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IN REPLY REFER TO:
NCPC File No. MP217/1200

MAR 27 2009

Mr. Royce Hanson
Chairman, Planning Board
M-NCPPC
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

RE: Public Hearing Draft Gaithersburg West Master Plan

Dear Mr. Hanson:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Public Hearing Draft Gaithersburg West Master Plan (Master Plan). The comments provided below focus on the National Capital Planning Commission's (NCPC or "the Commission") role as the central planning agency for the federal government in the National Capital Region. Our comments focused specifically on the recommendations for the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) enclave and other elements with direct impacts to federal interests.

As the federal government's central planning agency for the National Capital Region, the Commission has several responsibilities that warrant federal - local planning coordination. Among our major responsibilities are preparing long-range plans and special studies to ensure the effective functioning of the federal government in the NCR; preparing the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements* which includes the federal government's region-wide policies for transportation, the environment, workforce locations and open space; reviewing master plans and area plans proposed by state, regional and local agencies for their effect on the federal establishment; as well as evaluating the federal government's proposed capital improvement proposal. We invite you to visit our website, www.ncpc.gov, for additional information.

Gaithersburg West Draft Master Plan General Recommendations

NCPC supports the key recommendations of the Master Plan and finds them to be generally consistent with a number of policies of the *Comprehensive Plan for the*

Mr. Royce Hanson
Page 2

National Capital: Federal Elements (“Comprehensive Plan”). NCPC finds that the Master Plan recommendations are generally consistent with the *Smart Growth and Sustainable Development Planning Principles* of the Comprehensive Plan. We commend the Master Plan for identifying strategies that advance local, regional and federal interests, namely:

- concentrating mixed-use transit-oriented development within walking distance of major transit stops;
- identifying the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) as a priority for funding in the early stages of implementation of the Master Plan;
- introducing street grids into existing superblocks to improve walkability;
- developing a continuous regional bike trail system with the cities of Gaithersburg and Rockville; and
- protecting and enhancing natural areas through sensitive development.

NIST Enclave Recommendations

We identified the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) as a primary federal interest. NCPC supports the concept of linking the various employment and residential areas along the I-270 corridor with a high-capacity transit system, but anticipate providing additional comments regarding site-specific impacts to federal interests when the NEPA environmental documents for this project become available for our review. The Master Plan shows part of the route running along the NIST boundary and providing a transit stop at the NIST. NIST is currently coordinating its master plan revision work with NCPC and we are requiring a Transportation Management Plan (TMP) for the NIST campus. The proposed CCT facility will increase mass transit access to the NIST site and enhance NIST’s TMP. We also appreciate the Master Plan’s recommendation for reciprocal plan review between NIST and Montgomery County. We would like to add to this the continued consultation with NCPC, as you are currently doing. On the natural areas recommendations, the Existing Land Use map for the NIST/Londonderry-Hoyle’s Addition should show the location of the stream buffer areas and forests within the boundaries of the enclave so we can determine more accurately whether any federal interests will be affected.

Other Potential Federal Interests

The Master Plan referred to the stream valley parks in two different areas of the plan. First, under the Key Recommendations, the Piney Branch (a stream valley park) Special Protection Area was mentioned. In the Life Sciences Center Public

Mr. Royce Hanson
Page 3

Open Spaces section, it identifies stream valley parks as one of the elements of a comprehensive open space system. NCPC review would be required for any proposed changes to public parkland along the stream valley corridors to the extent that these areas are subject to the Capper-Cramton Act of May 29, 1930 (46 Stat. 482). Please contact NCPC staff for early consultation should you determine that there will be proposed changes to any of the Capper-Cramton stream valley parks.

We commend your proactive efforts in ensuring that the federal government is engaged in your planning endeavors and encourage you to continue doing so, especially with the NIST. We look forward to future coordination with the Montgomery County Planning Department. Please contact Amy Tarce at (202)482-7241 or amy.tarce@ncpc.gov if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Marcel C. Acosta
Executive Director

cc: Susan Cantilli
National Institute of Standards and Technology

Nancy Snyder
National Institute of Standards and Technology

Nancy Sturgeon, Planner Coordinator
Gaithersburg West Master Plan
Montgomery County Planning Department