

Dr. Wallace D. Loh  
President  
University of Maryland  
1101 Main Administration Building  
College Park, MD 20742-6105

August 20, 2013

Dear President Loh,

We are writing to express our concerns about a commercial-residential development project that is proposed for the site of the University of Maryland golf course. We understand that you have received an unsolicited proposal to replace all or part of the golf course with condos, a hotel complex and a highway interchange connection to the Beltway. While we believe that the University leadership would not seriously entertain this idea, we are writing to share our views on this matter and to ask you to reject any proposal to destroy or diminish this important open space.

We are Anacostia restoration advocates who are working in partnership with government and business leaders at all levels. We are helping to implement the \$2 billion Anacostia Restoration Plan, a ten-year effort to restore the Anacostia River and its watershed. We welcome the University of Maryland's partnership in the Anacostia's revitalization, and we ask you to begin with the environmental Hippocratic oath: "first do no harm" to your own existing open spaces.

In restoring an ailing urban river to a state of improved health, a key step is valuing and saving important existing open spaces. These include forests, farms, and sustainably-managed golf courses that harbor wetlands and woodlands. The Anacostia has a dearth of these open spaces – and we must sustain such large and carefully managed ones such as this one. Paint Branch watershed overall is only 26% covered with forest, whereas the target is to have at least 40% overall forest cover. About 40% of the 175-acre University of Maryland golf course area is covered with trees. Without this open space, the eastern "buffer zone" of the University area would be lost, and particularly in larger storms, millions of gallons of stormwater now absorbed by the golf course's groves and greenswards would be funneled into Paint Branch and the Anacostia.

The University of Maryland golf course is a successful, popular recreational and open space amenity that is crucial to hundreds of thousands of people in our region. The course won *Golf Inc.*'s Renovation of the Year Award in 2011 for design and construction excellence in the \$3.5 million renovation project. Residents of College Park, Adelphi, Hyattsville, University Park, and other local communities value the golf course as open space in the midst of the concrete and asphalt of the surrounding urban region.

The University of Maryland golf course is certified by Audubon International and is known to the region's birdwatchers as a top spot for viewing redtailed hawks and many other species. According to a 2003 survey that led to the course's certification, it harbors 25 species of birds, 13 mammals, amphibians and reptiles, and more than 25 varieties of trees. There are also butterflies, wildflowers and wetland grasses. Though we are not making any categorical statements about golf course water quality and stormwater impacts, we have learned that for this specific golf course, on about two-thirds – (25 out of the 35 acres) of the course's intensively managed turf areas (Fairways, Greens and Tees), the use of Bermuda Grass has enabled the reduction of chemical use by roughly 95%.

Once a forest and other open space is covered with buildings and roads, engineered stormwater devices can mitigate but not fully prevent downstream pollution, particularly from larger storms. While we are avid supporters and installers of "Environmental Site Design" (ESD) devices as restoration technologies

for existing imperviousness, these devices cannot fully replace the functions of woodlands and open spaces. We view sound land use decisionmaking as a prerequisite to the optimal effectiveness of ESD in aiding the restoration and protection of our urban waters.

Not only would the proposed commercial-residential development project that would replace this golf course be a setback to our region's multi-billion-dollar investment in restoring the Anacostia, but the proposal also flies in the face of Smart Growth principles that focus on "Right Development, Right Place." Development at this site will detract from redevelopment and revitalization of the Route 1 corridor, and the existing Metro Stations at Prince George's Plaza, Greenbelt and College Park. Developing this road and changing the entrance to the University would turn its "front door" away from Prince George's County.

The success of the monumental Anacostia Restoration Plan depends upon the involvement and commitment of all partners who own and control land in the Anacostia Watershed. As a major landowner, stormwater permit holder and opinion leader, the University of Maryland is poised to play a leading role in the Anacostia's restoration. We submit that the University's role in the river's restoration begins with a visible commitment to maintain in perpetuity – and continuously improve the stewardship of -- your remaining open spaces. If we lose these places – including this golf course --we cannot get them back. We respectfully request that you reject proposals to diminish or destroy the University's golf course, and we would welcome the chance to meet with you to discuss this matter in greater detail.

Yours for clean water and green, healthy communities,

James R. Foster  
President  
Anacostia Watershed Society

Diane Cameron  
Conservation Director  
Audubon Naturalist Society

Claudia Friedetzky  
Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club  
Conservation Representative

Bill Matuszeski  
Chair, Anacostia Watershed Citizens Advisory Committee

Brittani Garner  
Anacostia Program Organizer  
Clean Water Action

Cary Coppock  
Prince George's Co. Vice-Chair  
Anacostia Watershed Citizens Advisory Committee

Cheryl Cort  
Policy Director  
Coalition for Smarter Growth

Vicky Hageman  
Chair  
Citizens to Conserve and Restore Indian Creek

Dan Smith  
Friends of Lower Beaverdam Creek

David Dunmire  
President  
Eyes of Paint Branch

Dennis Chestnut  
Executive Director  
Groundwork Anacostia River DC

William Duncan  
President  
Friends of Still Creek, Inc.

Marian Dombroski  
AWCAC and Friends of Quincy Run Watershed