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Statement on White Flint 2

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My name is Michal Freedman and I am here as a Member of the Executive Committee of the Montgomery County Sierra Club.

My testimony focuses on Executive Boulevard, which is an area that I know particularly well, having worked in offices there for many years.

Executive Boulevard is currently composed almost exclusively of office buildings, with a high, nearly 1/3 vacancy rate. It is far from being a mixed-use area. Instead, despite its proximity to shops, including multiple grocery markets, and metro, it is emptied of people on evenings and weekends. There would be enormous benefits to expanding its use to include substantial numbers of residential units, particularly affordable housing.

Sierra Club nationally and Sierra Club Montgomery County have made increasing density near public transit, and increasing affordable housing in particular, a key element of our agenda to increase energy efficiency and help mitigate accelerating climate change.

For many years we have known that human beings are doing devastating damage to our planet from using fossil fuels. In 2007, Montgomery County was one of only 12 counties nationwide to pledge to reduce global warming emissions by 80% by the year 2050. Short term, emissions were to be reduced by 10% by 2015.

Where does Montgomery County now stand? In March 2015, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) found energy use has been increasing and the County is now about 15% behind in achieving its goals.

It is thus all the more important that the White Flint 2 and other County Plans help reverse this wrongful trend. Planning for adequate affordable housing in the White Flint 2 area can play a role. Transportation is one of the three largest contributors to global warming, and it is growing as a share of rising CO2 emissions. Studies show that we cannot reduce transportation-related carbon emissions through vehicle and fuel technology alone. We must find ways to reduce vehicle miles driven. According to the Sierra Club National, "placing new development within already built areas reduces vehicle miles driven by as much as 61% and CO2 emissions by 50%." Manhattan has the lowest carbon emissions per capita of any U.S. city because it is so dense and because car use is so low.

The energy benefits are even greater when affordable housing is included in housing near public transit. Increased affordable housing means even more reliance on public transit because people who qualify for affordable housing use cars less than more affluent people. And because people who are not affluent drive older, less fuel-efficient cars, their use of public transit replaces even more carbon-intensive miles with clean miles. Thus, one of the most obvious way of reducing automobile dependence, reducing the number of vehicle miles driven, and reducing carbon emissions is providing adequate affordable housing near metro stops, like in White Flint 2.

And equity necessitates more affordable housing. According to the Montgomery County Housing Policy statement of 2012, 27% of County households make less than \$50,000. Most of these people do not live in poverty, but they can't afford average rents in the County. As the Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Affairs reports, less than 4% of housing is "Moderately Priced Development Units" or affordable housing. That leaves a large gap.

In sum, we should plan for additional residential units in White Flint 2 along Executive Boulevard, and especially adequate affordable housing, not only because we must build our communities for all people, but because doing so will contribute to reduced carbon pollution, which is essential for all of our futures.