

Mr. Hydorn Got It Right! Smart Growth is Being Dumbed Down.

In his recent Letter-to-the-Editor, Bob Hydorn (Gazette, August 5, 2009, Gaithersburg growth needs second look) asked for the County Executive and Council to take a second look at growth in Gaithersburg regarding the Smart Growth Initiative. Washington Grove, Briardale, Derwood, and Mill Creek also are older, built-out communities that are getting short shrift from our elected representatives who want to "shoehorn" service park facilities from the Shady Grove Metro area to our neighborhoods without consideration for the impact they will have. Our communities took part in County-sponsored charettes (they were called that after-the-fact to conform to County notification requirements) to "notify" us about their plans for the Casey 6 and 7 properties. These were about as after-the-fact as one can get, seeing that the County had already purchased the property and begun the process of mandatory referral to place industrial facilities next to residential properties. This violates too many County zoning requirements to list in this short letter.

The movement of facilities from Shady Grove is being accomplished to further the principles of Smart Growth. The Town of Washington Grove, and other neighboring communities, supported the concept of the build-out of the Shady Grove Metro in the Shady Grove Sector Plan because the promise to us and our neighboring communities was that we would be connected to this new development. By placing the industrial service parks on Casey 6 and 7 directly between our communities and the Shady Grove Metro, the County has severed our connection and isolated us behind the ICC, the transportation center for Ride-on buses, the ICC Western Maintenance Facility, and the Emergency Management Operations Center (EMOC). EMOC is especially detrimental to our older community because the County intends to place fuel and natural gas storage facilities, heavy equipment storage and use, construction materials storage, and other noxious materials within 50 feet of residential housing—even though the County's own zoning ordinances say these materials must be 750 feet from residential housing.

So, Bob Hydorn got it right; Smart Growth is being touted as the legacy for our elected officials, but this is in name only. Four of the 10 principles of Smart Growth are being ignored in planning for the Shady Grove Metro area and the Webb Tract:

- Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
- Create walkable communities

The County needs to adhere to these principles or quit using the façade of Smart Growth in their press releases and promotional materials. The older communities are the backbone of Montgomery County. It is time for these communities to get the same consideration in development planning as developers receive each day. Disconnecting older communities from new development does nothing to create a livable environment.

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