

From: [Unger, Darian](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Sierra Club letter regarding Silver Spring streetscape standards
Date: Tuesday, November 4, 2025 10:49:51 PM
Attachments: [25-11 Darian Unger - Sierra Club to Planning Board on streetscape standards.pdf](#)

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Dear Chairman Harris and Planning Board Members,

Please see the attached letter from the Montgomery County Sierra Club regarding your upcoming discussion on Silver Spring streetscape standards.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,
Darian Unger
Chair, Montgomery County Sierra Club



November 4, 2025

Dear Chairman Harris and Planning Board Commissioners:

The Sierra Club Montgomery County Group offers the following comments on the Silver Spring Streetscape Standards, agenda item scheduled to be discussed on November 6, 2025.

We ask that Montgomery Planning and the Montgomery County Department of Transportation incorporate best practices to prevent light pollution and harm when updating street lighting guidelines.

Attachment 1 in the packet states “MCDOT and Planning have recently collaborated on new street lighting guidelines that, once approved, would establish appropriate illumination levels by street type and would apply to locations throughout the county.”

Light pollution is caused by poorly designed outdoor light fixtures that instead of directing light downward onto the street and sidewalk, direct it sideways and upwards. Light pollution is exacerbated by outdoor light fixtures that produce that with bluish color components.

Light pollution is harmful to human health and to ecosystems. As discussed in a January 2023 article in the journal Science, excessive artificial lighting at night can have a detrimental impact on the welfare of animals and humans alike.

The Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History addresses these issues in a wonderful 2nd floor exhibit called “lights out” that is available until December 2025.

Best practice #1: prevent light pollution and harm by selecting outdoor light fixtures that direct light downward. Since 2011, the State of Maryland has required that state-funded, newly installed outdoor light fixtures prevent light pollution by conforming to the definition of a “restricted uplight luminaire”. Planning and MCDOT should incorporate identical or similar standards when selecting outdoor light fixtures for the Silver Spring Streetscape Standards.

Best practice #2: prevent light pollution and harm by limiting the color temperature of street lighting fixtures to 3000K (Kelvin). In 2016 the American Medical Association (AMA) adopted guidance that the correlated color temperature of outdoor lighting be limited to 3000K. Such lighting is considered “warm white” and is less disruptive to the health and behaviors of nocturnal wildlife, including fireflies, and night pollinators. Lighting with a higher color temperature contains blue light components which contribute to light pollution and are harmful to ecosystems and human health. The District of Columbia government limits the color temperature of newly installed street lights to 3000K on main roads and 2700K on residential streets. The State of Maryland in 2025 began requiring that many state-funded, newly installed light fixtures be limited to a color temperature of 3000K or less.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Unger", written over a light gray rectangular background.

Darian Unger
Chair, Montgomery County Sierra Club

A solid black rectangular redaction box covering contact information.

cc: Planning: Jason Sartori, Atara Margolies, Tina Schneider, Eli Glazier, Alex Rixey,
David Anspacher, Richard Brockmyer
MCDOT: Michael Baccari, Dan Sanayi, Michael Paylor