

Dear Riverdale Park, University Park, and College Park residents,

Our corner of the County is being looked at for some significant development projects in the years ahead. Preliminary planning is starting for development at the "Cafritz Property" – between the Armory and Albion Road along Route 1 – and for the "East Campus" area of the University of Maryland.

I have insisted on a public planning process with a great degree of community engagement in the planning for both potential projects. For me, the effect of development on roads, schools, the environment, and our community's quality of life must be addressed appropriately and to the satisfaction of the community in order for these projects to move forward, and I strongly urge your participation.

There has been one community meeting about the East Campus project, which was held at the University's Ritchie Coliseum on Monday, May 7th, and there will be many more opportunities for the project to come before the public in the months to come. There is information about the East Campus project on the University's website at www.eastcampus.umd.edu/

Today, however, I am primarily writing to discuss the potential development of the Cafritz property.

I am pleased that the Cafritz family has agreed to conduct two days of public workshop meetings to hear from the community, and a third meeting to review with the public what they have heard from the community.

The initial workshops will all be held at *Riverdale Elementary School, 5006 Riverdale Road*, Riverdale Park, MD. They will be held on *June 2nd(10am-2pm - come anytime), June 7th (7-9pm)*, and a wrap-up meeting on *June 14th (7-9pm)*. The June 2nd and 7th workshops will give each of us a chance to share our ideas and concerns for this project. Note that unlike other proposed developments, the Cafritzes do not have a drawing of actual buildings or a fixed plan for the site. They are, as many of us are aware, interested in the possibility of a Whole Foods grocery store and a cultural community arts center, but beyond that they are looking to hear from the community on our likes and dislikes, what we would like to see versus what we do not want at the site. On June 14th (7-9pm), all of our suggestions from the community workshops will be pulled together to establish principles to guide potential development at this location. The development team will then come up with a more complete proposal for more community meetings in the fall. There will even be a website – www.cafritzpop.com – so you can enter even more comments and see what others are saying.

I urge you to please attend and participate. Rarely do developers seek so much community input. Your participation will also help me represent the community's desires if and when development of the site moves through the County process.

I also want you to know that I have had some preliminary meetings with

Jane Cafritz, who is spearheading the project. I let her know that I have been hesitant at the prospect of development at the site, but that I would listen to the community and would insist on an open, public planning process so that the community could convey to her its desires for the property. She has been committed to doing just that and is eager for community involvement so that whatever may happen on the site will fit with our community.

If it is to be developed, I stressed a number of other items that I thought would be important, some of which I have listed below:

- First, I stressed the wooded beauty of the site, the animal habitat, and the need to protect its natural environment and provide a significant buffer of trees between our neighborhoods and development there. Further, it should include "green building" techniques in order to prevent an increase in stormwater runoff and pollution, as well as use energy efficiently.
- Second, in the event that there may be housing on the site, I let them know that it should be designed as best as possible to reduce the number of school-age students as I do not want the development to put more enrollment pressure on our local schools. I especially encouraged them to look at housing for active retirees and senior citizens, which would not only keep from adding children to our schools, but would also have less of a traffic impact, especially during rush hours. I will note that they are not interested in housing for University of Maryland students at this location, which I think will coincide with the community's view as well.
- Third, I suggested that if they are seeking a commercial presence on the site, that it would have to pass muster with the community and mentioned that only high-quality establishments would be acceptable, and that the area is lacking in ethnic restaurants. As many of you know, a Whole Foods grocery store has also been discussed for the site.

There are a number of other factors that deserve consideration, like making it as pedestrian and bike-friendly as possible, seeking amenities that serve our community, and ensuring that it is transit-oriented with pedestrian connections from the site to Riverdale Park's MARC station and to the College Park Metro station.

Rarely do I find a developer who is so willing to engage the public before a complete plan is in hand, and who is so agreeable, so I do want to acknowledge what I see as a true commitment to the community from Jane Cafritz and her family. In our hands, we have the ability to guide the future of our community and I hope you will join me at these workshops to make your voice known. If you have questions, please contact me or my Legislative Aide, Dannielle Glaros: 301-952-3060, or dmglaros@co.pg.md.us. I look forward to working with you through this process and representing the community's interests.

Sincerely,

Eric Olson
Council Member
District 3