

Montgomery County Council Introduces Bill Targeting Mega Gas Stations

Bill comes amid debate over proposed Costco station

By [Kelvin Robinson](#), NBC Washington. Updated 9:18 PM EDT, Thursday, May 10, 2012

The heated debate over a proposed gas station at the Wheaton, Md., Costco took another turn Thursday.

Montgomery County Council member Marc Elrich sponsored a bill called ZTA (Zoning Text Amendment)12-07, which would ban mega gas stations from setting up shop within 1,000 feet of schools, parks, hospitals or other areas used for recreation.

In Wheaton residents have raised concerns that the station could pose health risks because of its close proximity to nearby homes. Members of Kensington Heights Civic Association point out that with 16 pumps it would be the largest gas station in the county.

The main concern is the fumes emitted, especially those from idling vehicles.

"Science tells us that locating such facilities near children, near the elderly, and frankly near people period, contributes to a public health hazard," Elrich said, adding, "You can possibly make it pretty, but you can't make it safe."

Elrich said the bill does not specifically target Wheaton or big box stores, but rather ensuring that this situation doesn't begin to happen more often.

"If this is going to become a growing trend, we need to be careful about how we site these things."

Costco has previously told News4 it already has seven locations similar to the one proposed at Wheaton.

In a statement in April, a Costco spokesman said, "We have done our homework. We are good corporate citizens and we can build a gas station that will have no adverse impact."

That Costco is slated to open later this year.