

# The A. J. Advisor



Autumn 2014 *Are you catching us in your email? The Advisor is only published three times per year.*

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## On Odenton



WINER  
Congratulations to Steve Schuh. As our new County Executive, I believe he understands what is needed to move Odenton Town Center and West County from years of planning and spotty support to an economic development success. I should say the same for Andrew Pruski as our newly elected district Councilman. He certainly knows the local fits and starts that have plagued our community. Can we really become the economic “breadbasket” for the entire county as has been touted?

To help our newly elected officials make a fresh start for Odenton Town Center, I’m going to suggest something I never thought I would; scrap the Odenton Town Center Master Plan. Many years ago, I was instrumental in visualizing and promoting the concept for an Odenton Town Plan. The need then was as great as the commitments to the area the county had ignored. Dozens of community and business folks worked to get a plan that would recognize the area’s appeal and opportunity. Though the first Plan was too vague and too big, an oversight group was set up to make sure it was pared down and implemented. That was 20 years ago.

I recently ran into a former economic development official who opined that Odenton has developed in spite of having a plan. That is to say, in my own words, everything that’s been built in the Odenton Town Center area over the last twenty years would have and could have been built without the Plan. It’s been a planner’s dream, but a community’s and developer’s nightmare at the same time.

The Plan has always been based on a vision for an urban center, which vision is flawed in and of itself. Odenton is part of a suburban area by any formal or informal definition. The Plan has been layered with concepts and ideas with details added along the way with changes made every five years. Where detail is found, it is confusing at best and conflicts with other county codes and expectations at worst. Making matters worse, all those details became “codified” by the county



## “YES” to Ballot Question 1



Stuart Title

Unfortunately there is NO long term Federal plan, nor any concrete State plan when it comes to transportation. The country is in need of hundreds of billions of dollars of repairs to a crumbling infrastructure. In Maryland alone it is estimated at over \$7.5 billion in today’s dollars.

The unfortunate thing for Maryland is they had a plan crafted in 1971 with the creation of the Transportation Trust

Fund, with billions of dollars at one point, that could be leveraged into bonds to support infrastructure maintenance and expansion. Unfortunately this fund that I now refer to as the Transportation “Lack” of Trust Fund is just that. Since 1984, \$1.470 billion dollars has been transferred to the General fund to cover budget shortfalls. Our

“trustworthy” politicians promise to pay back the Fund however, to date only \$453.2 million has been paid back with over two thirds by-passing the Fund and going directly to MTA and a host of other transportation projects. The idea of a “lock box” for this Fund was on the November ballot as Question 1. As written, it’ll be harder (but still possible) for funds to be “re-appropriated” for the benefit of balancing the budget through the General fund.

### Question 1



“This proposed constitutional amendment would require that funds in the State Transportation Trust Fund be used only for transportation purposes and prohibit transfers from the Transportation Trust Fund unless the Governor declares a fiscal emergency by executive order and the General Assembly passes legislation by a supermajority vote approving a different use or a transfer of the funds.”

from MarylandReporter.com

## Special Thanks

To Senator Rosapepe for his diligence in trying to move Odenton Square, the TOD (transit oriented development) project next to the Odenton MARC train station, forward.

The Senator has put forth his effort in working with both private and public sector groups to bring accountability to the fruition of this project after eleven long years.



over the years. The process for building in the Town Center got harder rather than easier, when the whole idea was to incentivize high quality developers to want to develop there before anywhere else. Clearly, that didn't happen.

The Oversight Committee has over the years slowly but surely been hijacked by county staff to become just another layer of review for proposed development that is already supposed to be the county's job. Unfortunately, the Committee's one and only original stated purpose was to advocate for the Plan, forcing the county to implement what's been on paper as its own plan for the last twenty years.

Now, the Plan is once again in a five year "review and amend it" cycle. The new county council will get a fresh version of the newest county planner's dreams. The cast of character planners change every few years and decide anew what is right for everyone else. The county calls this "Long Range Planning". I might suggest it's way too long.

About the only project built in Town Center that represents the density envisioned in the Plan, the Village at Odenton Station, struggles for retail leasing because the rest of the Town Center core development has taken so long as to paralyze retail interest until there's "more". About every other project could have been built without the Plan and maybe faster. It's time to start over.

Our State government's response especially under Gov. O'Malley (\$676.3 million and NO payback) is to raise taxes to replenish the fund through increased tag and title fees; increased tolls; increased gas tax (one of the highest in the country), increased ticket costs; sales tax; etc. At the same time, fuel consumption is down due to less driving, better fuel economy, and public transit options while other costs are rising, diminishing the reality of ever paying back or maintaining what the Transportation "Lack" of Trust Fund was intended to provide.

As most Bills we vote on, the public is just given the headlines but there are usually hidden flaws that the public isn't made aware of, and the "Lock Box" Bill is no different. However, as an advocate of public transportation for the past 15 years with no hidden agenda, I implored each of you to vote "YES" to the Question 1 "Lock Box" Bill. It's not perfect but it is improved and can be watched over by you the voter, voting out of office any politician that goes against the will of the people to keep it locked!

The Bill passed and Maryland voters were heard when they told the state: **LET'S LOCK IT UP!**



### AJP Welcomes *Kim*

Kim Morse has joined A. J. Properties, Inc. as our Administrative Assistant. She is an organizing aficionado with verve! Her professionalism and friendly spunk in the office have been a great asset and we're pleased to have her on the team.



**BIG NEWS!** The Odenton Town Center Development District (TIF District) **passed** the Anne Arundel County Council with the following amendments: (1) BRAC revitalization funds included in the TIF, (2) Expands the list of named projects to include improvements to 175 and 170 and utility upgrades, and (3) Prohibits a special tax district on top of the TIF district. Also, Route 175 was FULLY FUNDED to six lanes one mile between Reece Road and Disney Road with construction expected to begin autumn 2016.

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