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**Zoning Text Amendment**  
for Sandy Spring Ashton Overlay Zone  
April 16, 2009

### **Preserve Rural Sandy Spring**

*I have lived in Ashton for 20 years and reside about 2 1/2 miles from downtown Sandy Spring. I am a member of the Sandy Spring-Ashton Rural Preservation Consortium Steering Committee, but these comments are my own, made only as a citizen of the Sandy Spring-Ashton community.*

I am pleased that the Montgomery County Council has taken the initiative to update the list of land uses that are prohibited in the Sandy Spring/Ashton Rural Village Overlay Zone. This action by the Council will emphasize the importance of the Sandy Spring/Ashton Master Plan and support the continuing desire of the community to keep Sandy Spring and Ashton areas rural.

One of the difficulties that I have had in providing input into the development process is the lack of specifics in the Master Plan. This is understandable since it is a plan for future development. However, the Overlay Zone has provided more specific rules regarding what commercial development is allowed. The list of prohibited items does much to enable citizens to make sure that, along with the residential development, commercial development remains appropriate.

The Planning Staff has made a number of recommendations concerning the Zoning Text Amendment before the Council. While I believe that the additions to the list are consistent with the uses already there, I am concerned about removing the prohibition of railroad tracks. I realize that in many rural communities there are existing railroad tracks that were installed many years ago for transporting goods and people. Development took place around those tracks, rather than the other way around. In any case, railroads are no longer used for short distance transport. Thus, I do not foresee railroads in the future of Sandy Spring and Ashton. Installing railroad tracks would be a major disruption. Sandy Spring and Ashton now have only two-lane highways and this is not expected to change, so the high volume transport provided by railroads is not needed. Thus, I recommend that the railroad tracks remain in the list of prohibited uses.

I agree that if someone has received occupancy permits prior to the County Council's approval of the Zoning Text Amendment that they should be allowed to continue with their development.

I encourage the Planning Board to recommend approval of the Zoning Text Amendment to the County Council