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Maryland National Capital Park & Planning Commission
Development Review Division
County Administration Building, 4th floor
14741 Governor Ogden Bowie Drive
Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772

Dear Cynthia Fenton

RE: DSP-15020-01

Application Name: Capital Plaza Walmart

On behalf of Progressive Cheverly, we are writing to oppose the expansion of the Walmart at Capital Plaza into a Super Walmart store and to urge MNCPPC not to approve the Detailed Site Plan (DSP) application.

Our objections to this expansion are threefold:

1. Despite many promises, Walmart has been a poor corporate neighbor.
2. Capital Plaza remains almost entirely a wasteland after many years. The current expansion proposal, with full grocery space, is offered piecemeal with no plan to change conditions in the rest of the shopping mall, let alone bring about a vibrant Town Center to benefit the community.
3. We object to the decision to proceed under DSP rules; this application should be treated as a Special Exception.

A poor corporate neighbor

In 2005, Progressive Cheverly helped form the Community Standards Coalition (CSC), a citizens group representing neighboring communities and towns. This coalition has worked for more than ten years with the Prince George's County government, District Council, Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation, local officials, neighborhoods, Walmart, and property owner

Nellis Corporation, to promote positive economic development with the purpose of attracting quality retailers to the Capital Plaza site. A landmark agreement with Walmart in May 2006 (known as the Community Standards Agreement) outlined nine standards to ensure that the store would be an asset in the community by providing a high quality retail experience and local employment opportunities. Key provisions included no sale of alcohol, guns, or ammunition; no 24-hour operation; addressing traffic congestion and security in adjoining neighborhoods; maintaining strong parking lot security; promoting local hiring and workforce development; an attractive facade and landscaping; an energy-efficient and environmentally innovative site; and ongoing dialogue with the Coalition on all issues. The agreement included 16 signatories representing nearby municipalities, civic associations and local community organizations.

When Walmart opened the store in March 2007, the company promised to be a good neighbor and to provide good jobs, a quality retail operation in a safe and clean environment, crime prevention in the parking lot and store, and clear communication with the community. This has not been our experience, and many of the arguments that Walmart makes in the DSP neither match this experience over the last nine years nor provide confidence that the expansion of the existing store will prove to be a positive development for the surrounding communities and for the development of Capital Plaza itself into a vibrant town center as envisioned in the 2010 Central Annapolis Road Approved Sector Plan and Sectional Map Amendment.

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For nine years the health, safety, and well-being of neighborhood and shoppers have been compromised by Walmart's lack of adequate maintenance, security, and management of the store and parking lot. Walmart's parking lot has a high level of crime-related activities including car theft. The lack of a shopping cart containment system (prior to Oct 2013) resulted in shopping carts throughout the neighborhoods and a parking lot littered with carts, impeding safe pedestrian access and vehicle traffic. Additionally, constant turnover in store management and high staff turnover have adversely affected store conditions, resulting in poor customer service, poorly stocked shelves, unsafe shopping conditions with merchandise cluttered aisles, and safety issues of blocked aisles with boxes and pallets. Walmart also claimed it would bring economic benefits to our community, but failed to live up to that promise as well. This store has been the site of employee protests about poor working conditions, wages, and benefits.

If healthy communities are in any way the responsibility of the Planning Board and the planning process, this record of behavior should not be rewarded with a massive expansion of retail capacity.

Creating a vibrant Town Center

Since 2007 there has been only one new building constructed, when Chevy Chase Bank built a new building. (The previous structure is still a vacated building on the site.) Recently an abandoned restaurant was torn down and there are preliminary plans to build a new restaurant, with 'talk' of more.

What we have on this prime location (39 acres on Route 450 near the Baltimore-Washington Parkway) are the Walmart, Chevy Chase Bank, McDonalds, and a car dealer, with no new construction or re-development except for the Walmart since the original mall was demolished over

ten years ago. During this period a full-service grocery store closed at the site. Acres of prime real estate lie dormant, surrounded by chain link fencing. The Community Standards Coalition has pushed for more development at the site, with no positive response from Nellis or the County over the years, despite many meetings of the stakeholders.

We have waited to see positive development of the rest of the 39-acre vacant mall. We have been led to believe in conversations with the developer that a full-service grocery store is needed to generate the traffic necessary to attract business to the location. However, by Walmart's account to the Coalition, the Capital Plaza Walmart is already the most heavily shopped store in this area, without a grocery store! Why has that not been enough "traffic" to have encouraged development? The Walmart presence, with its existing extensive packaged grocery offerings, in our opinion, has served to drive established businesses away. The Safeway grocery store adjacent to the Capital Plaza Walmart closed within a couple of years of the Walmart opening, and Bill's Hardware Store, a presence in the neighborhood for decades, also closed.

Approval of a Super Walmart at Capital Plaza would still make it the only game in town, with the store and its expanded parking spaces now taking up about 22 acres of the 39-acre Mall with little other development. The Capital Plaza Mall, according to the 450 Corridor development plan, was planned to be a pedestrian-friendly mall of various shops and eating establishments in addition to the Walmart. In our opinion, there has to be a collaborative effort by owner Nellis Corporation, Walmart, the Prince George Development Corporation, the Planning Board, and the local citizens to develop the Capital Plaza Mall in a way that enhances our neighborhood and provides good shopping, eating, and social opportunities. Granting an expansion of the Walmart without any prospects for other development at the Mall is unacceptable. Where is the big picture of development for this area?

We want to point out that the economy in the surrounding communities in Prince George's County is robust and is attracting millions of dollars in new mixed-use development and new quality businesses. For example, we have a Wegman's and will soon have a Whole Foods. Positive changes are taking place in New Carrollton, Riverdale Park, College Park, Mt. Rainier, and Hyattsville, as the economy improves. However, the blighted area known as Capital Plaza remains an eyesore that contributes little to the economy in sales or employment opportunities. **The community surrounding Capital Plaza has a right to expect more.**

While we do not place all the burden of this situation on the shoulders of Walmart, neither do we absolve the company of all responsibility. **With a true commitment to community enhancement and the market power of one of the largest corporations on the planet, we believe much more could have been accomplished in nine years.**

Special exception

Progressive Cheverly continues to believe that Walmart's application for an expansion to a Super Walmart with the addition of 35,287 square feet to the existing 85,000 square feet and the inclusion of a full grocery store should require the Special Exception process. It is our position that the Park and Planning application process should be halted immediately and replaced with a requirement for the Special Exception process. We are not land use planning experts, but we continue to view as

extremely problematic the decision, without any public involvement or knowledge, to allow the DSP process in place of the Special Exception process.

For the reasons stated above, we ask that you deny the permit for the Walmart expansion to a Super Walmart and advocate for a positive, community-oriented development at Capital Plaza Mall in Landover Hills, Maryland, on this 39-acre parcel. A Super Walmart on the 450 Corridor does not serve the community or the county. **Instead we would urge that you support the Special Exception process, which would allow for the kind of community input that should be part of this process.**

Yours truly,

Margie Burns and Clareen Heikal
Co-chairs, Progressive Cheverly