



# Growth Action Network

of Anne Arundel County, Inc.

P.O. Box 748 • Arnold, MD 21012

## GAN and County meet with developer of controversial project



### Briefing meeting hosted at Watershed

The Watershed development, located near the junction of Route 295 and Route 198 and just north of the Patuxent Research Refuge, is becoming increasingly controversial as more of the public becomes aware of its environmental impact. [This video](#) provides an overview of the issues. Construction requires clear cutting of nearly 180 acres of forest that is an extension of the prime forest in the Patuxent Research Refuge. Much of this forest was designated Habitat for Forest Interior Dwelling Species by the Department of Natural Resources. Approximately 1800 townhouses and condominiums are planned. Construction and sales have begun.

On August 11, Elm Street Development, developer of the controversial Watershed project hosted a meeting for the GAN Board, Councilman Andrew Pruski, OPZ Senior Planner Mark Wildonger, Deputy Chief Administrator for Land Use, Lori Rhodes, and Planning Advisory Board Member, Elizabeth Rosborg. Elm Street was represented by Vice Presidents Mike Burlbaugh and Jim Krapf, who described the meeting as an effort to inform interested stakeholders about the history and activity of the development. During the meeting several references were made to the video at the link above.

Although no confidential information was revealed, the host did not permit GAN to record the meeting. However, notes summarizing meeting highlights were made by GAN for distribution to its members. Meeting notes can be reviewed at [this link](#). All attendees were given the opportunity to review the notes, and reviewers comments are included as an addendum to them.

The project has a long history. Zoning is Mixed Use-Residential, and the parcels were included in a BRAC overlay by the 2009 GDP. Submission of subdivision applications began in 2015, and a grandfathering clause in the 2019 AACo Forest Conservation Act exempted the project from regulation under it. The project could be a poster child for forest loss in Anne Arundel County. In addition to the annual loss of an estimated \$360K of ecosystem services provided by the large forest acreage, pollution of the Patuxent River and Refuge by stormwater runoff is likely, and collateral damage to the Refuge by incursion of thousands of new homeowners nearby is expected. Traffic congestion is almost certain to increase on Route 198.

The total value of home sales at the Watershed will likely be in the billion dollar range. Project investors will probably smile on their way to the bank. However, many West County citizens recognize that their benefit from the project will be minimal, but their loss will be significant.

GAN members are encouraged to ask County election candidates how they would work to strengthen forest preservation laws to assure that similar projects will be prevented in the future.

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