

Response from Valerie Ervin

Valerie Ervin, candidate for County Council, District 5
In favor of tunnel

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"The Forest Glen Sector Plan asks the question "What should this community look like twenty years from now?" The plan states that "regional through traffic in Forest Glen is likely to increase even if nothing new is built in the sector area itself." During the development of the Sector Plan, community members expressed concern about future growth and the impact of traffic on the neighborhood. The plan was supposed to seek a balance between all the competing needs of the neighborhood, the people who travel by car on Georgia Avenue and the broader Silver Spring community. The vehicles that travel on Georgia Avenue every day pose many hazards to pedestrians. The road is dangerous and difficult to cross. The Forest Glen neighborhood is surrounded by the Capital Beltway on the south and is bisected by Georgia Avenue a six-lane major highway. In order to successfully reach the many objectives called for in the Sector Plan the idea of a pedestrian tunnel beneath Georgia Avenue at Forest Glen Road's time has come. I am enthusiastically supportive of a plan to build the tunnel. The Sector plan was approved and adopted in 1996, ten years ago. The vision for this community based on the plan did not take into account the growth in the region especially the development around metrorail. However, the Sector Plan adopted many recommendations in 1996 that are relevant to today's discussion:

1. Focus development at appropriate locations near Metrorail stations consistent with the General Plan
2. Provide a balance between the needs of the residential neighborhoods and the regional interests served by Holy Cross Hospital. Provide safe and efficient traffic circulation for both local and regional travel, taking into account the impacts of vehicular traffic on existing neighborhoods.
3. Encourage non-automobile modes of transportation such as transit, bicycles, and walking providing for attractive, safe, and convenient access to major destinations including the Metrorail station.
4. Enhance neighborhood identity by strengthening the neighborhoods within the sector plan area and providing additional gathering spaces such as public open spaces and pedestrian-friendly streets.

Sector plans are supposed to be visionary. They are designed for us to revise and amend as needed. I look forward to working with the Forest Estates Community Association as we seek to find solutions to making the tunnel a reality."