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University wants biotech campus in Beltsville

University-owned land in Beltsville is rezoned by Pr. George's council

*There is a **MUCH BETTER** solution: build this campus on top of a Green Line Metro station.*

By Ovetta Wiggins
Washington Post Staff Writer

The SRSOZ State Rail Station Overlay Zone would empower Prince George's County to act like the Master Developer they should be.

Howard University wants to build a research and development campus in Prince George's County that would rival Duke's Raleigh-Durham Research Triangle Park in North Carolina and Johns Hopkins University's biomedical corridor in Montgomery County, university officials say.

Land-use and transportation are intimately linked. If it is productive and attractive to function as a pedestrian, people will do it. And — they will be happier, healthier and wealthier.

It is time that we zone land recognizing this!

Pr. George's scraps plan to revise zoning, growth policies in 2010

By Ovetta Wiggins, [Washington Post](#), Wednesday, June 16, 2010

Plans to rewrite the zoning law and subdivision regulations in Prince George's County and to update the county's growth-management policies are being **scrapped this year to save money** -- a decision that could also delay future development projects. ...

They need State help NOW!

"This aligns with our teaching and research mission. More importantly, it is good for Prince George's County," **Artis Hampshire-Cowan**, senior vice president and secretary at **Howard University**, said in an interview Friday.

Howard has owned 108 acres in a relatively quiet, residential Beltsville neighborhood since 1971.

So what? Today is a different world. Metro did not exist. Smart Growth was not a priority. Exchanging the land is the smartest, easiest step to a dramatically better solution.

University officials recently asked the County Council to **rezone the land, which is part of the county's rural tier, from open space to I-3, or an industrial employment park zone.** The County Council sits as the District Council when it hears zoning cases.

Hello! Is anyone awake here? Prince George's County has 14 undeveloped Metro rail stations! Howard University would be a gem/catalyst to a science city on top of one of them.

The council approved the request last month as part of discussions relating to the land-use plan for the northwestern part of the county. Howard's next step would be to get lawmakers to pass legislation permitting research and development in an industrial zone.

This is gov't malpractice!

Imagine Howard University Bio / Space Science city at West Hyattsville or Prince George's Plaza Metro. Then it is literally adjacent to the MAIN CAMPUS -- and the transportation infrastructure already exists!

This is why the state must enact the SRSOZ and empower local gov't with tools and knowledge.



Compare :

1) Green Line linkage enabling pedestrians to easily and quickly participate on both campuses — including the Howard Univ. Hospital

OR

2) 17 mile 32 minute drive (assumes no accidents or traffic jams doubling or tripling it) between DC and Beltsville.

And, how about the cost and land-waste of parking lots - in **BOTH** locations (in addition to all the other negatives of more auto use — see tabs 33a and 33b on the [Woodmont Triangle page of the website](#) in footer?)

Legislation is expected to be introduced this month to allow research and development in industrial zones on campuses similar to the one Howard is proposing. Hampshire-Cowan said the university isn't sure when the project would be completed.

"It will be a very positive impact on the county to have a new biotech campus associated with a major institution," said County Council Chairman **Thomas E. Dernoga** (D-Laurel).

Only if you put it in the right place — on TOP of a METRO station!

Local government MUST think and act like the Master Developer they ARE! The SRSOZ is exactly what is needed to solve this problem NOW.

Howard officials said the campus would bring an influx of jobs, but some residents who live in the vicinity said they are concerned about what else the campus might bring, including traffic and a negative effect on the environment.

How are they commuting?

Mary Kaye Vavasour, who lives near the site, said she worries about waste disposal and the county's ability to deal with an emergency. "Our local fire department doesn't have the capability to handle an explosion or fire," she said. "Certainly our Beltsville fire department couldn't handle a hazmat situation."

A building on the site, which would need capital improvements, houses the university's **Center for Atmospheric Sciences** and the **Center for Climate System Observation**. The program trains students as part of NASA's effort to increase the number of minorities who obtain advanced degrees in science-related fields.

Simply build new at the right Metro station. The economic value created and UNLEASHED by SRSOZ will more than pay for this.

Robert Duffy, a planning supervisor for the Prince George's County Planning Department, said the university has been able to do some research at the site because the work predated the existing use.

If this should be "rural tier" and we need to reduce auto-use and we have already built a Metro rail network ... WELL ... ???

"There has been this misconception out there that Howard is coming to Prince George's County. We're not coming to Prince George County," Hampshire-Cowan said. "We've been there."

She said Howard officials think the county is a prime location for expanding the university's research portfolio, given a feasibility study by county planners regarding Prince George's efforts to attract and retain biotechnology companies.

The study found that 2.4 percent of Maryland's 377 biotech companies are in Prince George's, compared with 53 percent in Montgomery. Prince George's had the fewest bioscience employees with 1,573; Montgomery had 12,115.

"There is a real concern about building a corporate tax base," Hampshire-Cowan said. "This is where high-end jobs come from."

Some residents said they oppose the university's proposal because Howard initially had asked that the property be zoned mixed-use, which offers the most flexibility, including the building of offices, homes and retail businesses.

Unless we zone land mixed-use we are forcing people to get into a car to do everything. In today's world that is governmental mal-practice.

If we want to reduce traffic (thereby reducing gasoline waste and exhaust gases that pollute the air and the Chesapeake Bay) this mixed-use environment must be pedestrian-friendly with Metro-rail as the primary regional transportation infrastructure.

Hampshire-Cowan said people feared that Howard wanted to sell to developers, but the school was looking for maximum flexibility. "We're not real estate developers," she said, "and that's not what we do."

Let's not forget the two most important dimensions of Sustainability:

- 1) A government that spends more money than it collects in taxes is NOT sustainable.*
- 2) A private company that does not make a profit is NOT sustainable.*

Only people with jobs pay taxes. Those without jobs COST governments money!

The SRSOZ solves big problems in a sustainable fashion.

Some neighbors said they considered it a victory that the council decided against mixed-use zoning and instead opted for industrial use. But Vavasour said she remains concerned about waste disposal and added that she will keep a close eye on details of the plan.

This outrageous failure by local government is why the SRSOZ is desperately needed.

"We'll have to deal with the site-plan process," she said. "There's an awareness that this should be addressed. . . . And I have confidence that we can work it out."