

TESTIMONY
Before the City of Rockville Planning Commission
On the City of Rockville Master Plan-Municipal Growth Elements

September 13, 2010

Wootton High School Cluster

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The Wootton Cluster PTAs and PTSAs appreciate this opportunity to comment on the City of Rockville's Comprehensive Master Plan and the Municipal Growth Element of that Plan.

The Wootton Cluster PTAs/PTSAs agree with the Richard Montgomery Cluster PTAs/PTSAs that population growth in the City (and in the County) has a significant impact on school facilities. More particularly, the Wootton Cluster agrees that City (and County) planning must consider impact of population growth and new development on the ability of our schools to adequately serve our children. When decisions on growth are made without consideration of the capacities of our schools, our schools become more crowded and the quality of the education we provide our children will suffer.

The Wootton Cluster does not currently have the school crowding problem in our elementary schools that is affecting the Richard Montgomery elementary schools. But the Wootton Cluster has experienced overcrowding at Wootton High School for many years. Indeed Wootton began to have "portables" within a few years of completion of the addition to the school in the year 2000. The expanded Wootton was designed to hold approximately 2000 students; for a number of years Wootton has had a population of over 2400 students. While Wootton administration has done an admirable job of managing the school with such a large surplus of students, the school simply cannot handle any significant increase in students. Consequently, as the City plans for future development within the limits of the Wootton Cluster, it must consider the impact of a population increase on Wootton High School.

The Wootton Cluster PTAs and PTSAs are also concerned about the potential for overcrowding of other Cluster schools in the future as a result of new development. In particular we are concerned about the development plans for the so-called “Science City” and for development of other large tracts of land within the Wootton Cluster boundaries. As things now stand, a sizable Science City residential population, or any other large residential development within Cluster boundaries, will have a significant impact on our schools. Clearly, Wootton High School cannot house any more students; such a large project will also negatively affect other Wootton Cluster schools.

Because of these concerns, all Wootton Cluster PTAs and PTSAs have adopted a statement of principles about potential residential developments within Wootton boundaries. A copy of that statement is attached. In essence, we believe that students from substantial new developments/neighborhoods should not be added to Wootton Cluster schools if they will increase student populations above current levels, regardless of whether the tracts of land involved are within the present geographic boundaries of the Cluster; and we oppose any boundary change that would remove any established neighborhood/community from the Cluster in order to accommodate students from a new development, neighborhood or community regardless of whether the tract of land involved is currently within the present geographic boundaries of the Cluster.

The Wootton Cluster PTAs and PTSAs urge the City of Rockville to consider our concerns and our statement of principles, as well as the concerns of the Richard Montgomery Cluster PTAs and PTSAs as the City develops the Municipal Growth Element of its Comprehensive Master Plan; and that the City adopt a policy that recognizes that additional residential growth is likely to, have an adverse impact on our schools.

WOOTTON CLUSTER PTAS/PTSAS STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES ABOUT POTENTIAL RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN WOOTTON BOUNDARIES

The Wootton Cluster PTA's and PTSA's Have Agreed to the Following Several Principles:

1. We have serious concerns about assignment of students from substantial new developments/neighborhoods/communities (such as those over 1000 units) to Wootton Cluster schools which are overcapacity in their enrollment at such time. Of particular concern, is Wootton High School which has been overcapacity for many years and enrollment is projected to continue to be over capacity (without the addition of students from new developments) for the next fifteen years as per MCPS projections. Students from substantial new developments/neighborhoods should not be added to Wootton Cluster schools if they will increase student populations above current levels, regardless of whether the tracts of land involved are within the present geographic boundaries of the Cluster.
2. We strongly oppose any boundary change that would remove any established neighborhood/community from the Cluster in order to accommodate students from a new development/neighborhood/community regardless of whether the tract of land involved is currently within the present geographic boundaries of the Cluster. All Wootton Cluster PTAs and PTSAs commit to maintaining a unified position in support of all current Cluster communities/neighborhoods remaining in the Cluster in preference to addition of any new development/neighborhood/community.
3. These positions represent the affirmative views of the Wootton Cluster communities. We anticipate that our elected officials in the County government and on the Board of Education will support our viewpoint during the planning process before any building begins on any currently undeveloped tracts of land within or adjacent to the present the geographic boundaries of the Cluster.