

Community Conversations
About Montgomery College's Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus

Meeting #3 – Online Comments
June 6, 2017

Note: Each block below are the comments made by one person.

1. Montgomery Preservation Inc. (MPI), the County's non-profit preservation advocacy organization, has commented several times during discussion of the Montgomery College Facilities Master Plan. We believe it is important at this point to support the recent statement of Neighbors United, a group of North Takoma residents. MPI strongly agrees that the best resolution of the current debate over location of modernized Math and Science facilities for the students and faculty of Montgomery College is to return to the siting in the 2006-2016 Facilities Master Plan. This solution would be in line with some major concerns that MPI expressed in our previous statement in the ongoing community conversations. It would avoid the likely potential for a dense new building to erode the character of the historic district and would avoid the disruption and expense of demolishing Falcon Hall in Takoma Park. MPI believes that a return to the carefully thought-out 2006-2016 Facilities Master Plan siting for modern Math and Science facilities would meet the needs of Montgomery College students, faculty, and staff – a goal that we share - while addressing the concerns of the Takoma Park community. Mary Reardon Vice President, Montgomery Preservation Inc.

Mary Reardon
2. I attended all 3 Community Conversations meetings with MC and the City and spent many hours researching and writing comments in good faith about the College expansion proposed in the latest FMP for the TP/SS campus, only to realize that the whole process was an exercise in futility; that President Pollard would make the final decisions on several poor alternatives, and would even be able to override recommendations of a mysteriously chosen "working group." My questions and comments were largely ignored and the College did not answer my rebuttal to their incomplete and deceptive Q&A paper. What I did learn from the last meeting with MC is that the W-1 site (College Foundation Property), for the new Math/Science facility is definitively off the table as are the "Potential Expansion Opportunities." But the College will not remove their preference for a future building (Health and Fitness) from Jesup Blair Park and will not agree to honor our County Historic Preservation Ordinance in Master Plan Historic Jesup Blair Park as they are required to do in the City of Takoma Park Historic District. MC did not answer specific questions I asked nor answer comments I made. Please see my comments of 3-21-17 and 5-9-17 on the City web site. Reiterating some of my previous comments; MC underestimates the years it will take to construct the Elizabeth Square Aquatic Center. M-NCPPC states it will not be ready until Spring 2020 at the earliest, not mid 2019 as MC states. If Falcon Hall is demolished in 2 years there will be no Health and Fitness building for 5-10 years afterwards according to MC spokesman! Falcon Hall recently had extensive upgrades to the building not listed in the FY13 "VFA" analysis. If the building is land filled in 2 years most of this money will be wasted. This is not good planning. If MC's past is any indication of how it will set up and respond to a tree preservation agreement in the future, there will be issues and trees will be harmed or destroyed. Of course, trees within a foot print of a new building or close to its construction will be demolished outright. In previous MC construction projects there has not been a mechanism for reporting violations to an agreement. No officials want to hear about infractions, much less deal with them. I was appalled to learn that Provost Stewart distributed a letter to faculty and staff before the last meeting imploring these new attendees that do not necessarily understand the issues, to come and comment, pledging blind allegiance to College positions and in direct opposition to the 2002 agreement for a collaborative relationship with the City and adjacent neighbors. Therefore, If the

College refuses to build the needed Math/Science/Labs building on the W-1 site, or the Fenton Street properties flanking the MC east garage, I agree with the following position of Neighbors United as the only workable solution I can support. See below: "I am writing you on behalf of Neighbors United, a group of North Takoma residents and families. As we have stated repeatedly we support the development of modernized Math and Science facilities for MCC's students that meet the needs of the 21st century. We believe the best and fairest resolution to the current debate over the location of this proposed development would be an agreement that this development should return to the siting shown in the 2006-2016 Facilities Master Plan. We believe that this would provide a win for the students, for the college, the community, and the City. We urge each of you to support this principled compromise." June 13, 2017 signed by Bernard Aronson, 7611 Takoma Ave. Thank you,

George French

3. MC Expansion, Math/Science, SSSH Statement, Comments Following up on 6/6/17 Community Conversation By Marcie Stickle, Silver Spring Historical Society, Advocacy Chair The Silver Spring Historical Society enthusiastically endorses the Neighbors United 6/13/17 Statement below: Neighbors United June 13, 2017 Dr. De Rionne Pollard President Montgomery College Mayor Kate Stewart City of Takoma Park Dear Dr. Pollard and Mayor Stewart: I am writing you on behalf of Neighbors United, a group of North Takoma residents and families. As we have stated repeatedly we support the development of modernized Math and Science facilities for MCC's students that meet the needs of the 21st century. We believe the best and fairest resolution to the current debate over the location of this proposed development would be an agreement that this development should return to the siting shown in the 2006-2016 Facilities Master Plan.[*] We believe that this would provide a win for the students, for the college, the community, and the City. We urge each of you to support this principled compromise. cc Montgomery County Council Sincerely, Bernard Aronson 7611 Takoma Avenue * SSSH specifically refers to Falcon Hall, Science South, Science North

Marcie Stickle

4. These comments specifically refer to Slide 28 from Conversation 3. This slide discusses construction mitigation measures. Similar promises were made to the community for the renovation of P-3. Unfortunately these promises were not kept. Just as a few examples (among others), noise frequently started prior to 6 AM; noise levels reached over 90 dBA at >100 ft from the site; diesel powered equipment was operated 24/7; trucks were queued and idling along city streets; and significant amounts of dust and diesel exhaust drifted over onto neighboring yards. At times the noise was so loud that people had to leave their houses and go elsewhere. What is needed is not promises of mitigation but an enforceable contract between the college, the City, and residents. This would deal with aspects of construction that affect the community including noise, air pollution, nighttime light pollution, road closures, stormwater runoff (including runoff laden with silt that was transported to neighboring residences), trees, litter, worker smoking on residential and/or public property, and other issues associated with construction. In the contract, the college would agree to abide by decisions of the Takoma Park Noise Board and Tree Commission for issues regarding noise and trees, respectively. There would be stipulated penalties for failing to abide by the contract. In addition, during the P-3 renovation project, there was no project manager from the college on campus for most of the project. Thus, residents were left with no recourse but to contact the contractors if there was a problem. The college was very critical of this practice, but failed to put appropriate people in place. This needs to be changed for any future construction that impacts the community.

Paul Chrostowski

5. The June 6 meeting was a disaster. The college needs to start over and actually listen to the community instead of trying to bully the community into agreeing with the college's plan. Based on opposition in the last two meetings, Dr. Pollard suddenly announced that the 2006 master plan was back on the table, except that the demolition of Falcon Hall -- which was not in the master plan -- would not be reconsidered which basically left the 2013 plan in place. Marvin Mills admitted that Science North would not be demolished and replaced for 5-10 years, if ever, again a provision in the 2013 plan. The college could not provide credible and comparable cost estimates for its various proposals. The \$85 million stated in the 2013 plan does not include the demolition and replacement of Science North. Finally, in an obvious move to placate opponents and claim community "consultation," the college proposed a "working group" made up of various stakeholders to hold two three-hour facilitated meeting to come up with alternate proposals that Dr. Pollard could reject without further discussion. It was clear to the audience that this was not the meaningful involvement in the decision and design process that the community had hoped for. This working group should be abandoned, and all parties should go back to the drawing board and develop a compromise that meets everyone's needs and will garner broad-based support. To do so, the following questions need to be answered with appropriate documentation. 1. What is the projected increase in student enrollment at TP/SS campus through 2023? How was this projection taken into consideration in the 2013 master plan? 2. How many additional classrooms and laboratories will be constructed under both the 2006 and 2013 master plans? 3. What is the relationship of the academic master plan's goal to have 85 percent of all seats occupied to the need for additional classrooms? 4. What is the total estimated cost of demolishing and replacing Science South and Falcon Hall and then demolishing and replacing Science North in a second phase? Why isn't that part of the cost projections in the 2013 master plan? 5. What is the cost to replace only Science South and renovate Falcon Hall? 6. Why do the other campuses have fitness facilities for employees, staff, students and community? Please explain why promoting a healthy lifestyle is not important for the TP/SS campus but is for the other campuses. 7. What will be done with Science North if it is not replaced? Will it be renovated to provide up-to-date classrooms and laboratories? 8. Why does TP/SS need a planetarium when it offers only one astronomy class, and astronomy is not a focus of the campus? What is the projected cost to replace the planetarium? 9. Is a conference center or large theater room included in the new building? What is its purpose and cost?

Edith Holleman

6. Thanks to Montgomery College and The City of Takoma Park for hosting the 3rd of 3 Community Conversations focused on the Facilities Master Plan for the Takoma Park Silver Spring Campus. As a nearby neighbor, with a daughter who currently attends the College, my comments are as follows: 1) It is important to note that the principals defined under Section 2.5.1 Campus Master Plan Guiding Principals do not express commitment to maintaining health, wellness, fitness or athletics at the Takoma Park Campus. To my mind, a campus without wellness, fitness and athletic facilities is incomplete. 2) While I believe that a fitness and athletics program should be an integral part of the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus, there are many good reasons to demolish the Falcon Hall. The quality of the subject 1970's construction is by today's standards is poor and I concur with the condition assessment defined in the 2016-2013 Master Plan. 3) Relocation of the Falcon Hall fitness and athletics program to a new location would free up valuable space in the East Campus. This newly created free space enables a domino approach to renewal on the East Campus. Further, it makes room for a more elegant central campus green. 4) To my mind, the potential expansion area identified on page 72 of the 2016-2023 Master Plan that is located just north of the Pedestrian Bridge and immediately adjacent to the railroad tracks in Jessup Park is an ideal location for a new wellness, fitness and athletic facility. This location would allow for ready access by both college students and the Takoma Park/Silver Spring community. 5) As a community member who lives in the southern portion of Montgomery County, I am jealous of the newer and more spacious fitness and athletic facilities that have been and are being developed in northern Montgomery County. I believe that the County should be looking for

opportunities to create parity across the County and there is every reason that the College should demand and receive funds for the new fitness and athletic facilities need to make the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus a complete educational campus. 6) As a father with children who have directly benefited from the College, I heartily support and am grateful for our State's and College's commitment to sustaining and renewing the college facilities in Takoma Park and Silver Spring. 7) As a neighbor who shares community with the College in North Takoma, I am happy to support the 2016 - 2023 development plan provided that it is amended to include a near term commitment (an immediate next phase) from both the College and perhaps in collaboration with the City of Takoma Park develop new and robust wellness, fitness and athletic facilities on the subject Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus.

Jeffrey Luker

7. 1. There were six speakers (3 students and 3 staff) who all represented the position of the College. Although it's impossible to be certain about the students, certainly none of the staff would openly contradict the College president. These were all plants. 2. Dr. Pollard has made the Falcon Hall decision one of, "I will choose science over athletics because the former is necessary for graduation and the latter is a frill." The students who were brought in echoed the same thoughts. However, the decision needn't be Science or Athletics - there is ample room for both. 3. The plan that Dr. Pollard favors, replacing Falcon Hall and Science South with a new building, leaves Science North to languish. Why not go back to the original plan to keep athletics AND science and rebuild on the site of Science North and Science South? 4. Dr. Pollard claims that her mind is open. However, it's very clear that she has already made her decision

David Asch

8. I strongly support the College's plans and process to develop and build a new Science/Math facility at the location of the current Falcon Hall and Science South buildings. I see this as an essential capital investment to serve future Montgomery College students at this campus. This new, modern, state of the art academic facility is long, long overdue.

Cynthia Rubenstein

9. I'm proud to call Takoma Park my hometown, and we need to support MC in bringing up-to-date STEM facilities to the TP-SS campus. Many students of color and low-income students will not be able to access meaningful careers in these fields without better equipment and support for new science labs. There are great solutions on the table that address the ongoing concerns of neighbors and still will bring quality facilities to MC. Our community needs this!

Sebastian Johnson