

***** A group of Sligo Woods neighbors has been meeting to discuss the details and implications of the University Boulevard Corridor (UBC) Plan for our neighborhood. Below is a summary of their findings and thoughts regarding the UBC Plan. This is not the official position of the Sligo Woods Civic Association, but is meant to be informative and provide neighbors with actions they can take regarding the UBC Plan. We will discuss the plan further at our January General Meeting on Jan. 9th, 2025.

The University Boulevard Corridor (UBC) Plan

Montgomery County says.....This plan focuses on the three miles of University Boulevard between 495 and Wheaton. The county's aim is to address community needs related to traffic safety, regional connectivity, environmental sustainability and economic development. It looks for ways to implement safe bikeways, bus rapid transit, complete streets with wider sidewalks, and safe access.

However, after attending many meetings with the UBC planners this is not what we have heard. The focus appears to be on rezoning the neighborhoods along University Boulevard, which includes homes along University Boulevard and at least one block into our neighborhood. This will allow the county to have more attainable (not affordable) housing by increasing the housing density. You can see the latest specifics here.

[Montgomery Planning Website for UBC](#)

In addition, the state is working on the [Pedestrian Safety Action Plan](#).

The state says...the new plan provides an overview of existing conditions, identifies areas of need and recommends strategies to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety in those areas.

We attended the first meeting and learned that data on collisions, pedestrian deaths, and congestion was used to identify the areas of "greatest need". Only two areas of "greatest need" are located in Montgomery County with University Boulevard being one.

Then the Montgomery County Planning board brought forward plans to change what R60 means. All our homes in Sligo Woods are currently zoned R60. This will allow duplex, triplex or quadplex housing on each of our lots. They call this Attainable Housing (Not affordable) because there will only be more homes. [Planners final report about changing R60 definition to Montgomery County Council](#)

These are our major concerns:

1. Rezoning and Housing Density

- **Concern:** The focus of the University Corridor Plan appears to be on rezoning areas along University Boulevard to increase housing density. While the goal is to provide "more attainable" housing, this doesn't necessarily equate to affordable housing, and residents are worried that the increased density might change the character of the neighborhood and lead to higher property values, not lower costs.

- **Question Raised:** Why are these changes being made in an area already identified as needing pedestrian safety improvements? Wouldn't adding more homes put more strain on infrastructure, further complicating the efforts to make the area safer for pedestrians and cyclists?

2. Attainable vs. Affordable Housing

- **Concern:** The terminology has shifted from "affordable housing" to "attainable housing." The community is concerned that this shift might mean the county is trying to address housing supply without actually making homes affordable for those who need them most. A single-family home was replaced by three townhomes, which were sold at a higher price, suggesting that the development may not result in true affordability.
- **Question Raised:** If the county's goal is to provide more affordable housing, why did they stop using that term, and how can they ensure that new housing options will be affordable for low- and middle-income families?

3. Traffic and Pedestrian Safety

- **Concern:** University Boulevard is already recognized as a high-need area for pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements, based on data from the state's Pedestrian Safety Action Plan. However, adding more homes would increase traffic and congestion, which may undermine efforts to improve safety and environmental sustainability in the area.
- **Question Raised:** Why are plans for increased housing being pursued in an area already identified as needing pedestrian and traffic safety improvements? Wouldn't these efforts conflict with one another?

4. Environmental and Safety Considerations

- **Concern:** The University Boulevard Corridor Plan aims to promote sustainability, safer bikeways, bus rapid transit, and wider sidewalks, which are all positive initiatives for improving the area's livability and reducing environmental impact. However, there is concern that the county may prioritize rezoning and increased development over these essential safety and environmental upgrades.
- **Question Raised:** Will the county's focus on development hinder efforts to improve safety and environmental sustainability?

5. Community Engagement

- **Concern:** There is a sense that community input has been overlooked, or at least that residents are not fully convinced their concerns are being addressed in the planning process. Your neighbors have attended multiple meetings and read many reports, but the information from these sessions hasn't fully alleviated concerns. On November 5, we asked many of our neighbors about the UBC, most had not heard anything. Was anything provided in Spanish?

- **Question Raised:** Are the county's plans truly reflecting the needs and desires of the community, or is the focus more on development goals that might not align with the neighborhood's priorities?

5. Community Engagement

- **Concern:** The UBC plan is focused on neighborhoods in Montgomery County already comprising comparably affordable homes, with high rates of home ownership among residents, and with neighborhood median incomes at or below the County's median income.* This plan, including rezoning to allow multiplexes and large apartment buildings, and the potential negative consequences for schools, infrastructure, neighborhood character, and congestion disproportionately affects middle income homeowners and communities in the area, and is detrimental to the quality of life of those living here.
- **Question Raised:** What does this plan solve for the residents and home homeowners who live in these neighborhoods? Why is this area of middle income homeowners in comparably affordable homes being targeted for so-called "attainable housing", disproportionately affecting the quality of life for middle income residents in these communities?

6. Public Safety

- **Concern:** This plan, inclusive of rezoning to allow multiplexes and large apartment buildings, will significantly increase the population of the area. Increased population brings with it an increase in crime, an increase in fire & rescue service demands, and an increased need for emergency planning. This plan is being proposed at a time when the County is experiencing a shortage in these areas, particularly a shortage of sworn officers in the Wheaton Police District, which encompasses Sligo Woods. This is a quality of life issue.
- **Question Raised:** What can or is the County doing to address public safety concerns, including police personnel shortages, so that neighborhoods are not left to bear the public safety burden of rapid development and population density increases?

This summary was compiled by several neighbors of Sligo Woods who attended numerous meetings and reviewed extensive information. Our goal is to provide a brief overview that encourages you to explore the issue further. This is our neighborhood, and we are committed to ensuring that the county does not impose decisions that do not align with our desires and needs. We believe in having a voice in shaping the future of Sligo Woods.

Barbara from Calumet, Charlotte from Dennis, Jan from Orange, Mary from Justin, Sheri from Helena, Susie from Carson, Tim from Gilmore

What can you do? Be informed. Things are in the planning stages and can change. Use the links included to read what is currently happening. Email the County Council members and

share your ideas and concerns. We have included the emails for the county council and two sample letters you may use and change as you wish. The first letter is about the UBC and the second one is about the Attainable Housing zoning change for all our homes.

Emails for Montgomery County Council Members

County Council President

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County Council member for our district

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LETTER ABOUT UNIVERSITY CORRIDOR PLAN

Dear [COUNCIL MEMBER NAME],

I'm writing to express my opposition to elements of the University Boulevard Corridor (UBC). As a District 6 constituent in the Sligo Woods community, I am concerned about the impact of this proposal for residents and homeowners in Sligo Woods and other communities along the UBC corridor.

The elements that are especially concerning include:

- Rezoning along University Boulevard to permit large-scale Commercial Residential buildings in plots currently occupied by single family homes

- Narrowing vehicle lanes on University Boulevard
- Extending a bus lane through the Four Corners intersection of University Boulevard and Colesville Road
- Placing a bus station at the intersection of Dennis Avenue and University Boulevard
- Rezoning R60 plots to allow for multiplex buildings

The impact of these proposed changes are significant and undermine the quality of life of those of us living in these communities. Specifically:

- The addition of apartment buildings in Sligo Woods, a small-scale neighborhood of single-family homes, would add congestion along University Boulevard – already an issue – and means more traffic on our smaller neighborhood streets and throughways. This not only adds to congestion, but it also amplifies threats to pedestrian safety (already an issue in our area) and creates parking scarcity for residents.
- Narrower traffic lanes and the addition of bus lanes through Four Corners exacerbates congestion instead of alleviating it.
- A bus station at Dennis Avenue and University Boulevard creates more pedestrian and vehicle traffic at an intersection that is already highly prone to congestion and seems to ignore the fact that Dennis Avenue is a relatively small thoroughfare along residential neighborhoods. Put simply, this is not an ideal location for a bus station.
- More housing density in areas of small-scale neighborhoods creates greater demands on aging infrastructure and maxes out school capacity – already an issue for high schools in the Down County Consortium.
- Last, but not least, allowing multiplexes on smaller R60 plots fundamentally undermines the character of smaller scale, single family home communities like Sligo Woods – *a neighborhood comprised of comparatively affordable homes and a diverse group of residents with median incomes that are below the county median.*

In sum, the UBC does not seem to reflect the best interests of the people living in communities along this corridor. The benefits of the UBC plan disproportionately go to developers while residents and communities bear the burden of the impact.

I hope you will support the interests and quality of life of residents and homeowners in single family home communities in the County and **say no greater traffic congestion and rezoning under the UBC.**

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]

LETTER ABOUT R60 ZONE CHANGE

Dear [COUNCIL MEMBER NAME],

I'm writing to express my opposition to proposed revisions of the R60, R90, and R200 housing classifications in Montgomery County, currently under review by the County Council. As a District 6 constituent and homeowner in the Sligo Woods community, I am concerned about the impact of this proposal for residents and homeowners.

These potential impacts include:

- Congestion for smaller neighborhood streets and throughways, meaning more traffic and parking scarcity for residents
- Greater demands on aging infrastructure, already an issue for the County
- No demonstrated link to *affordable* housing; in fact, there is evidence throughout the county that multiplex units are often sold for as much or more than the original single-family home
- Maxing out school capacity, already an issue for the Down County Consortium of high schools
- Last, but not least, allowing multiplexes on smaller R60 plots fundamentally undermines the character of smaller scale, single family home communities like Sligo Woods – a neighborhood comprised of comparatively affordable homes and a diverse group of residents with median incomes that are below the county median.

In sum, the benefits of this proposal seem to disproportionately benefit developers while residents and communities bear the burden of the impact.

I hope you will support the interests and quality of life of residents and homeowners in single family home communities in the County and say no to rezoning.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]