



of the Anacostia River
P.O. Box 4314
Silver Spring, MD 20914

March 14, 2019

To: Members and Chair of the Prince George's County Planning Board

Item: CSP-18002 – Magruder Pointe

Requested Action: Preserve Open Space Designation on the Lower WSSC Parcel

Dear Chairwoman Hewlett and Planning Board Members:

On behalf of the Neighbors of the Northwest Branch of the Anacostia River (NNWB), I respectfully and strongly urge you to retain the Open Space zoning designation on the WSSC parcel adjacent to Magruder Park. NNWB is a 501(c)(3) volunteer organization dedicated to the ecological restoration of the Northwest Branch, with members in Montgomery and Prince Georges counties. Organized in 2003, NNWB leads regular stream cleanups along the Northwest Branch, including in Hyattsville. Our members remove invasive plants, plant trees and grasses, tend reforested riparian areas, monitor water quality, and generally advocate for the health of this northwestern source of the Anacostia River.

We were therefore greatly dismayed to learn that after the extensive community process resulting in the rezoning of the lower WSSC parcel from R-55 to Open Space as part of the farsighted 2004 Gateway Arts District Sector Plan vision for Hyattsville, the Planning Board is considering reverting to R-55 to permit construction of 40 townhouses on the property. This is particularly disturbing because, as you and the developer know, this property is in the Northwest Branch floodplain, and this area frequently has standing water. This is why the best use of this property is as stated in the Gateway Plan (p. 123), "to expand parkland," and (p. 33) "impervious surfaces should not be added." The Planning Board evidently recognizes that flood hazard since it requires the townhouses be raised 18 inches.

NNWB is struck by the repeated affirmations that the Anacostia River should be restored: first by Governor Harry Hughs in 1984, followed by Governor William Donald Schaefer and Prince Georges County Executive Parris Glendening in 1987-88, then Governor Schaefer and County Executive Glendening in 1991, followed by then Governor Glendening and Prince Georges County Executive Wayne Curry in 2001. The recovery efforts include a comprehensive plan, based on some "underlying principles," among them (p. 2 of the 2001 signing Agreement):ⁱ

- The Anacostia River and all of its tributaries are community assets to be restored, protected and preserved for the common good.

- The Anacostia ecosystem is an integral part of the larger Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay ecosystems and should be managed in concert with the ecosystem goals outlined in the Bay agreement.
- The Anacostia watershed shall be managed in a scientific and environmentally sensitive manner to protect the public from potential flood hazards.

The current townhouse proposal on the 100 year flood plain of the Northwest Branch is inconsistent with these efforts to restore the Anacostia River and inconsistent with the principle of protecting the public from flood hazards. A flood plain is exactly that, and both our current flood experience (Ellicott City, Annapolis) and predictions by scientists, including by our own Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), show we can expect more rain and more exercise of floodplains:

Maryland is experiencing more frequent extreme rain and storm events and more flooding as a result of sea level rise and coastal storms. Increasing temperatures, which allow air to trap more moisture, will make these storm events more common. ⁱⁱ

The MDE also cites the obvious, that it is far less expensive to plan accordingly than to deal with the damage. As if more citations were necessary, Bloomberg News reports that because of devastating floods across the country in 2017 and 2018 and the astronomical public costs associated with repairing those damages, FEMA is planning to use private-sector data to calculate the real flood threat for each home in 100-year flood plains and set costs for the National Flood Insurance Program based on those data. ⁱⁱⁱ

We Neighbors of the Northwest Branch respectfully urge you to plan for the future and reject a past where environmental effects were disregarded. Our society's future depends on it. This is a golden opportunity to reforest at least some of the site to absorb some of the coming rains. It's an opportunity to enlarge a healthy amenity for the community of Hyattsville. Please **retain Open Space zoning on this part of the Northwest Branch's floodplain.**

Please ensure that this letter is added to the official record on CSP-18002. Our organization is registered as a person of record.



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ⁱⁱ The references documents are currently available online [here](#).

ⁱⁱ See <https://climatechange.maryland.gov/science/>

ⁱⁱⁱ **Insurance Rates Seen Rising in Flood-Prone Areas With Trump Plan** By [Christopher Flavelle](#), March 12, 2019.