

Facts Support the Gaithersburg West Master Plan: A Factual Response to Recent False “Pentagon” Comparisons

Summary: The comparisons some are making between the Pentagon and the Gaithersburg West Master Plan are deeply flawed and inaccurate on many levels, starting with the fact that they are comparing a single-use military office building with a much larger area that will include a mix of jobs, housing and retail. The Plan is a key element of County Executive Ike Leggett’s Smart Growth Initiative and is the new ‘main street’ of Montgomery County’s life sciences industry.

False Claim #1: “The Pentagon site is 583 Acres.”

Fact Check: **THIS IS NOT TRUE.** Not even close. According to [Pentagon 9/11](#), published by the Historical Office of the Defense Department, and multiple other official sources, the Pentagon building sits on just 29 acres, **34 acres** if you count the internal courtyard, with another 67 acres consumed by surface parking lots. The Gaithersburg - North Potomac - Rockville Coalition has [inflated](#) the true acreage of the Pentagon site in its publications by 570% to 1,700%, depending on whether or not you include the parking (The original site was 583 acres when the Pentagon was first built, but various parcels were sold off or transferred to other uses over the years). Any comparisons based on this incorrect acreage figure are simply not valid.

In contrast, the far more sustainable, compact design proposed in the **922 acre** Life Sciences Center (part of the **4,360 acre** Gaithersburg West Master Plan), will rely on mass transit, a mix of uses, new hiker biker trails and improved pedestrian access, and will REPLACE much of the surface parking that is currently located in this area with more compact parking garages. That will leave a lot more room for parks, recreation and open space, and reduce run-off resulting in a cleaner environment.

False Claim #2: Densities in ‘Science City’ are higher than the Pentagon

Fact Check: **THIS IS NOT TRUE.** According to the DOD website, the Pentagon has **29,000 employees** (not the 23,000 opponents cited) on a total of **101 acres** (including building and parking), or about **287 employees** per acre. In comparison, the proposed Life Sciences Center would allow up to 60,000 employees on 922 acres, or just **66 employees** per acre, **less than 1/3 the density of the Pentagon**. The truth is, the densities proposed in the Shady Grove Life Sciences Center area are about the same as you see at the Washingtonian Center near Rio, or the area around Germantown’s BlackRock Center for the Arts. So next time you hear “Pentagon” think “BlackRock.”

False Claim #3: The Shady Grove Science Center lacks transportation access

Fact Check: **THIS IS NOT TRUE.** Gaithersburg West will have 4 new transit stations on the Corridor Cities Transitway, providing direct transit access to Shady Grove Metro and points north. It’s also served by 3 major highway exits off I-270 and it sits at the end-point of Sam Eig Highway and the ICC, not to mention Great Seneca Highway, Shady Grove Road, and many other access points.

The Gaithersburg West Master Plan is a major step forward for science, job creation and quality of life for all residents of Montgomery County, and it has nothing at all to do with the Pentagon (think of BlackRock)!

Setting the Record Straight: The Truth about the Gaithersburg West Master Plan

	The Pentagon	Belward Research Campus <i>As recommended by the Planning Board</i>	Belward Research Campus <i>As proposed by Johns Hopkins University</i>	Shady Grove Life Sciences Center <i>As recommended by the Planning Board in the Gaithersburg West Master Plan</i>
Total Land Area	101 Acres	107 Acres	107 Acres	922 Acres <i>(of the 4,360 acres in the entire master plan)</i>
Gross Floor Area <i>(Commercial square ft.)</i>	6.5 million	4.6 million	6.5 million	20 million * <i>(only 7 million is new)</i>
Number of Employees	29,000	15,000	21,000	60,000** <i>(only 38,000 are new)</i>
Number of Residential units	0	0	0	9,000*** <i>(only 5,700 are new)</i>
Density – Employees Per Acre	287	140	196	66
% Preserved as parks, recreation & open space	5%	45%	45%	TBD

* This figure includes 13 million square feet of existing or approved commercial development in the current master plan area, so only 7 million of this is new commercial development, and that will be staged over the next 30 to 40 years.

** This figure includes roughly 22,000 jobs already there in the Gaithersburg West master plan area.

*** There are currently 3,300 residential units already in place in Gaithersburg West, which this figure includes.

The Truth: Nothing proposed in Gaithersburg West is EVEN CLOSE to the densities in the Pentagon.

Sources:

- <http://www.dtic.mil/ref/html/Welcome/general.html>
- [Pentagon 9/11](#), published by the Historical Office of the Department of Defense
- [Wikipedia](#)

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