

Community Conversation: Montgomery College Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus
Summary of Public Comments Made at Meeting #2
May 9, 2017

1.	Suanne Alexander (Takoma Park Resident / Neighborhood Representative) Written remarks included as Attachment A.
2.	Edith Hollman (Silver Spring Resident / Neighborhood Representative) Written remarks included as Attachment B.
3.	Dale Barnard (Silver Spring Resident / Swimmer) Emphasized that the Athletic Department is as important as the other Departments within the College. Advocated for the continuation of the pool at Falcon Hall. Reinforced desire that the College consider the needs of the students and the community.
4.	Colleen Cortez (Takoma Park Resident) Family has been very supportive of the College and want students to have a high quality science education, as well as in the humanities and arts. Asked about the anticipated height of the planned facility. <i>Response: Building is anticipated to be two stories (approximately 25') in the front and three stories (approximately 35') at the rear. Roof mounted HVAC systems would add roughly 10' to 15' to the height of the building.</i> <i>Numbers are tentative as design will be developed during a series of planned charrette process where user groups, community members and other stakeholders will be engaged in a discussion of all aspects of the building including massing, scale, exterior/ interior appearance, pedestrian flow, programing schemes, etc. Design would continue to be tweaked until we think we have something that will work.</i> <i>Noted building would be no closer to the sidewalk than Falcon Hall is currently and that they anticipate increasing the amount of green space on the site.</i>
5.	David Kaplan (Resident) Will the proposed design charrettes be held at different locations? <i>Response: No decision has been made at this time.</i> Will the College commit to spending some of its planning money to explore use of the Burlington Avenue site to meet the needs of its science / math programs? <i>Response: No plans to do that due to financial, academic and operational constraints.</i>
6.	Tebabu (Takoma Park Resident) Agreed with College's planned intention to engage the community but do not see the same degree of diversity in the audience as what is experienced on campus, noting a disproportionate number of whites in the audience. Expressed disappointment in outreach efforts and urged the College to increase its efforts to engage an audience that is more representative of the student body.

Response – Summary of outreach efforts undertaken by the College to engage the community in the discussion provided. Noted mailing of postcards to residences located within a ½ mile radius of campus and the announcement of the meetings in the Takoma Park Newsletter. Assured attendees the College will continue its ongoing efforts to encourage community members to participate in the discussions.

7. Richard Wiley (Takoma Park Resident / Architect)

Noted that his main concern is the lack of community representation in the planning process as laid out in the letter of agreement executed by the College. Stated that he has been supportive of the college and appreciates this current process. Would like to be included in the planned charrette.

Response: Thanked for his interest in participating in the charrette process.

8. Unable to Determine Name (Takoma Park Resident)

Has toured various colleges across the country with her children, many of which have multi-storied math and science facilities located on their campuses. Expressed concerns about the height limits being placed by the College.

Response: Proposal is for a multi-level story facility. College needs to be careful to coordinate the various types of space that will be created within the building – classrooms, labs, prep space. Survey of Maryland Community Colleges designed to gather information about their science and math facilities found that none have buildings more than 3 or 4 stories in height. While physically possible, cost considerations - especially if they factor in the cost of parking – impact the feasibility of the undertaking of a taller structure. Noted that the budget for one building on the UMD campus equals what is budgeted by the State for the entire Maryland Community College system.

Advocated for use of the Burlington Avenue site. Stated concerns that the College is not taking into consideration all of the costs associated with proposed development (traffic, health, safety, environmental, etc.) Noted belief that the College was being insincere when stating that the development of a taller facility on Burlington Avenue is not feasible. Expressed concern that the College was placing a higher value on parking than the educational needs of its students or the interests of the community.

Response: When evaluating its options, the College needs to consider the financial cost of any development when determining what options are feasible. Parking opportunities on campus are limited.

College's statement that the footprint of the new building will be the same as current Falcon Hall is not reflected on the materials distributed at the meeting. Advocated for maintaining the setback of current facility.

Response: Materials distributed at the meeting reflect current concept included in the facilities master plan. College will commit that the new building will not be sited any closer to the sidewalk than the current facility.

John Hannon (Silver Spring Resident)

Asked for a commitment that the College will include within the scope of services provided to the designer engaged for the charrette process will reflect their commitment regarding the set back of the new facility.

Response: Confirmed the College's commitment will be reflected in the Scope of Services

9. Monique Edger (Takoma Park Resident)

Reinforced earlier comments regarding the lack of diversity in the audience. Asked if the College made unilateral changes to the Facilities Master Plan without involving the community in the process or, if they did, was not everyone informed of these decisions.

Response: Summary of the facilities master plan process was outlined with detailed provided on how community residents participated in those conversations. College staff noted that a dozen people attended the first meeting to discuss the plan and that there were two people in attendance at the second meeting. College was told at that time that there was no interest or support for a four story building. Plans were modified subsequently modified to address what they heard. Falcon Hall was included in the conversation at that point given the need for additional space to accommodate the larger footprint of the revised facility. The age of the building and lack of funding also informed that decision. College has attempted to be responsive to the interests of the community while addressing the needs of their students. The Burlington Avenue site does not work for the planned project given the property that they have, the money they have, and their programming needs. If the community wishes the College to proceed with the earlier four story option and is willing to work with the College during the longer construction period, they will proceed accordingly.

10. Rick Chappelle (College Employee)

Stated that the audience does not look like the people he sees on the campus which is more diverse than the people participating in the conversation process. Encouraged attendees to visit the college to see the makeup of the students. Said the students deserved the same level of services and access to facilities that are enjoyed by the Rockville and Germantown student body. Asked if the College was planning to demolish the planetarium where he works as a part of this project? And if so, what will happen to the programming that is currently offered?

Response: We are planning to have a planetarium located within the new facility.

11. Joshua Briggs (Student Body President)

Urged everyone to reach out directly to the students and include them in the discussion. Noted that many students were unable to attend because of scheduled final exams. Asked if there were any plans to replace the lost athletic facilities after this project is completed.

Response: Athletic facilities will be relocated to Rockville or Germantown. The College is working with the County to see how they can partner with the County to offer programming at the new public fitness, aquatic ad community center that will be located at Apple and Fenwick Avenues in Silver Spring, 1.5 miles from Falcon Hall. Facility is included in the County's budget. The new facility should be online at the time the recreational facilities at the campus will be closed.

Where will classes be held during construction?

Response: Class schedules will be adjusted to accommodate students on campus.

12. Marcie Stickle (Silver Spring Historic Society)

Reinforced importance of creating a work group which includes Historic Takoma, adjacent neighborhood representatives and the Silver Spring Historic Society. Noted the historical and architectural character of several of the buildings on campus. Encouraged the College to work with / incorporate these buildings into their plans to create needed space while maintaining the character of the existing campus. Advocated for the use of the Burlington Avenue site.

Response: College initially proposed to the City and continues to strongly support the creation of a community group. Their interest in conducting these conversations is to bring everyone to the table to participate in the discussion. They are resistant to limiting the discussion to a very small group of people to ensure that everyone's interests are represented.

Because they do not have the design expertise needed, the plan includes bringing onboard an architect to design a facility that is responsive to the historical and architectural characteristics of the neighborhood which at the same time allows them to develop buildings that are responsive to the needs of the College and its students, and allow them to provide a state of the art science education. The existing buildings are literally falling apart, do not meet ADA requirements and they are unable to find replacement parts for many of the obsolete systems.

Attachment A

Statement of Susan Alexander
Community Conversation II
May 9, 2017

My name is Susan Alexander. I've lived on Takoma across from the Commons building for the past 24 years. I am speaking on behalf of a large number of North Takoma residents who live close to the College. Thanks for this opportunity.

If you attended the previous meeting on March 21 you might be wondering: what is the issue here? The issue is the location of a very, very large building.

The issue is not our neighborhood's respect and support for Montgomery College. My neighbors and I are proud that Takoma Park is home to a community college which offers opportunity to underserved populations in our County, and we value and support its mission. And the issue is certainly not whether Montgomery College math and science facilities should be modernized to offer the best possible preparation for its students' future studies. We agree with the students who spoke in March that it is outrageous that they still don't have up-to-date laboratories and equipment.

The issue, however, is where those facilities should be located. The issue, and there are many ways to accomplish this, *is* how to meet Montgomery College student needs in a way that respects the residential nature of our neighborhood.

We are here at this meeting tonight because of a broken promise. The College and the neighborhood have a long history of ups and downs. A major down was in the 1970's, when the College sought to condemn and demolish many of our houses to expand the campus. Though some houses *were* demolished, that initiative was stopped, and some amends were made, one of which is the wonderful residential character of the current eastern campus, purposefully designed to blend in in harmony with the remaining historic houses and Belle Zeigler Park, where our children play. The east side of the campus is low density, and has residential-friendly function and character. Falcon Hall, for example, contains the school's swimming pool and gymnasium. So good was that 1972 design that it won an architectural award for the masterful way in which the harmonization was done.

After bad times, relations reached a historic up in 2002 when the college sought a way to institutionalize the excellent rapport it had built with the community. To this end, in July of 2002 the College signed an agreement with the City, the County and Historic Takoma in which (to use the words of the agreement) "to avoid the friction of the past," it declared its intention to drop its practice of unilateral decision making and embark on a new, collaborative relationship with the signatories of the agreement and the surrounding neighborhood. Around that time the College purchased the former Giant Bakery site along Georgia Ave., and reaffirmed its commitment that the east side of the campus would retain its low-density, residential character: Large buildings and increased density would be focused on the western part of the campus along the Georgia Ave corridor.

So with those good intentions, how did we reach today's impasse? For years, the College said it wanted to replace Science South and Science North with modern facilities, and renovate Falcon Hall. This was in keeping with the longstanding commitment to focus its development to the west that the College made with the purchase of the Giant Bakery site. The College put those initiatives in its 2006-2016 Master

Development Plan, and the County Council approved building a new Science and Math building on the sites of Science North and Science South in its 2016 and 2017 budgets.

Then the College changed its mind. It unilaterally issued a new Master Plan in which, instead of building its new laboratory on the sites of Science North and South, across from the railroad tracks, it would tear down Falcon Hall, eliminate its swimming pool and other functions, and place a 135,000-square foot building, three to four commercial stories tall, on the corner of Takoma Avenue, directly across from Belle Zeigler park and several residences. Larger even than the Student Services Center, aka, the Nunley Building, such a structure would tower over our houses. It would require many years of heavy construction with all the attendant dirt, dust, particulate pollution, diesel fumes, and pile driver noise next to the Park and it would put the Park in direct line of any hazardous emissions, should they occur, from toxic chemicals stored and used in the new Science Lab. Is this the best choice for the community? Is this the only option for the College? As I stated before, the College long favored the far less destructive proposal to replace Science North and South. Another, and even more attractive possibility is the Burlington Avenue property, on the western campus, which the College promised for an academic building with parking underground in a previous master plan. Using Burlington has many advantages: with no demolition required, building could proceed quickly, design would not be constrained by concerns about building size and function, and the project would submit the neighborhood to the least amount of pain and suffering during construction.

Now you might say, but can't the College do anything it wants with the land it owns? The answer to that is, no, the College is legally bound by the 2002 agreement I mentioned earlier to collaborate with the City and the local community on any changes to campus structures at the earliest practicable stage. Building a tall building, tearing down a building, changing a building from a swimming pool into a laboratory-- all of those ideas should have been vetted with the community during the Master Plan update process, but none was.

We wish to create a win-win outcome in which all stakeholders are respected and none are injured. It has been our experience that when new administrators join the College, they are not always apprised properly of the 2002 agreement, of the balances previously struck, or of the College's codified desire to institutionalize good relations through collaborative, neighborly processes. But it has also been our experience that when those newcomers are fully up to speed, they generally want to do the right thing. We hope that we are now at that moment with you, that having been reminded of your institution's promise to our neighborhood, you will wish to keep it. We call upon you to signal your intentions in this matter this very evening by taking the demolition of Falcon Hall off the table and by committing to the formation of an appropriate small group to begin the consultation process with the community called for by the 2002 agreement. Tonight's forum is useful as a broad solicitation of ideas, but it does not constitute consultation. The only way to solve the problems at hand in a cooperative respectful way is through a roll-up-your-sleeves working group where representatives of the City, the College, Historic Takoma and the local community can drill down into complicated issues with appropriate experts at our sides.

We have an opportunity to set an example for the students of the College that responsible, community-minded people resolve their differences by negotiations and dialogue. We hope the College seizes this opportunity.

Attachment B

STATEMENT OF EDITH HOLLEMAN
COMMUNITY CONVERSATION
May 9, 2017

I am Edith Holleman. I have lived at 813 Philadelphia Avenue in Silver Spring, one-half block from Montgomery College since 1980, and this is the first time the college has ever asked me or my neighbors their opinion about any of their plans. I would like my statement and the petition of the residents of this community placed into the official record of this meeting.

I was like, "Wow," when I got in the mail the invitation to these meetings. I thought the college is actually making us part of their planning process. Unfortunately, that does not appear to be the situation. We are being asked to approve their master plan, 14 months after it was finalized and sent to the state and almost a year after the county council told them to meet with the community. Today – before these "conversations" are over – the county council approved money to develop design plans based on that master plan which will demolish Falcon Hall, the campus' only health and fitness facilities. There are no plans for a timely replacement, only vague promises of "when we get the money," and an acknowledgement that health and fitness facilities are not a priority. I suspect that most of you have not seen the master plan or did not even know until now that is why you are here – to rubber-stamp the already-approved plan.

I was asked to be on this program to represent Silver Spring. I do not claim to represent Silver Spring. I don't know who does – if anyone. I represent the over 130 people in Silver Spring and Takoma Park who signed this petition asking the college not to tear down Falcon Hall until they have another fitness building. The community, the students and even some of the faculty had no idea that tearing this building down was a critical part of the college's master plan. For more than a decade, the college's plan was to renovate and expand Falcon Hall and replace the science buildings. That suddenly changed in late 2015.

The college claimed that everyone within a quarter mile of the college was invited to meetings before they rewrote the master plan in late 2015. I was not. We found out about it from the school newspaper in May of 2016. No one who uses Falcon Hall was asked. My neighbors didn't know. I can guess that the majority of you present tonight did not know that the previous master plans proposed the renovation of Falcon Hall, and that it was quickly and stealthily rewritten in early 2016 to plan for its demolition. No other option was considered. When I took this petition around, the common response was, "What!! Why would they do that?"

I have been swimming at the college for more than 30 years. When I went to college, there were no fitness facilities for students who weren't athletes, and that generally meant nothing for girls. I learned to swim in graduate school because my school built a fitness facility for all of its students. Like most students, I had no money for private gyms and pools. I had no money for a car either so I began to

bike. Those exercise patterns stayed with me to this day because exercise patterns are developed when we are young.

We know that exercise is more and more important for a healthy, long time. Today, in the Washington Post, a study on life expectancy from the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation threw the following conclusion: "People are less likely to live longer if they are poor, get little exercise and lack access to health care." "Study: Life expectancy varies drastically by county," WP, A14, May 9, 2017 (emphasis added) That describes many people in Montgomery County, and many of our students. Depending on what happens to the Affordable Care Act, more and more of us may be responsible for our own health care. Exercise is a critical aspect of preventive health care, and one of the few actions that we can take ourselves if it is not financially and physically out of reach.

We know that, but Montgomery College doesn't seem to. So here we have a campus whose focus is on health sciences and training the health professionals who will be telling all of us we need more exercise. But their college is taking away their opportunity to exercise and telling them by it actions it is not important.

Can you wrap your mind around this? A college that had an great indoor pool, a beautiful basketball court, a weight room, tennis courts and racquetball courts that the college has refused for 10 years to repair and reopen for use is going to rip it down when other schools are attracting students by building these facilities. The Takoma Park/Silver Spring campus would be the only campus in the Montgomery College system with no athletic and fitness facilities for its students, staff and the community – not because they never had them, but because they ripped them out.

So here we are: once again the stepchild of Montgomery County. The last to get anything. The area starved of public fitness facilities. Why? The college has a surface parking lot behind the Performing Arts Center that is supposed to be used for an academic building. Why not put the math and science building there? It would be close to health sciences, and it could be built as high as zoning will allow. Parking could be underneath the building. But the college is refusing to consider it, saying that parking is more important than fitness.

The college likes to claim that Falcon Hall is underutilized. Actually, hundreds of people use it multiple times every year. I have been swimming several days a week at the college for over 30 years. The pool is used seven days a week by campus and community members. Here's a partial list of recent users:

- Over 80 community members swimming 3-4 times a week
- Students, faculty and staff open swims: 60 per week
- Student swim classes (always full, but cut back by college from 5 to 2 per year)
- Montgomery County Public Schools Swim and Dive – for over 30 years
- Good Counsel and St. John's High Schools
- District of Columbia and Daleview Masters' Swim Clubs
- Local USS Swim Teams
- Summer Youth Camps

There is not another building on campus used seven days a week. And this list does not include the student and outside use of the basketball court or the weight room because I did not have time to collect that. Maybe by the next, too-late community meeting, I'll have it.

I don't know if the administration even knows the extent of its use beyond those of us who pay annual fees. The provost indicated to us that he did not. I also know that the college does not advertise this terrific resource to the neighbors or to their own students or staff to expand its use. There are no signs on the outside doors or the campus bulletin boards to even tell you when the public hours are. For example, you have to go inside the pool to find that out. I learned of the pool's existence by word of mouth many years ago when I was looking for a pool. There used to be aerobic classes for seniors. It no longer exists although there are plenty of seniors in the neighborhood. Why?

The college also claimed that the students have voted by their feet because they don't sign up for physical education classes. First, you need to know that the college eliminated its requirement for one PE class for general education students and cut back classes offered. I don't know about you, but when my daughter went to college, we did not use her tuition money for PE. She did, however, use her college's fitness center almost every day.

The college has tried to portray us and others as being against new science buildings. We are not. These are our students and neighbors; they were educated in our K-12 schools in our community. But this is a community college, paid for by all of us through our tax dollars. We own this college, and it is supposed to be a community resource for all of our citizens. It is supposed to encourage the development of well-rounded healthy students. And that includes physical fitness.

What good is a nurse or a medical technician who is suffering from his or her own bad health because he or she was never encouraged to take care of the body, mind and soul? Why is Montgomery College behind the eight-ball like this?

I want to add a comment about the planetarium. It isn't specified in the master plan, but the college plans to build a new planetarium with a 200-seat auditorium or conference room around it. It is treated like a sacred cow, but how is the planetarium part of the mission of this campus? There is one introductory astronomy class taught there, but no advanced courses or associate degrees. There are some community events, but – again – most residents have never been in it. Do we need another auditorium? There is already a large auditorium in the Performing Arts Center and meeting space in the Commons Building.

Is this why the college wants to tear down Falcon Hall? We don't know. It is time for a candid, open discussion with the college about its ideas, not this hide-the-ball situation we have had until now. The college needs to listen to us, for a change. And we do not want to hear about how maybe the county will build an aquatic center someday at the Washington Adventist Hospital site or perhaps the county will let them build a fitness center in Jessup Blair Park someday.

If you would like to add your name to our petition, we will be in the back at the end of the meeting. Thank you.