

CB34-2016

I want to thank and congratulate the DPZ for their comprehensive analysis of the TOD zone's history and deficiencies—and their attempt to make it conform more to the concept of TOD shared by the rest of the world. Only the ill-conceived CAC zone has had more revisions.

In fact, the five rounds of changes that were made to the TOD regulations between 2004 and 2016 amount to basically 12 years of the county making changes to respond to specific property owner and developers who are chasing the market.

I first became aware of the TOD zone at a pre-submission meeting for the Annapolis Junction at Savage TOD site. Like most locals I was skeptical of the plans to plop a high density residential, commercial, retail center and hotel by a cement plant and junk autos, across busy Route 32 from a recycling processing center. I was skeptical when the plans called for a county funded garage. I was skeptical when no additional road improvements to gain access to the site were included. I was skeptical when all the expensive improvements based on a train station still did not include an actual train station—something folks who commute from Savage really desired. They did not desire the large number of apartments with no room in our local schools. They did not believe the zero-children assertion. But the real absurdity was hearing the developers brag that the apartment complex would ask the highest rents of any Maryland TOD—including Montgomery County's Symphony Station.

Imagine my incredulity when Mr. Oh at the Planning Board meeting wrung his hands and said things just can't be done as envisioned because there really isn't sufficient transportation at the location to draw the commercial/office/ hotel component. (Gosh, if there isn't enough transportation there—and virtually none at Laurel Race course TOD—what are we doing???? Was this just another plot to allow high density residential development conversion in our dwindling supply of manufacturing and industrial land.

The significant issues motivating the actions of the proponents and the responses of the Council and DPZ are emblematic of a larger problem. Howard County has up to this time failed to create a larger vision for its future and incorporate that vision into its Planning and Zoning process. James Rouse provided Howard County with a possible vision for its future. What has the county done with that vision? Patching holes in the ship will only help you to complete your journey if you know where you're going.