



June 28, 2020

Mr. Casey Anderson, Chair
Montgomery County Planning Board
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Dear Chair Anderson and Planning Board members –

This letter is to share with you the Sierra Club Montgomery County group position on synthetic turf and our more specific concerns regarding its application by Foulger-Pratt as part of its planned project (No. 91998005C and Site Plan No. 81999002M) on Ellsworth Drive in downtown Silver Spring.

The Sierra Club Montgomery County Group and the Maryland Chapter¹ are opposed to synthetic turf because it poses a threat to both public health and the environment. We share many of the concerns about the proposed installation of synthetic turf in Downtown Silver Spring (DTSS) expressed in greater detail in correspondence from other groups and individuals. These include water pollution from microplastics as it degrades, the composition of the glue used to attach it to the asphalt, the chemicals recommended for its cleaning; an increase in stormwater runoff and whether this is compatible with the existing stormwater management facility; flammability of this petroleum-based product; the large generation of synthetic turf (plastic) waste that must be disposed of every 8 to 10 years; and an increase in the Urban Heat Island Effect. Moreover, we are concerned about the manufacturer's insufficient and potentially misleading information about the product. Learning that the COVID19 virus can stay on plastic for up to three days only heightens our concern about public health.²

¹ For more information on the position of the Maryland Chapter and its positions see:
<https://www.sierraclub.org/maryland/syresiliencythetic-turf>

² van Doremalen, N., Bushmaker, T., Morris, D. H., Holbrook, M. G., Gamble, A., Williamson, B. N., Tamin, A., Harcourt, J. L., Thornburg, N. J., Gerber, S. I., Lloyd-Smith, J. O., de Wit, E., & Munster, V. J. (2020). Aerosol and Surface Stability of SARS-CoV-2 as Compared with SARS-CoV-1. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 382(16), 1564–1567. <https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMc2004973>



With the recognition by the County Council that we are in a Climate Emergency, it is critical that climate considerations, both extreme heat periods and increases in heavy precipitation events, are considered in all development planning and decision-making. We hope you agree that new development projects are one of the best opportunities the county has to increase climate resiliency. The proposed synthetic turf in DTSS would only reduce climate resiliency.

We thank the planning board for recommending to the developer that they consider an alternative to the Synthetic turf as an alternate plan. We urge you to consider our request to deny permission to install synthetic turf on Ellsworth Drive in Silver Spring and only allow for better alternatives that would be environmentally friendly and better for the health and safety of our community, as well as increase climate resilience.

We appreciate your attention and efforts on this important issue.

Thank you,

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