



**The following comments are submitted as part of the testimony presented by TCA President Marissa Valeri at the December 3, 2018 Community Forum portion of the Mayor and City Council meeting:**

Thank you, Mayor Newton, City Council members, for this opportunity. My name is Marissa Valeri, and I am the president of the Twinbrook Community Association. I hope to be able to update you all on the issues related to the Twinbrook neighborhood on the first Monday of each month during Community Forum.

### **Crime and Safety in Twinbrook**

Last month, our neighborhood experienced two significant violent crimes in the span of three days - one was a shooting on Rockland Avenue, the other a rape at the Twinbrook Metro station. In response, we hosted a community forum with Police Chief Brito, 1D Commander Francke, and Captain Steve Bohn from District 1 of the Metro Transit Police. It was live streamed on our Facebook page and is still available for viewing (<https://www.facebook.com/TwinbrookCommunity/videos/1007567916095059/>), and I encourage you to watch it. We are deeply appreciative of the open line of communication with Chief Brito, as he kept our community informed on the progress of the investigation and provided accurate information to prevent rumors and misinformation from spreading. He was vital to making our community forum happen, and we thank him for this.

We do have concerns with the information being sent by the City of Rockville Police Department via their weekly reports. Both of the aforementioned incidents were not included in the weekly crime report. We do not expect sensitive information to be shared during ongoing investigations; however, a mention of both of these crimes occurring would be something to expect of a weekly report. We also have ongoing concerns regarding the Twinbrook bike path. Drug transactions and public drinking continue to occur there, and the visibility of City of Rockville police in our neighborhood as a whole remains a concern. Our neighborhood continues to have a rash of vehicular hit and runs, as well as theft from vehicles.

### **Seasonal Leaf Removal in Area 1 of Twinbrook**

We also raise a concern from our community regarding Seasonal Leaf Removal. Many within our community have noted that the first leaf removal pickup has consistently occurred before the leaves have begun to fall. This year, the second collection occurred during a holiday week when many were out of town. We are receiving messages from various corners of Twinbrook about leaves that have still not been picked up as of today, even though the last pickup has occurred for Area 1. We would request that the City review and revise the date of initial pickup to coincide with the actual occurrence of Fall, and implement policy that leaf pickups are not to be scheduled during the Thanksgiving holiday week.

### **Twinbrook Metro Business District and the Rockville Small Business Impact Fund**

Lastly, we were surprised by the announcement last week of the Rockville Small Business Impact Fund. While the fund itself is surprising, what was more surprising to us was the inclusion of a Twinbrook Metro Business

District as a future recipient of resources from the new fund. At no point leading up to the announcement were we notified of this inclusion nor of the formation of the new business district. An open line of communication with neighborhood community organizations is critical and was missing in this process. In addition, many vital details such as the qualifications for applying to this fund, the limits on the amount requested, and the appeals process pertaining to application denial have yet to be shared. All of these details are important if community organizations want to promote the Fund.

While we understand the issues raised during the town halls on Rockville Town Center, we are unclear as to the creation of this business district by Twinbrook Metro station - which does not reside within our neighborhood boundary and has not had issues of economic solvency.

Once the proposed map of the Twinbrook Metro Business District was shared with our Executive Committee, it became clear that the individuals who would benefit from this fund were not our local businesses like Twinbrook Deli, Aurora's Hair Salon, or Dairy Queen, but rather the new developments on Chapman and the new proposed development on the other side of the train tracks which is being called Twinbrook Quarter. This is of concern to us, and we would appreciate clarification on the Council's intent here.

Like East Rockville and indeed many other neighborhoods in our city, there are many small businesses that are worthy recipients of support and grants to ensure that they remain in Rockville and thrive as part of our communities. However, on its face, this Fund seems nothing more to us than a pass through for developers who insist on extremely high rent and revenue sharing agreements with businesses - causing them to ultimately close location and look elsewhere.

The need to assist Rockville Town Center is urgent, but the solution to assisting small businesses throughout the city should be made thoughtfully and should not be rushed - and should not set up a dangerous precedent for developments that have not even broken ground yet. We would appreciate the Council looking into the relationship that landlords of business and mixed use area have with the small businesses they rent to, and to err on the side of supporting the solvency of our small businesses.