

To All Planning Commission Members:

We are writing in support of the Harford Road Overlay District introduced by Councilman Dorsey.

Our names are Cynthia Williams (age 46) and Glenn Simpson (age 56). Cynthia is an editor and owns her own business. Glenn is a fundraising consultant for nonprofit organizations. We are an interracial couple that has been together for 11 years.

We moved to the Beverly Hills neighborhood (on Beverly Road between Arabia and Walther) in early 2019 after living in Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles, California. Glenn lived in Lauraville for many years before that. For what it's worth, Glenn's mother and her spouse have lived in Lauraville for almost 35 years (and now own several houses in the neighborhood), and Glenn's father and his spouse have lived in Parkville for over 20 years. In the 1980s, Glenn's mother was the pastor of the church on Harford Road and Southern Avenue.

What we've been doing along the Harford Road commercial corridor does not seem to be working. If it were, we wouldn't have so many businesses that come and go (which is not to discount the myriad reasons a business might succeed or fail) and there wouldn't be so many vacant commercial spaces along the corridor.

Very simply, attracting more residents to the neighborhoods along the corridor means more potential customers for existing and new businesses in those neighborhoods. That's one reason we are excited about the large apartment building being constructed in the 4500 block of Harford.

Also, with Baltimore facing the same (affordable) housing challenges that much of the country is struggling with, the Overlay District seems like a win-win.

We haven't heard any objections to the Overlay District that don't essentially boil down to a belief that the new residents the plan could attract would somehow be undesirable simply because they wouldn't otherwise be able to get a single-family home in these neighborhoods. It is difficult to see that as anything other than class and/or race bias. Let's be better than that.

Cynthia Williams and Glenn Simpson
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