



City of Takoma Park



Washington Adventist Hospital

October 25, 2016

Isiah Leggett, County Executive  
Montgomery County  
Executive Office Building  
101 Monroe Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Mr. Leggett,

With this letter, the Takoma Park City Council and the President of Adventist HealthCare Washington Adventist Hospital respectfully request you evaluate construction of a Montgomery County Department of Recreation aquatics center on the Takoma Park campus of Washington Adventist Hospital.

This past budget year you included resources for the indoor swimming pool at Piney Branch Elementary School (PBES). However, in prior years your office has proposed closing the pool. The strong need for the pool by children and seniors in this area of the County convinced the County Council to provide funds to keep it open, despite the pool's limitations of size and accessibility.

While the community rallied to keep the PBES pool open these last few years, the school-aged population has grown markedly in and near Takoma Park. MCPS is beginning its facility study to find space for additional classrooms at PBES. We understand that providing both more classrooms and keeping and improving the indoor pool on the constrained school property will be a tall challenge.

While the community has focused on saving the Piney Branch pool, other small pools have closed or are closing. The Montgomery College Takoma Park-Silver Spring campus is proposing to close its swimming pool, as it addresses facility needs. Several years ago, Washington Adventist University had to close its pool, as well. It should be

noted that a proposed pool in conjunction with the Elizabeth House in downtown Silver Spring does not meet the needs for the young people and seniors in the Takoma Park/East Silver Spring area.

The County Department of Recreation understands that small, standalone swimming pools are expensive to operate and do not meet the needs of a large, diverse population. In contrast, aquatics facilities have pools for several uses, including meeting therapeutic needs, recreational needs, exercise needs and providing space for competitive swimming.

As Washington Adventist Hospital prepares to move its main hospital to White Oak, the City of Takoma Park and hospital leaders are looking at the current site for uses that complement the health services that will remain and, also importantly, improve the overall health and wellbeing of the community. An aquatics center would be an asset to both the hospital and the community.

An aquatics center in Takoma Park, on the edge of East Silver Spring, would provide an enormous community service. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), approximately 10 people drown every day and more than one in five of the drowning victims are under the age of 14. Knowing the basics of water safety and how to swim are invaluable skills and, unfortunately, ones that too many minority and low-income children lack. The CDC finds that African-American children between the ages 5 and 14 are three times more likely to drown than white children. One of the factors the CDC points to for this disparity is the lack of access to swimming pools. The USA Swimming Foundation reports that 70% of African-American children and 60% of Latino children cannot swim.

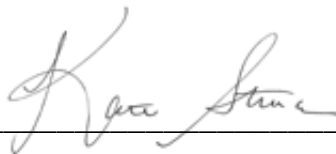
For the young people who live in the Takoma Park/East Silver Spring community, especially young children of color and low-income residents, having a place close to where they live to learn water safety helps our community address these disparities and provides important life skills to our young people.

The City and the Hospital wish to work with the Department of Recreation on evaluating the space needs for the aquatics facility, as well as determining the likely costs of development. We wish to request a General Assembly bond bill for the project and ask for your support and the support of the County Council.

We are pleased that both Dr. Weymouth Spence, President of Washington Adventist University and Dr. Brad Stewart, Vice-President and Provost of Montgomery College support this effort.


We welcome the opportunity to discuss the aquatics facility in more detail.

Sincerely,



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Kate Stewart, Mayor  
On Behalf of the City Council  
City of Takoma Park  
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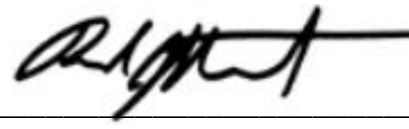
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With Support From:



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Dr. Weymouth Spence, President  
Washington Adventist University



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Dr. Brad Stewart, Vice-President and Provost  
Montgomery College, TPSS Campus

cc: Gabriel Albornoz, Director, Montgomery County Department of Recreation  
Bonnie Kirkland, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer  
Reemberto Rodriguez, Director, Silver Spring Regional Center  
Montgomery County Council  
Montgomery County Board of Education  
Peter Fosselman, White Oak Planning Coordinator