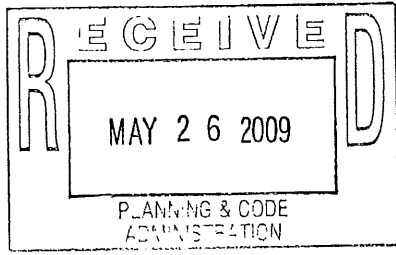


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Kentlands Citizens Assembly
485 Tschiffely Square Road
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

May 20, 2009

Dear Mayor Katz, City Manager Jones, and Members of the Gaithersburg City Council,

The Kentlands Citizens Assembly has convened a committee to explore the difficulties facing our unique Commercial District. Our committee is made up of volunteers from the residential and business community in the Kentlands area. Over the last several months we have met and sought input from all stakeholders, including Kentlands area businesses, property owners, developers, and residents.

We have identified several items, notably signage, that business owners feel would increase their success here in the Kentlands. We are writing you in an effort to seek your support and financial assistance in making the Kentlands Commercial District a success. We recognize that this process will require a long-term ongoing commitment from all of us, and have several requests for the City's involvement and funds. In an effort to break this into manageable parts and a realistic timeline, we are highlighting specific short term and long term requests. Many of these requests have been also recommended in the City-sponsored October 2007 Charette results. We understand that \$50K of the Capital Improvements Budget has been earmarked in FY2010 for improvements to the Kentlands Commercial District.

Short Term Requests *(defined as being completed in one year or less)*

We request that the City:

- Modify the existing green & white City signposts along Kentlands Blvd, adding a plank at the top that reads "Main Street Shops and Offices" with appropriate arrows.
- Install signs indicating areas where cars should go to park using the P symbol and an arrow:



- Modify the City Events signpost on Great Seneca Highway to guide passersby into the Kentlands Shopping Area, using branded name as described below.
- Address security concerns within the public spaces through increased police patrols and other measures as deemed appropriate.

Also,

- We will brand the Kentlands Commercial District with an easily recognizable name, and encourage business owners to form an association. If formed, we request a City staff person to be a liaison to this association.
- We will name the traffic Circles on Kentlands Blvd (to help with identifying quadrants, making it easier to provide directions and find specific shops & businesses). We request that the City pay for and install relevant, uplit wayfinding signs at these circles, guiding visitors to various shopping areas.
- We need to bring our commercial district in line with several other local shopping centers with regard to charm. We will reach out to the three major developers/property managers in the business district to develop consensus on year-round and seasonal beautification and events. We request that the City pay for and install branded lightpole banners across the business district and on Main Street (City property), pay for and install twinkle lights in the trees along Main Street, pay for, install, and maintain additional beautification items along Main Street – ideally planter boxes along the length of Main Street live/work area, and also in Main Street Pavilion. The goal of these efforts is to create a more charming and inviting place for visitors to shop.
- We request that the City hire a part-time Event Planner on our behalf to plan promotional activities and advertising throughout the year. We do not want this person to be the same individual who has been performing this task for Old Town, but will be happy for the City to help us select someone. We request that the City allocate approximately \$10K annually to subsidize a strategic advertising campaign to include regional print ads, and eventually regional radio ads. We will request additional funds from the merchants and developers either through an association or individually.
- We request that the City pay for and install improved lighting at the Kentlands entrance at Great Seneca Highway, near the Main Street Pavilion, and along Market Square Plaza.

Longer Term Requests (defined as being completed in one to five years)

We request that the City:

- Coordinate with the State and install permanent signage on Great Seneca Highway that reflects the branded name of the Kentlands Commercial District
- Coordinate with the State and install permanent signage at exits 9 (from the south) and 11 (from the north) on I-270 that reflects the branded name of the Kentlands Commercial District
- Implement a plan / resource to “manage” the commercial district

- Implement key recommendations from the October 2007 Charette Results
 - Pedestrian safety
 - Long term parking plan to enhance business growth and success
 - Identify and recruit businesses to the area and promote the business district
- Contract with an organization that is highly specialized and dedicated to creating enduring mixed-use projects (such as Live Work Learn Play LLP)

Attached to this letter are the signatures of our unified business community. We are anxious to receive confirmation from the City that these requests are reasonable and agreeable, and that the \$50K in funds promised to our community will be made available. The expectation is that we will soon meet with City staff to discuss a prioritization and implementation schedule for each request. Please contact Paula Ross at 240-601-8969 at your earliest convenience to set up a meeting with our committee representatives.

Sincerely,



Joyce Whitman
Chair, Board of Trustees
Kentlands Citizens Assembly

Mark Dirlam
KCA Commercial District Advisory Committee Co-Chairs




Paula Ross

Copied to:
Greg Ossont, Director, Planning & Code Administration
Adrienne Gillen, President, Kentlands Citizens Assembly
KCA Board of Trustees

MEMORANDUM TO: Mayor and City Council

VIA: Angel L. Jones, City Manager

FROM: Greg Ossont, Director 
Planning and Code Administration

DATE: August 17, 2009

SUBJECT: Kentlands Citizens Assembly Committee Requests for
Kentlands Boulevard Commercial Areas

As you are aware, staff has been coordinating with a subcommittee of the Kentlands Citizens Assembly on a number of requests that were submitted in May 2009. After receiving the letter, staff met with the committee to refine each request through clarification as well as prioritize each request based on the committee's feedback. Following this prioritization, City staff completed a comprehensive review and analysis of each request.

As part of the analysis, staff created a set of criteria to consider when responding to each request. Given the current economic climate, the devotion of financial and staff resources was a primary concern. In addition, devoting any resources to this specific area was evaluated against other areas of the City to ensure equitable distribution of our limited resources. Finally, staff evaluated whether or not it was appropriate for the City to take lead on the individual requests and whether or not local partnerships with businesses, association and property owners were appropriate.

Accordingly, staff has grouped the requests into three categories. In some cases, the City has already completed the task or is simply already fulfilling the request and therefore no further action is recommended. The remaining two categories are comprised of items that staff is either recommending the City consider in the future or consider not feasible at this time.

Items Already Completed and Staff Recommends No Further Action:

- **Task – Install Way Finding Signs**
Modified way finding signs have been purchased and have been installed by the Department of Public Works. They are placed along Kentlands Boulevard and direct vehicles and pedestrians to the Main Street Shops.

- **Task – Partner with Local Merchants in Special Events**
The City already participates in a number of special events in the area. Specifically, the City participates in:
 - Farmer's Market – City Sponsored Event
 - Summer Safari (held at the City Hall Concert Pavilion) – Co-Sponsored Event
 - Kentlands Day – City supported via resources
 - Kentlands/Lakelands 5K – Co-Sponsored Event
 - Oktoberfest – Co-Sponsored Event with KCA
 - Backyard Concerts – City Sponsored Event

- Kentlands Mansion Bridal Showcase (marketing opportunities) – City Sponsored Event
- Myriad of events held in partnership with the Kentlands at the Arts Barn and Mansion; recitals, film festivals, concerts.
- **Task – Increase Police Visibility Within Public Spaces**
Gaithersburg City Police have already heightened visibility and patrol the areas as much possible. Additional patrols are not feasible.
- **Task – Recruit New Businesses and Contract with Organization Specialized in Creating Enduring Mixed Use Projects**
The City will conduct a Work Session in the near future to provide an overview of how the Economic Development Office facilitates efforts to recruit new businesses as a citywide effort. Merchants are encouraged to attend.
- **Task – Implement Pedestrian Safety Plan**
Kentlands Boulevard modifications are under construction and crosswalk markings have been enhanced. Additional enhancements are not planned at this time.

Staff Recommends the City Take Limited Action on the Following Requests:

- **Task – Install Uplit Way Finding Signs at Traffic Circles**
The Department of Public Works and traffic engineering will evaluate the feasibility of monument signs in traffic circles.
- **Task – Install Beautification Items Along Main Street**
The City would be willing to work with business owners to execute right of way agreements for merchants to decorate their areas with planters, flowers, and plants but it is not reasonable for the City take on the full responsibility of installing streetscape features or incur the entire cost.
- **Task – Install Twinkle Lights at Various Locations**
The City would be willing to partner or execute a right of way agreement for merchants who wish to take the initiative.

Staff Recommends No Action on the Following Requests:

- **Task – Install Improved Lighting at the Main Street Pavilion, Market Square Plaza and the Entrance Along Great Seneca Highway**
The City has inspected its property to determine if more lighting is warranted at the Main Street Pavilion and Market Square Plaza and has determined that none of the City properties require additional lighting. The GSH entrance feature is maintained by the Kentlands Square Shopping Center.

- **Task – Install Public Parking Directional Signage**
 There is no “public parking” in large surface lots and therefore not feasible for the City to install directional signage.
- **Task – Budget \$10,000 Annually for Advertising**
 The City does not contribute to advertising budgets for private commercial areas nor does the City manage private commercial areas.
- **Task – Provide a City Staff Liaison for Newly Formed Kentlands Downtown**
 New staff request not feasible.
- **Task – Install Permanent Signage and Lightpole Banners with Branded Name**
 These tasks involve using City resources to promote a brand name of Kentlands Downtown. The request to promote a branded name is problematic for the following reasons:

 - Branding anything “downtown” may have an adverse effect on other areas already coined “downtown”, specifically Olde Towne.
 - Creating another branded downtown may confuse visitors as Gaithersburg Town Center is already highlighted on I-270. Having two signs pointing in different directions may be very confusing.
 - The area included in Kentlands Downtown is owned and operated by several different entities. The largest property owners already use resources marketing their retail centers as Market Square and Kentlands Square. Rebranding would likely cause problems for these property owners.
- **Task – Implement Long Term Parking Plan**
 Not feasible with existing resources and requires additional information.