chair
2425 Reddie Drive
Wheaton, MD 20902

Subject: Old Columbia Pike/Prosperity Drive Improvements Testimony

Dear Chairman Harris:

I provide this written testimony on behalf of the Tamarack Triangle Civic Association (TTCA). We are in general agreement with staff recommendation concerning the Old Columbia Pike/Prosperity Dr Project, but some changes are needed.

Alternative 2 as recommended by the staff is our alternative of choice. From public hearings held, this has repeatedly been voiced as the preferred choice of the people who live in the general geographic vicinity of the bridge, who want to keep the bridge as a recreational thoroughfare for the neighborhood and as a means of non-vehicular mode of travel between the two economic centers of North White Oak and White Oak Center on New Hampshire Avenue. They would rather have automobiles use Route 29 as the preferred means to travers between these two centers.

From various community presentations provided by the developers of Viva White Oak, they have indicated that they plan to have the intersections of Route 29 and Industrial Parkway and Tech Road realigned to support new vehicular traffic volumes and patterns destined to and from the Viva White Oak. Yet, the plan submitted by DOT does not address this future vehicular influx with possible consequences of contributing to congestion and public safety conditions. This project does not provide needed capacity at the above intersections to support this planned future development and increase of vehicular volume.

We at TTCA ask for Recommendation 2 be accepted and the DOT be informed to incorporate into their consideration for realignment of the Route 29 and Industrial Parkway and Tech Road intersections the inevitable development at Viva White Oak and the increased vehicular volume that accompanies it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Myo Khin".

Peter Myo Khin
President, Tamarack Triangle Civic Association

Greater Colesville Citizens Association

**██████████
Colesville, MD 20914**

March 31, 2025

Montgomery County Planning Board
Attn: Artie Harris, Chair
2425 Reddie Drive
Wheaton, MD 20902

Re: Old Columbia Pike/Prosperity Drive Improvements Testimony

Dear Chairman Harris:

I will speak for both the Greater Colesville Citizens Association (GCCA) and LABQUEST. We generally support the staff recommendations concerning the Old Columbia Pike/Prosperity Dr Project, but some changes are needed.

We support Alternative 3 as recommended by the staff. We also agree with staff that the project not proceed with the intersection options as presented in the Project Prospectus for either the intersection of Old Columbia Pike/Industrial Parkway or the intersection of Old Columbia Pike/Prosperity Drive/Tech Road. However, the project should proceed with the other parts of the project.

The project does not provide needed capacity at the above intersections to support planned development. MCB Real Estate LLC, the developer of Viva White Oak, has told us that they plan to design and build improvements to three intersections under LATIP: US29/Old Columbia Pike at both Industrial Pkwy and at Tech Rd, and at Industrial Pkwy/Tech Rd. However, MCB has indicated to us that it is not ready to address the design of those intersections. Rather, their current focus is on gaining county approval to construct the three master-planned roads within Viva White Oak.

Second, the proposed configuration is not adequate from a safety point of view. We agree with the staff report for the intersection at Tech Rd that through and left-turns need to be allowed. At Industrial Pkwy, the staff notes that only northbound right turns are currently allowed from Old Columbia Pike. That restriction makes for a hazardous situation to access both directions on US29 for the large number of residents currently living south of Industrial Pkwy. The DOT report notes that some drivers weave through the intersection against design features or undertake mid-block U-turns to access US29 (see pdf page 345 of the DOT report).

We have developed one possible design to address the above limitations, which is attached for your information. That design may not be the best but the intent is to show that at least one design exists. Our design just adds signals on Old Columbia Pike (replacing stop signs), makes no change to the signal phasing at Tech Rd and only adds another phase at Industrial Pkwy. It would require turning lane changes to add capacity and to permit thru/turns on Old Columbia

Pike at both Tech Rd and Old Columbia Pike. The final design should wait for MCB to focus on these intersections.

While outside the scope of this study, we envision the BRT Orange corridor and Randolph Rd Corridor would be routed through the Life Science and White Oak Activities as illustrated in the attachment. That routing would include using Old Columbia Pike south of Industrial Pkwy with stations added to Columbia Towers and White Oak Towers Apartments, both with large populations of potential transit riders. We think that substantially improved transit is required for these two activity centers to achieve the non-auto driver mode share identified in the master plan and Thrive. To provide that transit service, project Alternative 3 is required.

Thanks for considering our testimony.

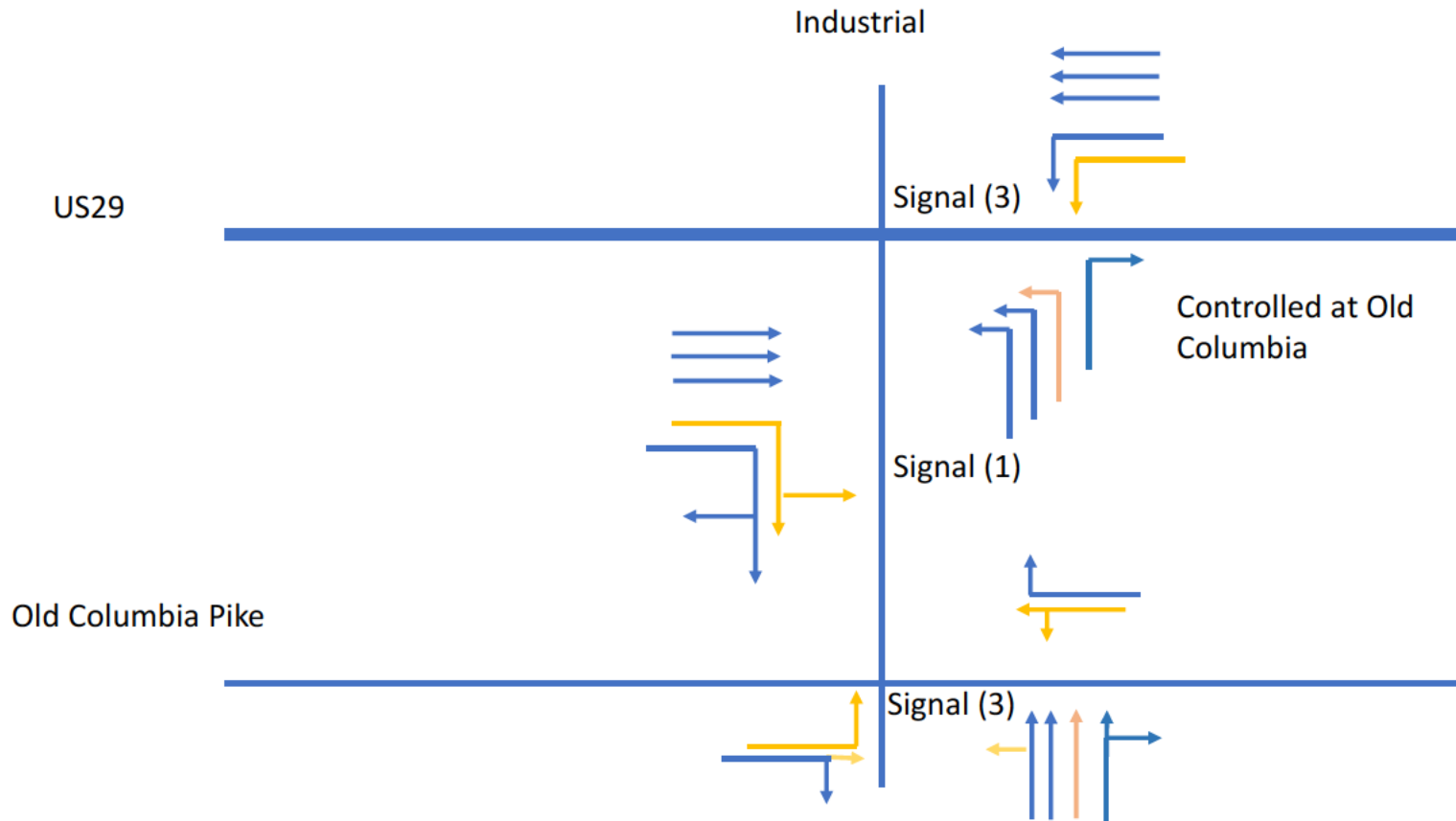
Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Daniel L. Wilhelm".

Daniel L. Wilhelm

GCCA President

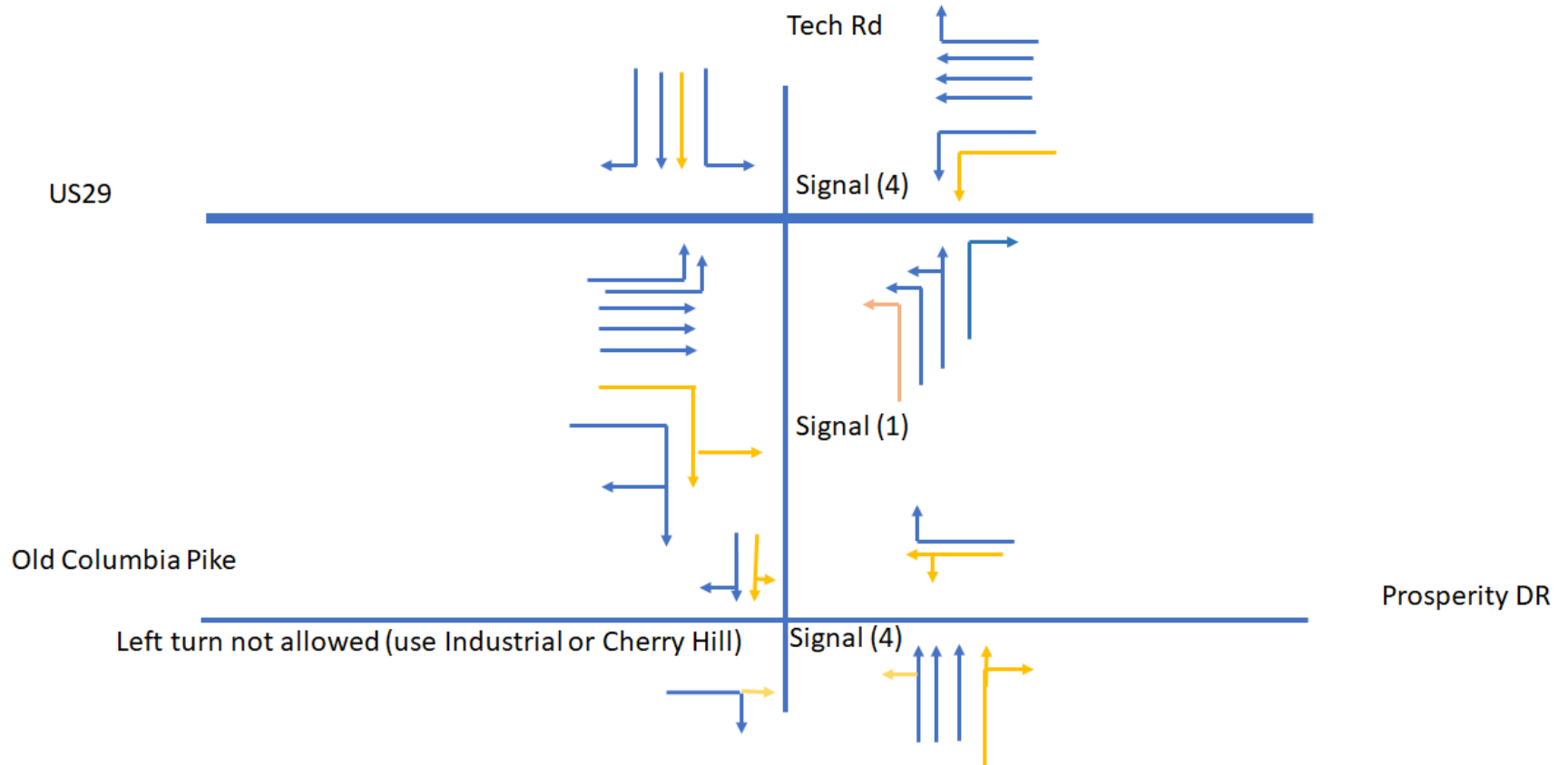
LABQUEST Proposed Movements at US29 and Industrial Pkwy



LABQUEST Proposed Signal Phasing at Industria Pkwy (no turns on red)

Street	Direction	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5	With added capacity
US29	SB Left	G	R	R	R	R	2 lanes
	SB Thru	G	G	R	R	R	3 lanes
	NB Thru	R	G	G	R	R	3 lanes
	NB Right	R	R	G	R	R	2 lanes
Old Columbia	SB	R	R	R	R	G	1 right 1 left/thru
	NB	R	R	R	R	G	1 left, 1 right/thru
Industrial	WB (Old Columbia)	R	R	R	G	R	1 left/thru, 2 thru, 1 right/thru
	WB (US29)	R	R	R	G	G	3 left, 1 ight

LABQUEST Proposed Movements at Tech Road for US29 / Old Columbia Pike



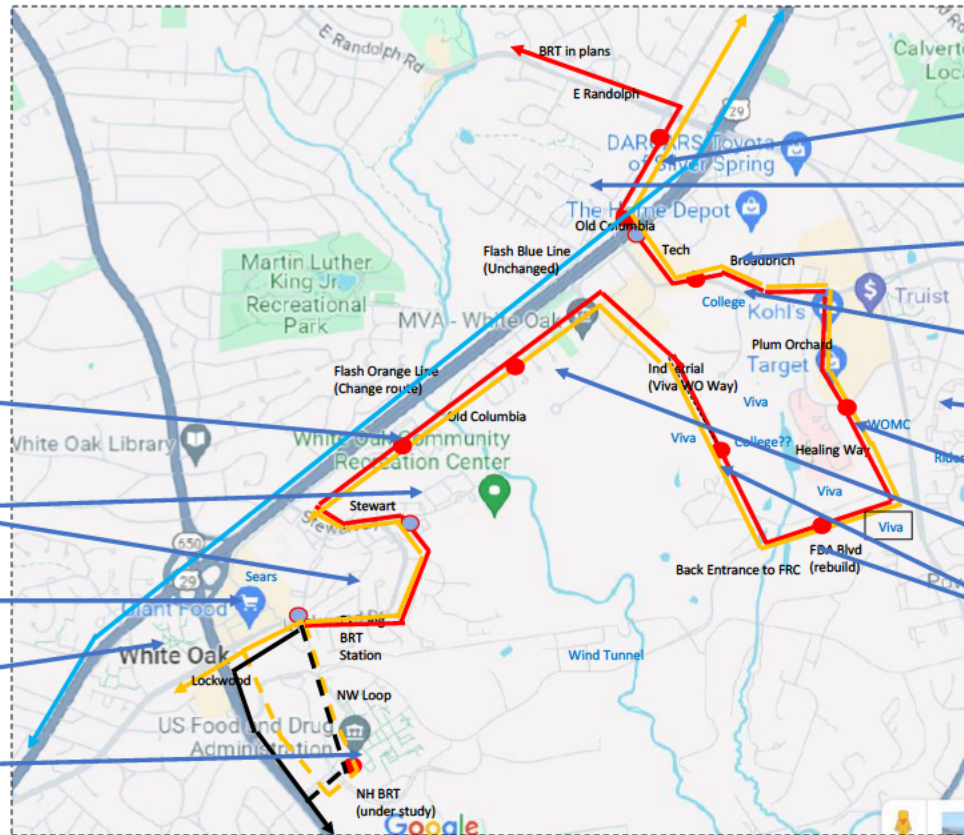
LABQUEST Proposed Signal Phasing

Street	Direction	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5	
US29	SB Left	G	R	R	R	R	2 lanes
	SB Thru	G	G	R	R	R	3 lanes
	NB left	R	R	G	R	R	2 lanes
	NB Thru	R	G	G	R	R	3 lanes
	NB Right	R	R	G	R	R	2 lanes
Old Columbia	SB (no turn on red)	R	G	R	R	R	1 right, 1 left/thru
	NB	R	G (no left turn)	R	R	R	1 right/thru , no left turn
Tech Rd @29	WB	R	R	R	G	R	2 left, 1 left/thru, 1 right
	EB	R	R	R	R	G	2 thru, 1 right, 1 left
Tech @ Old Columbia	WB	R	R	R	G	R	1 left/thru, 2 thur, 1 right/thru
	EB	R	R	R	R	G	1 right/thru, 1 left/thru

Desired BRT Routing Thru Life Science Center and White Oak Center

Major People Locations

- White Oak Towers Apt
- Lots of garden apt and townhouses
- White Oak Shopping Ctr With Sears replacement
- Enclave (3 high rise Bldg)
- FDA



Major People Locations

- Adventist World HQ
- Apt Complex
- White Oak Apt/& townhouses
- College Education Ctr
- Riderwood
- Hospital
- Columbia Towers
- Viva White Oak (12M sq ft)
- Likely New College Campus (in Viva)

Note that Orange Corridor moved from US29 to Old Columbia Pike between Briggs Chaney Rd and Tech Rd. Several stations can be added along Old Columbia Pike



Eyes of Paint Branch

Grassroots Conservation, Education, and Action for the Paint Branch and its Watershed

Testimony by David Dunmire, President

Montgomery County Planning Board Hearing
2425 Reedie Drive, Wheaton, MD 20902

Item #9: Old Columbia Pike/Prosperity Drive Improvements – Stewart Lane to Cherry Hill Road

April 3, 2025

For the record, my name is David Dunmire. I am a resident of the Paint Branch headwaters, and I am testifying on behalf of a local conservation group, Eyes of Paint Branch. We believe that down-selecting to a single alternative based on the limited environmental information in the Staff Report would be unacceptably risky. The sensitive environmental features for this project are in the park, as are the significant impacts. A more thorough environmental analysis in which minimization and mitigation of impacts are identified for each alternative is needed. This should be done in partnership with the Parks Department, and the selection criteria for the alternatives should explicitly include minimization and mitigation.

The Paint Branch watershed is a very special place. The Paint Branch Stream Valley Park contains some of the highest quality and most unique natural resources in Montgomery County. A rich network of seeps and wetlands feed an inter-related system of coldwater tributaries which support an uncommon diversity of aquatic, plant and wildlife species. These wetlands also provide groundwater recharge, and filtration of sediment and other pollutants, in turn enabling the high water quality needed for spawning trout and other sensitive organisms. The Upper Paint Branch Stream Valley Park hosts an impressive 28 species of fish, including other relatively pollution-intolerant species such as rosieside dace, fantail darter, and Blue Ridge sculpin. Many wetland areas throughout the watershed contain large spring peeper and wood frog populations that result in a cacophonous chorus of song each spring.

In 1974 the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) classified Paint Branch and all its tributaries upstream of the Capital Beltway as Use III waters, the first stream in Montgomery County to be identified as Use III. In 1980 DNR designated the Paint Branch watershed upstream of Fairland Road as a “Special Native Trout Management Area.” This designation was the first of its kind in Maryland and was intentionally designed to give the stream special status and the maximum protection afforded by state regulations. Additional county regulations including the Upper Paint Branch Special Protection Area and the Environmental Overlay Zone are also in place, which limit impervious surface area, expand hydrologic buffers, and exclude harmful land uses to ensure continued high water quality.

Many hiking trails wind throughout these beautiful forests. In the late ‘90s the Montgomery County Council initiated a program to significantly increase the parkland in the Upper Paint

Branch Park to provide stream buffers and protect sensitive natural resources. Since then, more than 300 acres of new parkland have been added. These trails offer a wonderful opportunity to experience the beauty and natural diversity of the Paint Branch, and a respite from the surrounding urban setting. A local ornithologist documented more than 159 wild bird species. The Paint Branch Main Stem Gorge area, where the proposed project is located, is one of the most beautiful areas in Montgomery County. The mature forest, steep slopes on both sides and numerous rock outcroppings are impressive. On one of our nature walks there, naturalist John Parrish identified 15 different species of ferns. We invite you to our frequent guided stream walks, hikes, clean-ups to experience the wonders of Paint Branch first hand.

The Staff Report on the proposed Old Columbia Pike/Prosperity Drive Improvements is 28 pages in length. In those 28 pages there is less than a page of content pertaining to environmental impacts. There is, however, some excellent text on page 27, which I quote:

“any proposed right-of-way expansion would affect existing park resources and would be constrained by stream buffers, steep slopes, floodplains, and mature forest. Water quality within Paint Branch is important and any improvements would need to provide increased stormwater management to treat runoff, however, the topography and environmental constraints would make design and incorporation of these features difficult...These proposed impacts would require significant resource mitigation and the proposed designs may prove to be unbuildable due to the environmental constraints.”

We agree whole heartedly agree with these statements. However, we see this information as appropriate for an introduction or a high-level summary. From the information contained in the Staff Report, it is difficult to correlate the severity of impacts and the mitigation issues with the each of the alternatives. The Staff Report recommends Alternative 3, even though as quoted above, these **“impacts would require significant resource mitigation and the proposed designs may prove to be unbuildable due to the environmental constraints.”** We understand that this project is currently in the concept phase, and that more details should be available in the design phase.

We might be more willing to go along with that approach if this project was not coming on the heels of another similar project, the Good Hope Road Side Path Project. The Staff Reports for that project were woefully inadequate in terms of the environmental analysis. They did not adequately identify the sensitive environmental features or their significance, state the requirements, define the impacts or appropriate mitigation. The design review, resolution, implementation, inspection, and enforcement chain had a number of failures, all in the process of simply adding a side path, albeit in the SPS/EOZ. There were some much needed but modest stormwater management improvements. However, the Gum Springs tributary, the second most important, will nonetheless suffer impacts in perpetuity that were avoidable.

The Old Columbia Pike/Prosperity Drive Project is significantly more complicated in many ways. If past has is at all related to prologue, we believe that down-selecting to one alternative based on the limited environmental information in the Staff Report is not advisable.

On page 2 Planning Staff recommends the transmittal of eight comments to the Montgomery County Department of Transportation. The first comment identifies Alternative 3 for further design. The last comment directs MC DOT to “Coordinate with Montgomery Parks Department to” to address four aspects of this project, one of which is to discuss avoidance and minimization of impacts. This approach limits the Parks Department input to the avoidance and minimization of impacts for just the selected alternative, as opposed to the avoidance and minimization of impacts for all of the alternatives. The most significant environmental resources in the project area are in the park, and the most significant environmental impacts are in the park. The Parks Department needs to be involved in the selection of alternatives. Given the sensitivity and importance of the affected resources, the constraints of the gorge topography, and severity of impacts, minimization and mitigation should not be an afterthought; they should be baked in from the beginning.

In summary, the Staff Report does not contain the information on environmental impacts needed for the Planning Board to make an informed decision on the Alternatives presented at this time. We recommend that the Board solicit additional environmental analyses on these alternatives from the Parks Department, including impacts and mitigation for consideration in the selection of an alternative.

It wasn't all that long ago that the Planning Department was known for consistently producing exceptional staff reports based on thorough environmental analysis. Their staff reports inventoried sensitive environmental features and described their significance, stated the purpose and need for the project, identified the applicable requirements, described the alternatives being considered, identified appropriate quantitative evaluation metrics and selection criteria, rated the alternatives, referenced how similar issues were addressed in previous instances, substantiated their recommendations, and summarized their findings. In sensitive areas, such as Special Protection Areas, minimization of environmental impacts was a priority, and mitigation was used to address only the residual impacts after minimization. This is what our sensitive environmental features deserve. This is what the Board needs. We ask for your help in making this the norm once again.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Copies to:

Gabe Albornoz, MC Council At-Large, Councilmember.Albornoz@montgomerycountymd.gov

Marc Elrich, Montgomery County Executive, Marc.Elrich@montgomerycountymd.gov

Miti Figueredo, Director of Parks, Montgomery Parks, miti.figueredo@montgomeryparks.org

Evan Glass, MC Council At-Large, Councilmember.Glass@montgomerycountymd.gov

Claire Iseli, Montgomery County Executive Staff, claire.iseli@montgomerycountymd.gov

Will Jawando, MC Council At-Large, Councilmember.Jawando@montgomerycountymd.gov

Kristin Mink, MC Council District 5, Councilmember.Mink@montgomerycountymd.gov

Laurie-Anne Sayles, MC Council At-Large, Councilmember.Sayles@montgomerycountymd.gov