

Mr. Royce Hanson, Chair
Montgomery County Planning Board
8787 Georgia Ave.
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: EZ Storage in Sandy Spring (Preliminary Plan No 120080410)

Dear Mr. Hanson:

I am dismayed to learn that the MNCCP staff has recommended approval of the above-referenced project. I am writing to urge the Board to act in accordance with the intent of the Sandy Spring master plan and the overwhelming majority of the residents and businesses in Sandy Spring by denying this project.

I have been in attendance at both the developer –community meetings held at Sherwood high school where the Sandy Spring/ Ashton community fervently and eloquently communicated their opposition to this facility being built here, citing several valid reasons. Foremost among these reasons are that:

1. A large number of residents were attracted to this area due to its rural nature. An EZ storage facility of this size, is certainly not in keeping with the small town appeal that drew us here.
2. This facility does not provide any value to our community. It does not serve a need for storage nor any other purpose.
3. The proposed self storage facility is inconsistent with Sandy Springs Master plan with respect to its usage and scale.
4. It presents unacceptable safety issue both in terms of traffic dangers and the very real potential for criminal activity

This last concern is very real and valid concern that does not appear to have been taken into consideration by planning staff. As a google search of “Crime and Self-Storage” will show, it is well known that Self Storage facilities generally lead to an increase of criminal activity in an area. In fact, my internet research showed that several police departments around the Country have issued warnings regarding drug and other illegal activities in self storage facilities. One website, www.sheepdog.com, that provides training and information to police and other law enforcement officers, notes that

“Self-storage facilities generally offer criminals with a near-ideal location from which they can work or store their products. The facilities often take cash, don’t do background checks, ask few questions, are open 24-hours a day, and, based on how the property is laid out, offer the ability to work out of the view of the casual passerby.

Through the years, police officers have found all sorts of criminal activity lurking inside of an unassuming self-storage facility. Recently, police training classes have talked about the use of a self-storage facility to establish a meth lab. While the threat of methamphetamine production is real, don’t forget about other crimes that can happen in these units:

- *storage of drugs*
- *storage of counterfeit goods*
- *stolen property*
- *money that is waiting to be laundered*
- *the making of bombs for a terrorist attack*
- *storage of illegal weapons*

For these reasons, I strongly urge the Planning Board NOT to approve a commercial development in Sandy Spring that would bring no benefit to the community, but instead devalue the area and increase criminal activity. It is for good reason that similar storage facilities are typically out of the way of residential areas and in heavily industrial retail areas. We are appealing to the Board to heed the voice of the community and do the right thing by denying the preliminary plan for this unwanted, unwelcome development.

Yours truly,

James M. Britton