

Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Ave
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: Abandonment 771 (Ellsworth Drive)

Dear Council President Katz and Councilmembers:

The Coalition for Smarter Growth would like to express **our opposition to Abandonment 771** (Ellsworth Drive). We support the formal restriction of non-essential vehicular traffic on Ellsworth Drive, but believe that this should be done in cooperation with Montgomery County rather than through abandonment.

Streets are significant pieces of infrastructure and Ellsworth Drive may be the most important street in Montgomery County due to its success stimulating social interaction between neighbors and spurring commerce. The county should not forfeit its ability to guide the future of Ellsworth by abandoning the last part of the street that is publicly owned.

Further, **we are concerned by the private proposal to install artificial turf** on Ellsworth Drive, due to environmental and accessibility impacts. Artificial turf can be difficult to navigate using wheelchairs and other mobility devices, and will eliminate a safe bicycling route through downtown Silver Spring. We are also troubled by the proposal to permanently remove the splash pad, which is extremely popular with young families. The way we design our communal spaces signifies our collective values, and Ellsworth must remain a place that is inclusive to all.

Finally, **we urge you the county to reopen Ellsworth Drive to pedestrians and outdoor dining**. Closing streets to vehicles to enable outdoor dining has been successful in Bethesda, Takoma Park, and even along Georgia Avenue in Silver Spring. It is regrettable that while outdoor dining in these areas have helped support businesses, Montgomery County's most successful pedestrian street has been reopened to cars. The restaurants along Ellsworth Drive deserve the same opportunity to expand outdoor dining options.

Ellsworth Drive is an incredibly important space for the greater Silver Spring community and is a great example of the power of well-designed public spaces. It should continue to evolve in a way that is welcoming to all of Silver Spring's diverse residents. Thank you for your consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,

Jane Lyons
Maryland Advocacy Manager
Coalition for Smarter Growth

CC: Montgomery County Department of Transportation