



ANACOSTIA WATERSHED CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Dedicated to the protection and restoration of the Anacostia River and its tributaries

February 25, 2013

To: Montgomery County Park and Planning Commission

Re: Proposed Exemption of Costco From Forest Conservation Law

The Anacostia Watershed Citizens Advisory Committee (AWCAC) exists to provide advice to the members of the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Partnership, the coalition of jurisdictions and agencies working together to restore the Anacostia River. The Anacostia Watershed Restoration Partnership includes Montgomery County. AWCAC urges you to reject attempts by Costco to get a special exception from submitting a Forest Conservation Plan for their proposed gas station and work to prevent this gas station from being built.

The site of the proposed gas station in the Wheaton Plaza parking lot partially drains into the Anacostia's Sligo Creek watershed via an outfall near the current LA Fitness. Investigations by the Center for Watershed Protection (CWP) have found this outfall to have major problems with illegal discharges. Preliminary follow up investigations by staff from the Department of Environmental Protection and Department of Transportation has not resulted in any improvement. County staff members have acknowledged that the underground connections leading to this outfall are poorly mapped. The CWP has labeled this outfall one of the four worst in the Sligo Creek watershed. It is not a good idea to put underground storage tanks filled with toxic fuel products like benzene immediately adjacent to this problem outfall.

Furthermore, the proposed site is in close proximity to the Stephen Knolls school which serves special needs children. Some children at this school require respirators for breathing problems. The existing small forest buffer is inadequate to protect them or area residents from the fumes of the mega-gas station. Forests play a fundamental role in maintaining water quality and air quality. Costco should not be allowed to jeopardize the environment of Wheaton and override the plans made in the Wheaton Sector Plan to maintain this forest buffer.

Finally, a local citizens organization (StopCoscoGas.org) organized to resist this project expansion. Friends of Sligo Creek, Audubon Naturalist Society, and Rock Creek Conservancy clearly oppose it. A careful tracking of County approvals for this project (1) ignores the absence of a proper forest buffer survey, (2) is an encroachment on an already compromised buffer, and (3) assumes liberties of project expansion not supported by Montgomery County protocol. The redevelopment of Wheaton is an important opportunity that the County should be using to promote environmental site design and pedestrian and bicycle friendly options near mass transit. Building the largest gas station in Montgomery County is a disservice to the many citizens of Wheaton who want their community to be redeveloped to be more walkable and less car-oriented.

c/o Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
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For these reasons, AWCAC asks that you deny Costco its special exemption and work to prevent it from building the proposed gas station. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Mike Smith

Montgomery Vice- Chair

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