



September 23, 2020

Testimony on the Draft Comprehensive Plan for Planning Commission Public Hearing

The Twinbrook Community Association thanks you for this opportunity to provide feedback to the Planning Commission on the Draft Master Comprehensive Plan for the City of Rockville. Volume II, which represents Rockville's planning areas, is a positive step forward in a long-range plan to develop our beloved City. We especially want to thank City planning staff for their efforts over the past 5 years. City staff have met with Twinbrook residents at least three times since 2015. According to Rockville's 2040 website this appears more than any other planning area. We appreciate the outreach and think the plan accurately reflects the vision of the neighborhood shared by neighbors at the meetings. The TCA agrees with all the recommendations in the plan and will specifically highlight those we find most important and were commented on by neighbors as part of our outreach.

I. Land Use, Housing, and Economic Development

We applaud the inclusion of the Twinbrook Metro Station area and the Veirs Mill Corridor in the Land Use Policy map, to ensure that Twinbrook residents have access to flexible zoning arrangements that allow for growth and housing options. We think this is a smart and creative way to help address the city's and county's housing needs in the future as well as support the Metro and the hopefully soon to be built Bus Rapid Transit along Veirs Mill Rd. In particular, the residential/retail "nodes" highlighted in areas 2 and 3 are responsive to the community's request to be a more walkable neighborhood. Parts of Twinbrook near the metro and Twinbrook shopping center have a high "walk score," but walkability drops off considerably as you move away from these areas. Adding retail to Area's 2 and 3 will give neighbors something they can walk to for their daily needs as well as support the future BRT.

The area around the Twinbrook Metro is an important one to our community. It connects us to the retail and services provided along Rockville Pike. We applaud transit oriented development that can connect the residential side of the tracks to the Pike in a meaningful way, including a pedestrian/bike crossing. This will also fulfill our shared goal of a truly walkable City. Project 6 remains the top priority of the neighborhood.

II. Transportation

We strongly support the improvement of bus routes, stops, and shelters in Twinbrook (Other Policy Recommendations, page 92). Many of the Ride On stops do not have a shelter, and some are not accessible to individuals with disabilities. This should be addressed. We also support any efforts to increase the frequency and coverage to bus routes that serve the interior of our community such as Ride on 44 and 45. As the county

moves forward with its design of the Veirs Mill BRT we think the city should take advantage of the county's planning efforts to make changes to Ride On buses so they help serve the future BRT as well as serving as a way to get around Rockville.

We look forward to the possibilities that the BRT will bring for innovation, economic development, and easing traffic congestion. We strongly support a BRT station at Atlantic Avenue (Project 1) as well as the extension of Atlantic through to McAuliffe should the shopping center redevelop (Project 5).

The extension of Lewis Avenue to Fishers Lane (Project 2) is a project that has been raised many times over the decades. We understand it has been controversial and there was limited support for it in the past; however, we believe the time has come to implement this improvement. With the recent and anticipated future development at Twinbrook Metro, it serves as another access point for the neighborhood. We understand the concerns about people using Lewis Ave as a "cut through" to avoid Rockville Pike; however, in this age of smartphones and navigation apps, we believe this cut through already occurs. People already use Lewis Ave to get to/from the Pike and Twinbrook Parkway. Today that means they need to also use Twinbrook's side streets such as Halpine. Providing a connection from Lewis to Fishers will help alleviate traffic on our smaller streets. If this project moves forward, we also strongly encourage the city implement traffic calming measures along Lewis Ave. to include speed cameras, which has also been a long time request of residents along Lewis Ave.

We cannot stress enough the importance of making further improvements to bicycle and pedestrian safety and access. We appreciate the city's efforts in 2020 at key intersections identified by the neighborhood and we look forward to working with the city to implement further improvements as envisioned by Project 10 and under Other Policy Recommendations.

III. Recreation and Parks

We are lucky to have access to our namesake brooks, parks, and recreation centers. TCRC is much beloved by many. We strongly encourage an investment in the Rockcrest Community Center, so that it may serve as a similar location for community meetings, programs, and sports. At a recent TCA membership meeting, support for project 8 was specifically mentioned as a need. Rockville's ballet program is highly regarded and a strength of the city's recreation program. Improving and expanding on this facility would be a benefit not only to Twinbrook but also the city.

IV. Historic Preservation/Place Making

Twinbrook has a rich history, and the founding of Twin-Brook along with the naming of streets within the development to honor World War II battles and important individuals is well worth acknowledging. We urge the inclusion of signage in Twinbrook and throughout the City to mark the history of a given community or neighborhood, including Twinbrook.

V. Cambridge Walk HOAs

The TCA strongly supports the above named HOAs request to remain part of Planning Area 8 rather than part of the Rockville Pike Planning Area (Planning Area 9). Although the townhome communities along Halpine

are represented by their own HOAs, they are and historically have been part of the Twinbrook community. We share their general concern about the potential redevelopment of the properties at 5906 Halpine Rd (Twinbrook Community Church) and 5946 Halpine Rd. The TCA does not have a position at this time on the appropriate zoning for these two properties; however we do support townhomes and “missing middle” housing at these locations. We are in contact with the Cambridge Walk HOAs and are committed to working together to find a solution that works for everyone. We believe that can best be accomplished if we all remain part of the same Planning Area.

Respectfully,

Mike Stein, President
Twinbrook Community Association