

# Montgomery County solicits public input on new White Flint development

**By Alex Ruoff, Published: June 8**

Aileen Klein and her husband, Barry, are hoping to live the remainder of their lives in a condominium in White Flint. But before they move to the community, Aileen would like to see the county build a library there, preferably within a comfortable walking distance from a place to eat.

She also would like to see a recreation center that hosts classes for seniors, as the Rockville retiree likes to keep active.

“It would be hard to live without a nice library,” she said.

Such were the sentiments Klein voiced to Rouben Ghazarian, project manager for the county’s Department of General Services, during a June 1 open forum hosted by county officials. The event was designed to take resident suggestions on the amenities that officials should include in a plan to redevelop White Flint over the next 20 years.

Even though a redevelopment plan that the Montgomery County Council approved last year calls for such public structures as a new elementary school, a civic green, and a hiking/biking trail, it does not describe exactly how those amenities fit into the plan or when they should be built.

About 100 people attended the meeting and offered their suggestions to more than 20 county employees on how the public amenities should be developed.

In 2010, the County Council approved a plan that provides for construction of the half-mile area around the White Flint Metrorail station over 20 years.

County planners estimate that the project could add more than 20 million square feet of development and more than 10,000 apartments and condominiums to an area that, as of 2009, held 12.6 million square feet of commercial and residential building space and close to 19,000 people. Since December of 2010, more than 6 million square feet of proposed new construction has been submitted to county planners, none of which has yet been approved.

Already, JBG Companies has built North Bethesda Market, which includes 397 apartments built atop a Whole Foods Market store, two restaurants and a gym. About half of the apartment building has been leased since it opened last summer.

To handle the expected growth, Montgomery County and Maryland will spend more than \$250 million to build a new network of roads, intersections and an expanded presence of

buses to better handle internal traffic and to reduce congestion along Rockville Pike, according to county budget figures.

Those projects also are designed to meet the county's goal of having half of those people who live and work in White Flint travel regularly by public transit or on foot. The next highest such goal in Montgomery County is Silver Spring, where the goal is 40 percent.

The plan also calls for the creation of public spaces and the renovation of existing ones, such as the Montgomery Aquatic Center, in an attempt to make the proposed new White Flint a place in which people will enjoy living, said Diane Schwartz Jones, an assistant chief administrative officer in the office of County Executive Isiah Leggett (D). These include a neighborhood library; a recreation center; a regional services center; changes to Wall Park, off Nicholson Lane; a public meeting space; and a recreation loop.