

# The A. J. Advisor



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On Odenton  
**WINER**



## RAPID RECREATION

In our last newsletter, I wrote that the maturing Odenton market and developing Town Center were in need of "quality of life" infrastructure such as park land to pull these developments together and provide a sense of place and gathering for fast-growing residential areas.

The good news is that the County has taken this call to heart and begun planning for design and funding of not only one, but up to three park areas in the Town Center. The bad news is that the priority placed on the park locations and construction doesn't seem to respond to immediate need. The goal should be about the fastest way to deliver these needed pieces of infrastructure as quickly as possible. The approach as I've come to understand it seems a bit misguided.



The largest of the park areas planned and the only one already owned by the County is 13 acres adjacent to the Odenton Regional Library. Though it contains some areas of wetlands, a significant portion can still be developed for active uses and much of the floodplain areas can be made passive recreation areas with easy pedestrian connections available to the MARC train station area as well as other areas of Town Center. Apparently, this property has been included in the adjacent Transit Oriented Development (TOD) project controlled by a development group given exclusive rights to development by the County and State over 7 years ago. This process and project is overseen by the County's Economic Development agency. There is no specific plan or schedule in the TOD project for improvements to the "park" area to insure it is built out ahead of the rest of the TOD development so as to serve the population already in place in the immediate "neighborhood."



The County has also identified approximately 3 to 4 acres of property consisting of a number of private owners on the north (opposite) side of Route 175 from the "Library" site. County planners enlisted the help of the University Of Maryland Landscape Architecture class under the PALS program (Partnership for Action Learning in Sustainability) to develop concepts for this

## rolling down the highway!



Stuart Title

Since April 2, 2014 I have been privileged to represent the Fort Meade Alliance and its Stakeholder Members on the Baltimore-Washington Parkway Traffic Safety Task Force whose goal "...is to reduce fatalities and serious injuries using a cooperative approach including fundamental elements of leadership, collaboration, communication and data analysis leading to implementation..." I have been involved with of a study on the condition and safety of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway. (Study link: [http://ntl.bts.gov/lib/55000/55100/55171/Baltimore-Washington\\_Safety\\_Plan.pdf](http://ntl.bts.gov/lib/55000/55100/55171/Baltimore-Washington_Safety_Plan.pdf))

Volpe led and moderated the study, with additional stakeholder participants including The National Transportation Systems Center, National Capital Region and NPS (National Park Service), along with additional Stakeholders and attendees participating from SHA, MDOT, NHTSA, BWI, Fort Meade, City of Greenbelt, CHART, National Park Police, Patuxent Research Refuge, NASA, madd, US Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, COPT, DoD, BWIBP, MTA and others.

### DO YOU KNOW

Odenton households alone spend \$870 million on goods & services (35% above the national average); and that doesn't count the 55,000 workers at neighboring Fort Meade who spend in the local community.

Source: Esri

Plans for a parkway linking Baltimore and Washington date back to Pierre Charles L'Enfant's original layout for Washington D.C. in the 18th century but did not fully develop until the 1920s. Major reasons surrounding the need for a parkway included high accident rates on adjacent US 1 and defense purposes before World War II. In the mid-1940s, plans for the design of the parkway were finalized and construction began in 1947 for the state-maintained portion and in 1950 for the NPS-

maintained segment. The entire parkway opened to traffic in stages between 1950 and 1954.

According to Volpe, the "Parkway" was designed for a maximum of 50,000 trips/day but in today's reality, it is a "highway" carrying 120,000 trips/day with an average of 547 accidents and six fatalities annually. I believe that the study was well presented and its conclusions regarding their four E's to improving safety: Engineering, Enforcement, Education and Emergency Services, are sound. However, I believe improvement and implementation are tremendous obstacles due to its long-ago designation as a "Parkway" under the maintenance and operation of the National Park Service. Their budget and funding are based on their mission (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1465/index.htm>) which was never intended to include maintaining let alone upgrading a "highway".

It has become very apparent to me at the many meetings and conference calls I have attended, that funding and assets necessary to implement the study conclusions are NOT available, and the NPS is looking mostly if not solely to the Stakeholders for implementation.

I have not found anyone who hasn't agreed with my conclusion that it is long overdue for this highway from I-495 and to the north, to be decommissioned as a National Park, and MDOT given the responsibility and control to implement the Volpe study's findings. The irony is that two of the reasons it was constructed are the same reasons it needs to be repositioned: high accident rates and essential for (Cyber War) defense. It no longer provides safe and reliable transportation.

*Park continued from page 1, column 1*

park area. Those concepts, together with student graphics for a new Town Center logo were presented in mid-December.

The unforeseen consequence of this program is that after a concept is chosen, the properties identified must be acquired by eminent domain; a process of spending public tax dollars that will likely take two years not to mention it will mean reduction of property tax the County could now otherwise collect from private development on those parcels. It may be a great idea, in fact there are some rather good concepts presented thus far. But, let's not lose touch with what's most important. Building a park that can serve not only future residents but also current demand while enhancing the presentation of Odenton as a great place to live should come first.

While Odenton is well accustomed to waiting, fortunately in this instance it is not necessary as the County already owns the property and can serve the current growing population. Plan, design and build the "Library" park first and build it now.

*highway continued from page 1, column 2*

With this said, the Fort Meade Alliance Transportation Committee as an advocate for the benefit of its members, their employees and the region will sponsor a spring Summit, for the purpose of discussing and formulating a task and time plan of action as a united Stakeholder group. It is imperative for our federal government contingency both Senate and Congressional; State and local government contingency; and State and local private business contingency, to be on the same page and personally involved in this process.

This is a tangible opportunity that will truly be a life changing event for the tens of thousands who utilize this "highway" in defense of our national security and to the benefit of all Americans they are defending!

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns as we move forward with a truly historic opportunity to improve our Nation's defense just as Pierre Charles L'Enfant's vision was carried out in the 1940's also in defense of our Nation.

## *We Toured*

In September we sponsored the West County Chamber's bus tour of new development in western Anne Arundel County and on Fort Meade. A lot is going on!



Donna Wilner

## *We Tasted*

Following the West County Tour, we had the good fortune to experience a variety of food from area restaurants.

## *And we were All In!*

We were also a sponsor of the Anne Arundel Community College Foundation's affair in support of student scholarships.



Aimee Troglio, Donna Wilner, Stuart Title & Kim Morse



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**AJP ROBERTES**

