

Action Committee for Transit

P.O. Box 7074, Silver Spring, MD 20907

April 23, 2006

Mr. George Leventhal
Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Ave.
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear George:

I want to strongly urge you to support quick approval of the Shady Grove Master Plan, including housing at all levels of affordability at the highest densities that the site can reasonably accommodate.

The driving force in the Montgomery County housing market, and the underlying cause of the current crisis in affordable housing, is the vast demand for housing near Metro from people at all income levels. This results from the simultaneous effects of traffic congestion and a change in lifestyle preferences, now reinforced by the high price of gas. But very little of the county's housing is near Metro. So all this demand is funneled into a small portion of the housing supply, which includes a disproportionate share of the affordable housing. Rents near Metro in Bethesda have skyrocketed, and higher income renters and condo buyers are spilling over into now-affordable apartment buildings on the east side of the county, especially in Silver Spring and Wheaton.

A trickle-down approach will not create affordable housing; that's why we require below-market-rate units. But we could never build enough below-market units to replace the existing stock of affordable housing. To preserve the existing stock, we must encourage new construction to accommodate the demand for market-rate units near Metro at the same time as we deliver below-market units. The Shady Grove plan, and the forthcoming Twinbrook plan, will do that. They should be adopted quickly and without reduction in the housing density.

Sincerely,

Ben Ross
President