



COALITION FOR SMARTER GROWTH

Testimony before a the Joint Public Hearing of the Prince George's County Council
and Planning Board regarding:

New Carrollton Preliminary Transit District Development Plan and
Proposed Transit District Overlay Zoning Map Amendment, March 2009

At the County Administration Building
14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive
Upper Marlboro, Maryland

By Cheryl Cort, Policy Director
June 16, 2009

Please accept these comments on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, a regional non-profit organization focused on ensuring transportation and development decisions are made with genuine community involvement and accommodate growth while revitalizing communities, providing more housing and travel choices, and conserving our natural and historic areas.

Build a Great Transit Station -- \$50 million project

Overall, we want to express our enthusiasm for the plan to recreate the New Carrollton station area as a great metropolitan center with a grand transit station as the anchor. We concur with the real estate experts panel report of the Urban Land Institute that "the first step in catalyzing development at the station area is to focus on the station itself." Built in 1978, the station is one of the oldest in the system. The station, however, is a leading economic development asset for the county.

Dr. Stephen Fuller, leading regional economist told the Envision Prince George's event last year that the County's underutilized Metro stations were its top assets for catalyzing robust economic development. Chief among these assets is New Carrollton. Dr. Fuller said. New Carrollton couldn't have been developed more wrongly, but this plan provides the blueprint for its transportation. It's clear that simply landing a large office tenant doesn't create economic development. Creating a place where people want to be is the key to leveraging the unparalleled access and transit connections of New Carrollton. This plan provides the guidance for creating the mix of uses, vibrant public spaces, and pedestrian friendly streetscape. Given the New Carrollton's unique position as a countywide economic development asset, we urge the County to make rebuilding the transit station the top transportation priority for state funds. The \$50 million estimated to create a grand metropolitan transit station is a relatively inexpensive commitment for the value it could leverage in catalyzing private investment. Focusing public and private investment here will build a strong, sustainable tax base for the county. This investment would also take advantage of existing infrastructure and reduce regional traffic by focusing growth at a major transit node.

Build a Shared Prosperity

We strongly support the economic development goals of this station area. Along with the high value commercial and housing development we hope to see as a result of this plan and investment in a great new transit station, we also ask that some moderately-price housing be preserved and built in new residential development. The plan mentions a number of ways to assist struggling homeowners and build new workforce housing along with market rate units. We ask that these polices be strengthened to preserve existing affordable rental homes and include moderately-price housing in new construction as an explicit requirement tied to zoning changes and increased densities. We ask that the parcels containing nearly 500 units of rental housing in the North Hillside neighborhood not be rezoned without policies to provide for the families living there new rental units on site or in the area.

More generally, increased heights and FAR should be offered in exchange for community benefits, including housing affordable to working families. A well-tested standard for the density bonus exchange would be a 12-15 percent set aside for workforce housing – housing affordable to households earning 65 percent of the area median income.

Transportation & Urban Design