

NORTH TAKOMA CITIZENS ASSOCIATION MEETING OF 7/8/08  
COMMENTS ON  
MONTGOMERY COLLEGE FACILITIES MASTER PLAN 2006-20016

The North Takoma Citizens Association held a well-attended meeting on 7/8/08 to discuss two preliminary options (Options 5 and 6) for the pending Montgomery College Facilities Master Plan (FMP) for 2006 -2016 that were presented to us on 6/24/08. An option involving purchase of one of two public storage buildings (Option 8) was also shown but the college stated it could not be considered a serious option in the FMP because they did not own the land.

In summary, the North Takoma Citizens Association unanimously disagreed with the two options (5 and 6) provided by Montgomery College, and also discussed some limitations of Option 8 as shown. The following comments are offered as constructive solutions that could resolve college growth issues in both the short-term and long-term and preserve the viability of our community:

- In this FMP and for the short-term, the College should show the utilization of the Burlington Avenue property owned by its Foundation now for the siting of a new Science and Math Center which continues to grow with each 5-year iteration of the FMP.
- The existing math and science buildings should be renovated to accommodate additional humanities programming, which could largely retain their current scale and also relieve programming pressures on the core Takoma Park residential campus.
- Pavilion P3 and its adjoining large former kiln bunker should be vacated, the buildings demolished, and the land dedicated to the City of Takoma Park as public and passive open space, or as a new single family residence provided that any other use for this small parcel would be strictly prohibited.
- Any new buildings along New York, Chicago and Takoma Avenues should not exceed two stories or 30 feet in height, and the buildings should not present as a "wall" to the community, but should present with large open and porous spaces with trees and landscaping to decrease the massing. Design Standards should be developed to control the size, scale, siting, massing, height and landscaping for any new buildings.
- The acquisition of the two public storage facilities and other commercial spaces along Fenton and Georgia and Burlington Avenues to accommodate the expansion required in the longer term for programming should be included in the current plan.
- The future plans for vacating the Child Care Center on Takoma Avenue, which is a protected structure within our local Historic District, must entail re-establishment of its single family use.
- The community cares very much about the appearance and scale of new future buildings and how they will impact our two historic districts, and thus requests a

- It relieves construction and future traffic pressures on Fenton Street which is a major connector between Silver Spring and the District of Columbia;
- There are fewer height and massing restrictions on this commercial property, thus providing the opportunity to maximize building size to meet additional future programming needs.

#### Removal of Pavilion 3 and Donation of Public Land

Of all the college buildings on Block 69, Pavilion 3 (P3) (with the appendage kiln bunker) has the most negative impact in terms of the viability of our residential neighborhood because it cuts off two important historic residential houses in our Takoma Park Historic District with the rest of the District. This obsolete building constructed in the 1970s has long been considered by college representatives as “an old mistake that would never be constructed today” because of its proximity to residents. Although the College presentation indicated that vacating P3 would be an option, and this has been discussed for many years, this is not shown in the any FMP options. Further, it has been indicated that the building will increase from 15,000 to 18,000 gross square feet which has raised concerns. The community was unanimous in wanting the removal of P3.

Vacating this small parcel of land, demolishing the buildings and dedicating it as public and passive open space owned by the City of Takoma Park has the following benefits to both the College and our neighborhood:

- It puts greater distance between the College and the community; the Takoma Park campus buildings are closer in proximity to residences than any other campus in the Montgomery College system;
- It removes an obsolete building from maintenance and the minimal programming now there could be replaced along Fenton Street or smaller buildings on New York Avenue;
- The dedication of this land as the Etta Mae Davis Memorial Park would help cement good relations between the college and community;
- Providing dedicated open space helps replace some of the green space lost to needed expansion;
- It removes potential legal pressure on the college, county and state from adjacent landowners regarding any future development plans for this property.
- Alternatively, there was support for development of this site as a new single family residence provided that there is a legal mechanism in place that would ensure that no other type of use could be placed on this land.

#### Off-site Public Storage Facilities and Commercial Land

Over the past 5 years (and dating even back to the middle 1990s), our neighborhood has urged the College to seriously address the need to secure additional off-site commercial land in South Silver Spring particularly two public storage facilities to resolve future expansion needs. Over this time period, at least one of the public storage facilities has

fronting on residences to two stories (MCNAC suggested 30 feet) along streets facing residential houses. A high-rise campus is not desirable in any location on the east campus. (The use of "stories" rather than "feet" makes the height unclear.) More specifically, references to two stories with a third story setback should be deleted. Also, the word "adjacent" in the presentation should be defined to include residences across the street from the building. Any new building on the corner of Chicago and Philadelphia should be sited back from the existing historic house set-backs and be far enough away and massed such that the historic streetscape (this is the most beautiful and historic block of Philadelphia Avenue) is not impaired or dominated by a large mass.

During the 4/22/08 meeting with the College and its architects, the neighborhood specifically stated that it does not want residential streets turned into walled canyons. We expressed the need for retaining large open and landscaped spaces between buildings ("porosity") to break up the massing and its effect on residences immediately across the street. The proposed options do not show this "porosity" or lower scale.

As well as massing, the community spoke at length about designs that are compatible with both our local Takoma Park Historic District and also our National Register District. It was clear from this meeting that the community wants meaningful participation in the design and scale of the campus to insure its sensitivity to our two historic districts. Assistance from the Maryland Historical Trust can provide guidelines during the process.

At the community meeting with the College, the community did not want to see "gateways" established on our residential streets, but did believe that a college "gateway" could be designated at Fenton and Burlington, which emphasizes the importance of acquiring this corner's public storage building.