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Dear Council President Glass and Councilmembers,

We, the undersigned organizations are writing to strongly support the Briggs Chaney – Fairland Draft Master Plan- specifically its focus on infrastructure and opportunity that increase food equity and climate resilience in the Eastern County and the county as a whole.

Planning staff have wisely put culture, health and resilience at the center of this plan's framework. One common denominator of health, culture and resilience is food. This plan has a smart focus on food, and specifically food equity. With food insecurity up 50% locally in the pandemic, there is a great need for measures that increase food access. But the beauty of this plan is a reimagining of "food access" to include access to food production and distribution opportunities through plans for an Agricultural Tech Hub and other food-focused community offerings (recommendation 3.D.2). The potential for improvements in public health, community connection and economic development from these proposals knows no bounds. Simply put – ramping up and broadening access to food production infrastructure brings self-determination and agency to a community the way no other land use can.

This refreshing focus on food production comes at a time of increased interest in community gardening – an interest that far outstrips existing community garden facilities as shown by long waitlists for garden plots, particularly in the eastern county. We urge that these plans be formalized as the planning process moves forward to be sure that these great ideas become a reality in the final plan – and we stand ready to collaborate on solutions. Plans for increased food production support will be bolstered by existing collaborative networks of food focused civic and government resources – including the new Office of Food System Resilience- to help get residents growing.

This draft plan also seeks resilience in the face of projected climate impacts. The Eastern portion of the county will see more dramatic urban heat island impacts than other areas. This vulnerability is an opportunity to pilot all possible solutions detailed in the Climate Action Plan such as dramatically increasing tree canopy and green space. Impervious surfaces also need attention- as detailed in the plan, previous efforts to maintain quality streams in the Paint Branch watershed were undermined by re-development efforts. As with the focus on food – centering climate readiness and water quality in re-development efforts is a goal that will have broad benefits for health and livability.

Our understanding is the innovations in this plan have been well received across the County when it came before the Planning Commission. However, it is important to note that community

plans must involve the community, though the undersigned organizations champion this framework that centers food and climate resilience, we defer to the leaders and organizations that have stewarded these neighborhoods for decades on what is best for their community and urge robust outreach and collaboration with those community stewards as the process progresses.

In our view, this plan takes the current challenges and projected growth of the Eastern County and meets it with solutions that also grow – a thriving local food system and green, forested spaces to meet climate challenges. This focus on meeting vulnerability with solutions that build community-based resilience should be the template for land use planning across the county.

Thank You,

Montgomery Countryside Alliance
ACQ Climate
Biodiversity for a Livable Climate
Community FarmShare
Green Sanctuary of Unitarian Universalist Church of Silver Spring
Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee
TCM Montgomery County
Safe Healthy Playing Fields Inc.
Sugarloaf Citizens Association
Zero Waste Montgomery County

Susan Eisendrath, Katharine Coon, Ellen Gordon: Climate Coalition of Montgomery County, Food Resilience Working Group Members, Diane Cameron, Doney Smith, Philip Bogdonoff