

Twinbrook Citizens Association

POST OFFICE BOX 834 - ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20848-0834

THE
VOICE
OF
THE
COMMUNITY

TM

"The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any." – Alice Walker

Dear Friend of Twinbrook,

June 5, 2013

When I looked at what I sent you last year, it seems like no time at all has passed. We are still wrestling with many of the same issues like planning, the APFO, and transparency in our City government. "Seems" being the important word in the sentence, as actually lots went on of importance to us even though it "seemed" as if every other Council meeting was about the Pumphrey parking lot on West Montgomery, or the \$190,000 Saul Ewing investigation. (Just a few issues that were on the front page of the Gazette this week.)

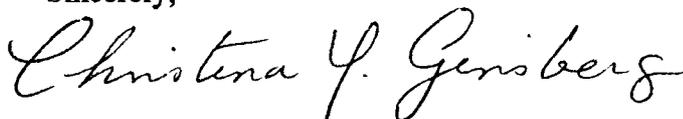
One issue that does stand out in sharp relief was the wrangling that broke out over the purchase of the Fireside apartments near New Mark Commons by the Rockville Housing Enterprises. The issue appeared over and over again on the Council's agenda as the Council debated the wisdom of preserving affordable housing that came with no extra apartments, no extra buildings, no extra traffic, no need to build extra schools, no more people, and served current Rockville residents by helping Fireside residents stay in their homes.

The direct cost to the City for the Fireside transaction: about \$250,000. Similar to what the City paid Saul Ewing, about half of what the Rockville Pike Plan cost to taxpayers, and a lot less than the \$2,000,000 City subsidies for Choice Hotels.

In contrast, decisions to place 4000 apartments including 550 affordable units at the lower end of Rockville Pike, out of sight of City Hall, received far less scrutiny from the Mayor and Council.

This enormous development and other massive projects on the Rockville Pike will present great financial and social challenges in years to come. This will require even more involvement from our neighborhood to maintain our quality of life. We welcome anyone who is interested in working with us for the future of Twinbrook.

Sincerely,



Christina Y. Ginsberg,
President, Twinbrook Citizens Association

General Membership Meeting and Election June 25

Our annual election will be at our June General Membership Meeting on Tuesday, June 25, 2013, 7 PM at the Twinbrook Community Recreation Center, 12920 Twinbrook Parkway. Your household membership entitles everyone over the age of 18 in the same household to vote. Please be prepared to show ID at the door. Members may submit nominations by 5:00 PM June 14th to Secretary Dr. Steven Wilcox at spwilcox@acm.org or by mail to the Twinbrook Citizens Association, P.O. Box 834, Rockville, Md 20848-0834. Members may also make nominations from the floor at the June 25 meeting.

Top Issues in 2012-2013

Rehashed Rockville Pike Plan Draft Issued by the Planning Commission

Despite testimony in 2012 and 2013 from the public and various subject matter experts, the Rockville Pike Plan in the draft version recently released by the Planning Commission still focuses on mega development.

Early testimony from citizens in 2012 was mirrored during the Planning Commissions work sessions and recent public hearings. The collective result is an analysis of the Plan that indicates that the component parts do not hold together to create the "vision" and will not result in a functional Pike. The Action Committee for Transit, Montgomery County Civic Federation and the Rockefeller Institute questioned the County's Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) study that mandates a BRT line on the Pike. BRT would be the Plan's main infrastructure addition to public transit justifying increased density.

The Planning Commission's version of the Rockville Pike Plan is not substantially different from the consultant's version, but significant sections that were in the consultant's version have been removed, including a section that documented the consultant's estimate of the infrastructure costs. Virtually no changes requested by citizens with regards to density, schools, and traffic have been made.

There are two provisions in the Plan that will directly affect Twinbrook homes if enacted. First, the "layback line" provision that mysteriously went missing in the RORZOR zoning has been restored. This is the measurement that will prevent tall buildings on Rockville Pike from casting shadows on the Lewis Avenue homes that back up to the Metro tracks. If this survives into the final Mayor and Council ordinance, that's good for those homeowners.

Second, the Plan implies that another bridge needs to be built between Edmonston and Halpine across the Metro tracks into Twinbrook. In the Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan process, there was intense interest in funneling traffic off Rockville Pike and down Lewis Avenue into the Twinbrook Station development, effectively making Lewis Avenue a bypass road for Rockville Pike. After four years of lobbying by the TCA, the recommendation to cut an access from Lewis into the Twinbrook Station development was removed from the Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan by the Mayor and Council in 2008.

While a bridge over the Metro tracks in Twinbrook, possibly near the end of Broadwood, would provide Twinbrook residents with an alternative to exiting the neighborhood at the Edmonston bridge or at the Ardennes/Twinbrook Parkway light, it would also facilitate cut through traffic by non-Twinbrook residents traveling west from Veirs Mill and Baltimore Road and eastbound traffic shortcutting off Rockville Pike or going south via Lewis to the office area on Fisher's Lane. The net effect would be more cars on Twinbrook's residential streets.

The Planning Commission is expected to send the Rockville Pike Plan to the Mayor and Council this fall. Citizens will again have an opportunity to comment on the Rockville Pike Plan.

TCA's guiding principles with respect to the Rockville Pike Plan are that:

- *the Rockville Pike Plan is not the citizens' vision,
- *citizens should not have to assume the financial risk,
- *we would like to keep Rockville, including Rockville Pike, family friendly, affordable, and diverse,
- *we want to keep Rockville's retail diverse,
- *we do not want Rockville or any other government agency to use eminent domain (seize private property) for the benefit of private persons or corporations,
- *we don't support mixed use at the proposed densities,
- *while we want to maintain good standards for infrastructure with general improvements in transportation and pedestrian accessibility, we do not want to increase density to achieve these improvements,
- *we oppose weakening the APFO or traffic limits.

Twinbrook Schools and the Rockville APFO

The Rockville City Council is examining the City's Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance with a view to adjusting the Ordinance to remove the Ordinance's current limits on development.

Several developments in or near Twinbrook are in limbo because JBG's Twinbrook Station development, which was approved before the Ordinance was adopted in 2005, uses all of the projected availability at Twinbrook Elementary School. MCPS has plans to expand the school but that expansion could be years in the future.

In the meantime, MCPS is reactivating a school site in the Hungerford neighborhood west of Rockville Pike. That school would be attended mostly by students who now go to Beall Elementary in West End.

Some developments at Twinbrook Metro on the Rockville Pike side of the Metro have been approved by the City Council and Planning Commission because students generated by those projects would be bused to the Farmland cluster south of Montrose Road. Several schools in that cluster were recently expanded and modernized.

Even if development projects inside the City are expected to send students to schools outside City limits, no notice is required under City law to be sent to the communities whose schools are affected.

It would be difficult for the Rockville Pike Plan to move forward unless the APFO is weakened. The reactivated Hungerford school will essentially absorb all the student surplus in the Richard Montgomery cluster but will not be able to also absorb more if Rockville Pike builds out as projected in the Rockville Pike Plan.

Expansion is also desperately needed at Twinbrook's "other" elementary school Meadow Hall, which is approximately 150 students over capacity.

The APFO committee which studied the issue on behalf of the Planning Commission several years ago did not come forward with a unified recommendation, as citizen representatives on that committee sent their own minority report asking that the APFO be kept as is and not changed.

Plans (?) for Broome Middle School

Representatives from Montgomery County and the Montgomery County school system held two meetings in April with the Twinbrook community to show proposed plans for the redevelopment of Broome Middle School.

Due to the re-activation of the Hungerford school site, another Montgomery County program, the Children's Resource Center, must find a new home. The County is proposing to move that County program to the MCPS-owned Broome site and build a three story office building near the corner of Linthicum and Twinbrook Parkway. An access road might be cut into the Broome property near the Linthicum entrance to Rock Creek Park.

MCPS has drawn preliminary plans for reactivating the old Broome building as a holding school, not a community-based school serving the Twinbrook neighborhood. In spite of the fact that the County judged the building unfit for the Montgomery County Board of Elections, MCPS intends to retain most of the building and enlarge it by enclosing the new building in a layer of additions. The green space between the current building and Twinbrook Parkway would be replaced by the classroom addition as well as a large parking area to serve the buses bringing in students from other areas of the County.

In both meetings, neighbors expressed concerns about the small size of the Broome site relative to its proposed use as a holding school, about the increased traffic caused by busing in all students as none would be from the surrounding neighborhood, and about the propriety of adding an office building in a neighborhood.

The plans as proposed by the County can be seen on the County's website.

TCA has asked the City for clarification as to how the Broome project would proceed through the special zoning and approval process known as mandatory referral. There will be at least one more community meeting but a date has not been set.

Stopped Cold by No Parking

Construction problems with the new parking garage at the end of Halpine and Chapman is complicating efforts by the developer of Twinbrook Station, JBG, to continue erecting buildings on the Metro-owned site.

Metro's Board refused to accept the parking garage until problems with the building are corrected. (Metro also refused to accept the Silver Spring Transit Center building for similar reasons).

Under JBG's contract with Metro, JBG must replace approximately 1100 surface parking spaces with spaces in parking garages (structured parking). The Twinbrook Station project is separated into stages and the parking for each stage must be finished before the associated office or apartment buildings can be erected.

The garage was inspected by a City-hired contractor under City supervision.

In the past, JBG has asked Metro for waivers in the scheduling of the garage buildouts, but Metro as far as we know has not granted any reduction to JBG's obligation to provide the 1100 replacement spaces.

April showers brought May flowers to the Twinbrook Shopping Center as new crepe myrtle trees replaced aging cherry trees and a new landscape contractor cleaned up flowerbeds around the strip mall.

The County hired a new landscape contractor for the Twinbrook Library. The TCA and the Friends of the Library will continue to take care of the flowerbed at the library's front entrance. Please enjoy the many flowers donated by your neighbors!

The Master Gardeners of Montgomery County are available at the Twinbrook library every Saturday from 10 AM to 1 PM to answer your gardening questions.

Property Values in Twinbrook Recovering

Spring is for realtors, and realtors are reporting that home prices in Twinbrook are starting to climb. Several homes in Twinbrook have sold in under 48 hours for prices approximately \$50,000 more than what comparable homes were getting last spring, with brisk bidding and multiple offers.

Twinbrook is one of the few affordable, single family home neighborhoods with walking access to Metro in Montgomery County. Rockville is unique on the Red Line in that low cost single family housing exists in the Lincoln Park and East Rockville neighborhoods, but historic Lincoln Park enacted a Neighborhood Conservation District that limits what homeowners can do with their properties in terms of renovation and expansion. The ability to possibly form a neighborhood conservation district was included in the Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan.

TCA has consistently opposed building and zoning restrictions that would be applied primarily to Twinbrook but not to built out neighborhoods with larger homes such as West End or King Farm.

While most of Twinbrook has remained remarkably true to the original developer's 1940's vision of affordable housing, Twinbrook has great untapped potential in the size of the houses relative to the large lot sizes. Renovated, upgraded and value-enhanced houses are the best defense against speculators accumulating blocks of houses to be repurposed for apartments or townhouses.

Sign Up to Hear From TCA

Just to clarify about listservs operating in Twinbrook, a new listserv is getting Twinbrook neighbors to sign up for chat, connection and business opportunities. The Nextdoor listserv is a commercial service like Twitter or Facebook.

Nextdoor limits participants to a defined geographic area set by the originator of the listserv. Nextdoor Twinbrook covers nearly the same area as the TCA.

The TCA listserv is the property of the Twinbrook Citizens Association and is the main communication tool for the TCA. We send out notices and news on behalf of other community organizations, charities, our local PTAs, and various local governments. We do not share your email addresses with other organizations.

If you think you SHOULD be getting TCA emails, if you changed your email, or if your neighbors would like to find out about the TCA and what we do as your neighborhood civic association, send your email address to:

twinbrookpres@yahoo.com

The TCA generally holds executive committee meetings on the last Tuesday of the month. Check the TCA listserv for details. Residents are welcome to attend.

Twinbrook Citizens Association

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**THE
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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Take Pride in Your Community!

Help make Twinbrook a great place to live and work!

Join the Twinbrook Citizens Association (TCA)!

Membership is easy and economical – just fill out this form and mail it
along with your annual dues of \$12 to:

Twinbrook Citizens Association
P.O. Box 834
Rockville, MD 20848-0834

Regular Household Membership:

\$12 – Regular Membership for Twinbrook residents entitles all persons 18 and older living in the same household to vote in the Twinbrook Citizens Association annual elections.

Resident Name(s): _____

Street Address: _____

Home Telephone: _____ Work Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Associate Membership:

\$12 – Non-voting membership available to any non-resident owning property in Twinbrook.

Property Owner Name(s): _____

Twinbrook Property Address: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Home Telephone: _____ Work Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Yes, I would like my name added to the TCA listserv.

Yes, I am interested in volunteering for _____
(please indicate area of interest)

Our website: <http://www.rocknet.org/Community/Twinbrook/>

(2013)