



COALITION FOR SMARTER GROWTH

May 26, 2011

Hearing Examiner Robeson
Office of Zoning and Administrative Hearings
Stella B. Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue, Room 200
Rockville, Maryland 20850

RE: Support for Local Map Amendment No. G-892 for the Chelsea School, Silver Spring

Dear Hearing Examiner Robeson:

Please accept these comments on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth. The Coalition for Smarter Growth is the leading organization addressing where and how the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region grows. We partner with communities in planning for the future, and offer solutions to the interconnected challenges of land use, housing, transportation, economic development, and the environment.

We want to express our support for this proposed map amendment and project. We have reviewed proposal, discussed it with community members and visited the site. We are also familiar with EYA and its record of quality developments around the region, and open and honest relationships with communities. When a townhouse is the right solution, EYA is one of the best developers to build that project.

In this case, townhouses are the right solution, and the EYA plan offers a quality product, appropriately designed to the context. The plan also offers an extensive amount of open space for the site. The amount of open space might even be overly generous but I appreciate that the developer is responding to the historic context and community concern. More housing opportunities here would have also been beneficial given the quick walk access to downtown stores, services and transit. We note that the MPDUs gained from this development are welcome and needed.

We appreciate that there is honest disagreement about the appropriate use of this site. We concur with the Planning Department staff assessment – replacing the institutional use with a residential, single-family attached development with substantial open space enhances the residential character of this transitional block between the Silver Spring Central Business District and the North Silver Spring residential neighborhoods. The single family townhouse format achieves an appropriate residential character and open space while also allowing for more housing opportunities so close to employers, stores, entertainment, restaurants, services, and transit. The proposed designs, backed up by EYA's track record on quality design, show that the development will respond appropriately to the context, including the single family detached context.

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The one area of concern we have is related to parking and transportation. We appreciate that this is the map amendment, but we wish to raise our concern about the high parking ratio. We acknowledge that this problem is substantially with the zoning code's minimum requirement of two spaces per unit. The project proposes a parking ratio just over two spaces per unit. For the same reasons why this site is appropriate for townhouses rather than detached single family houses, less parking would also be a benefit. We suggest the County allow for reduced parking supply and require a Transportation Demand Management Program (TDM) to reduce parking demand and increase walk, bicycle and transit mode shares. An effective TDM program will reduce traffic and attract transit-oriented buyers.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Cort
Policy Director