



# Greater Olney Civic Association

Post Office Box 212 Olney , Maryland 20830  
www.goca.org

**GOCA Officers**

President  
**John Lyons**  
SEROCA

Executive Vice  
President  
**Art Brodsky**  
Cherrywood

1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
**Susan Petrocci**  
Norbeck Meadows

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President  
**Jackie Benn**  
Fair Hill Farm

Recording Secretary  
**Danny Benn**  
Fair Hill Farm

Corresponding  
Secretary  
**Jay Feinberg**  
Olney Oaks

Treasurer  
**Roy Peck**  
Norbeck Meadows

Immediate Past  
President  
**Steve Smet**  
Norbeck Meadows

Awards Chair  
**Ronald Berger**  
Norbeck Meadows

Transportation Chair  
**Dave Eskenazi**

Business Liaison  
**Rick Coburn**  
Norbeck Grove

**Liaison  
Organizations**

**Olney Chamber of  
Commerce**

**Mid-County Citizens  
Advisory Board**

March 7, 2005

Honorable Thomas E. Perez  
President  
Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: Olney Master Plan

Dear President Perez and Members of the County Council,

As the Council begins its final discussions on the Olney Master Plan, we would like to take this opportunity to comment on several important elements. We ask for your thoughtful discussion and consideration of the following.

**32-acre property on Bowie Mill Road.** GOCA supports development of the property in accordance with the OBGC concept plan which, we understand, would yield 100% Work Force housing (60-70 units) and much needed recreational facilities on this property. All things considered, especially the significant environmental limitations of the property, we believe the OBGC concept represents the practical upper limit of what can and should be done on this site. As we understand the situation, the OBGC concept can be accomplished under the R-200 zone, so GOCA supports retaining R-200 zoning for this property. OBGC has been a positive and effective organization in the Olney community, and has consistently delivered on its commitments. OBGC recognizes the many issues and sensitivities surrounding this property, including traffic impacts, noise, lighting and other compatibility issues, and GOCA believes that OBGC is committed to working with the Olney community to address them constructively.

**Town Center Zone.** The first Draft of the Mixed Use Zone for the Town Center set density at 1500 units. GOCA questions what analysis has been done to support a 500 unit increase, totaling 2000 units. We also question whether the zone, as written, is capable of yielding 500 additional units, both from an engineering and an economic perspective. The current proposal appears to be a huge increase over the Planning Staff recommendation of 300 to 400 units. Strong language must be added to the Master Plan requiring the provision of adequate public services, particularly police and fire protection, prior to approving redevelopment. Otherwise, GOCA is satisfied with the proposed development standards associated with the proposed zone.

**Neighborhoods**

- Briars Acres
- Brooke Manor Estates
- Brookeville Knolls
- Camelback Village
- Cherrywood
- Environ
- Fairhill Farm
- Hallowell
- Highlands of Olney
- Homeland Village
- James Creek
- Lake Hallowell
- Norbeck Grove
- Norbeck Meadows
- North Creek
- Oak Grove
- Olney Mill
- Olney Oaks
- Olney Square
- Olney Village
- Perspective Woods
- Southeast Rural Olney
- Sycamore Acres
- Tanterra
- Towns at Environ
- The Preserve
- Victoria Springs

Hon. Tom Perez  
March 7, 2005

**Silo Inn Property – Traffic Issue, Not Rezoning.** GOCA has consistently stated that among its primary concerns about the proposed commercial development of this property is that it would add significantly to the already difficult traffic problems the Olney community faces on Georgia Avenue, especially during the morning and evening rush hours. GOCA understands that the developer and the adjacent homeowners have struck a private agreement that would exacerbate the traffic impacts associated with the commercial development. That agreement, as GOCA understands it, has resulted or will result in the developer entering into a legal covenant with the neighborhood that would prohibit the developer from constructing an access lane into the site from Silo Inn Drive. Thus, all traffic, including from the neighborhood, would be forced out onto Georgia Avenue to enter and exit the site, resulting in unnecessary and potentially dangerous traffic movements on and across Georgia Avenue even if a traffic signal is installed at the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Emory Church Road. This private arrangement, if allowed to stand, would allow the developer and the adjacent neighborhood, which claims it welcomes the convenience of the proposed shopping center, to externalize the traffic impacts of the development entirely onto Georgia Avenue and the wider Olney community.

GOCA believes that such a private arrangement makes a mockery of the years-long planning process, and that the Council should not enable it. To be clear, there is no additional Planning Board process necessary for this development to proceed. Once the Council takes its final vote to zone this entire property commercial, there will be no further opportunity to address this important traffic planning issue.

Therefore, if GOCA's understanding of the private arrangement is correct, GOCA requests that, in exchange for rezoning the property as requested by the developer and the adjacent neighborhood, the Council require the developer: (1) not to implement the private arrangement, and (2) to commit, conversely, to building an access drive into the site off of Silo Inn Drive to accommodate the shopping center traffic generated by that neighborhood. This two-part requirement would not frustrate the developer's plans for the center, but it would reduce to some extent the traffic impacts of the development on Georgia Avenue and the wider Olney community without overwhelming the adjacent neighborhood. GOCA believes this is a modest and fair "price" to "charge" for the Council's valuable decision to rezone this property.

**17.4 –acre Casey property on Batchellors Forest Road.** GOCA is concerned about the proposed language designating this property as rural open space under the RNC Zone given that the plan calls for the property to be dedicated as parkland for active recreation purposes. GOCA believes such a designation would set a bad precedent and could be cited for the proposition that athletic fields and other man-made spaces should "count" as rural open space. The construction of modern athletic fields, for example, involves tremendous

Hon. Tom Perez  
March 7, 2005

excavation, earth-moving, and unnatural compaction of the soil. Such highly engineered spaces are not "rural," and indeed are inconsistent with the RNC zone's stated intent to preserve open land, environmentally sensitive natural environmentally sensitive natural resources and rural community character.

Having said that, with respect to this particular property (or any other property in an RNC zone that is dedicated to the government for use as a public park), GOCA does not object to the master plan recognizing the importance of the dedication by permitting the transfer of residential density from the 17.4-acre property to the nearby property owned by the same person on the west side of Batchellors Forest Road, and/or by permitting the developer of that nearby property to "count" the dedicated parkland toward the rural open space requirement for that nearby property. GOCA suggests that any such language emphasize that the transfer of density and rural open space credit is warranted only because of the dedication of private land for a wholly public purpose.

GOCA believes that its proposal obviates the need for the proposed language to designate the 17.4-acre property as "rural open space." More important, our proposal avoids the potential for future confusion about whether man-made spaces involving "active recreation purposes" should count as rural open space based on the master plan's treatment of the unique circumstances of this particular property.

**RNC Densities Generally.** GOCA reiterates its position that the base RNC density all of the proposed RNC parcels in the plan (Mess, Norbeck Country Club, parcels in the southeast quadrant) should not exceed .33 units per acre. With the application of the MPDU law to the large lot zones, including RNC, the actual yield on these properties will in fact be .4 units per acre. Even at that density, the transformative effects of development under the RNC zone will overwhelm the communities surrounding these properties, will strain the infrastructure that serves them, and will adverse impact sensitive environmental resources.

**Norbeck Country Club.** We support the extension of the Upper Rock Creek SPA and the 8% impervious cap. In order to fully protect water quality in the North Branch as done in the URC, the RNC density should be set accordingly at .33 units/acre. With the requirement of MPDUs, the actual density will be .4. This should be the maximum allowable density as recommended by the Planning Board.

**Oakdale School site on Cashell Road.** GOCA fully supports the retention of the 18.5-acre school site on Cashell Road, currently reserved for Oakdale Junior High School. However, the draft Master Plan language stating that this property would be suitable for affordable housing if it is not needed for a school use should be rewritten to reflect the following intent. "In the event that MCPS determines, by a public process, that this site is not needed for a school, housing

Hon. Tom Perez  
March 7, 2005

consistent with the R-200 zone, required MPDUs and compatible with the surrounding residential neighborhood is suitable on this site."

**Buehler Road.** In recommending the extension of Buehler Road as primary residential and limiting it to 48", the Council has not considered the negative affect on King William. The Planning Board recommended that Buehler Road be connected to the Town Center only by pedestrian and bike routes. They concluded that any benefit gained by opening Buehler to local traffic was outweighed by the encouragement of cut-through traffic through the neighborhood. GOCA supports the pedestrian and bike connection and opposes the extension of Buehler Road.

**Special Exceptions/Commercial Development.** GOCA strongly supports the inclusion of language on page 42 which requires special exception uses to comply with the Master Plan. This is necessary to combat pressure for further commercial development outside the Town Center. GOCA urges the Council to include language in the master plan stating that all commercial development should be limited to the Town Center. Moreover, GOCA believes that the Council should set some sort of hurdle in the master plan that discourages special exception uses and what is effectively "spot zoning." The cumulative impacts of such developments in and around Olney over the last two decades has had cumulative impacts that should be contained, not expanded, as Olney approaches full build-out.

For more than 25 years, GOCA has taken very seriously its responsibility to safeguard the satellite town concept that is supposed to be the fundamental planning principle guiding the Olney Master Plan and Olney's development. GOCA has worked and will continue to work constructively with the County and all stakeholders to maintain the terrific quality of life that makes Olney such a strong and desirable community. Your decisions on this master plan will have a lasting effect on Olney's quality of life, and we urge you to consider GOCA's comments carefully as you make them.

Respectfully submitted,

John H. Lyons  
President

Susan Petrocci  
First Vice President