



Comments at Community Forum
Mayor and Council Meeting - September 12, 2022 | Meeting No. 25-22

Good evening Madam Mayor and Councilmembers. My name is Marissa Valeri, and I am the current Member at Large for South of Veirs Mill and former President of the Twinbrook Community Association.

I am speaking to you tonight on behalf of TCA and the many community members who are adversely affected by the sudden and abrupt closure of the CVS store in the Twinbrook Center shopping mall. It is fortuitous that REDI presented their 2022 report given the overlap with the issue I am speaking on and we look forward to working with them to highlight Twinbrook on the new exploreRockville website.

Twinbrook Center and Twinbrook Marketplace, the two shopping malls that flank Veirs Mill Road, are popular destinations in Twinbrook community as they are walkable and bikeable for many and accessible by public transit as well. The shopping centers contain some of the best of our community — Twinbrook Deli is an institution — and are as broad and diverse as our neighborhood. Along one section of Twinbrook Center stores you can get Korean barbecue, Ethiopian injera bread, El Salvadoran pupusas, and soon a variety of Vietnamese food.

On August 29th of this year, CVS closed its store in Twinbrook Center as part of its overall closure of 900 stores nationwide. Customers were given three weeks notice and the promise that their prescriptions would be sent to the CVS at 1580 Rockville Pike. This may not seem like a big deal to some, but I can assure you it is and the ripple effects of this closure are many.

We now have two places in Twinbrook to buy a beer and no place to fill a prescription— and that is not in the best interest of the community. The patrons of our CVS reflect our community — many are low income, limited English proficient, elderly, no access to a car — and they are now forced to drive to Rockville Pike, a road that is unfriendly to pedestrians and bicyclists alike, already over utilized by cars and farther away from the heart of the community. From a racial equity and social justice perspective to an environmental responsibility perspective, the closure of CVS is impacting Twinbrook profoundly and will continue to do so if the closure goes ignored.

Unfortunately, all we can do now is wait to see what the current landlord of Twinbrook Center will fill the space with and community members I speak to are not optimistic. They do not feel

connected to the ownership and do not feel that they care about the community. Empty disheveled storefronts for years on end — before COVID caused similar scenarios — graffiti and trash ignored, and severely deficient pedestrian infrastructure within the shopping center itself do not lend to optimism. As the southern gateway into the City of Rockville, we should demand better.

We know that you have had a review of City shopping malls on your action list and on your agenda in the past and we strongly encourage you to take this issue up again as soon as possible. Economic development in the City needs to extend beyond Town Center to include communities like ours. Retail needs such as grocery stores and pharmacies should be foundations of shopping malls — not afterthoughts. Please help our community secure this necessity and revitalize this important retail hub. Thank you.