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VILLAGE OF FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS

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November 10, 2025

Mr. Elza Hisel-McCoy
Chief, DownCounty Planning
Montgomery County Planning Department
2425 Reddie Drive, 14th Floor
Wheaton, Maryland 20902

Re: Friendship Heights Sector Plan — Proposal for Key Community Amenities

Dear Mr. Hisel-McCoy:

The new Friendship Heights Sector Plan offers the opportunity to shape a vibrant and livable future for our neighborhood. To that end, we propose the inclusion of several signature amenities that will both enrich daily life and serve as long-term pillars of community identity:

Proposed Amenities & Why They Matter

1. Montgomery County Public Library + Performing Arts Center

We propose that the new Sector Plan include a modern public library paired with a performing arts venue — modeled after successful institutions like the **Brigadier General Charles E. McGee Library** in Silver Spring ([Montgomery County+2Silver Spring Downtown+2](#)) and the Montgomery College Cultural Arts Center.

Benefits to the community:

- **Cultural anchor:** A combined library + arts space becomes a destination — hosting author talks, gallery exhibits, recitals, community theater, film nights, and more.

- **Educational resource:** Beyond books, the facility can offer digital media labs, maker spaces, co-working areas, tutoring, language classes, and lifelong-learning programs.
- **Community gathering hub:** Meeting rooms, flexible performance spaces, small theaters — these help bring neighbors together, encourage cross-generational engagement, and anchor civic life.
- **Equity in access:** A local, high-quality library/arts center ensures that residents don't have to travel far for enrichment, especially for families, seniors, and youth.

2. Public Park with Children's Play Areas and Dog Parks

We'd like the Sector Plan to include a well-designed public park that incorporates features such as playgrounds, splash pads or water play, walking paths, picnic areas, seating, green lawns, and a dog park. A model in mind is **Bethesda Market Park** (in development) ([Montgomery Parks+2](#)[Montgomery Parks+2](#)) and the recently renovated **Caroline Freeland Urban Park** in downtown Bethesda ([Montgomery Parks+1](#)).

How this helps:

- **Health & wellness:** Access to green space encourages walking, casual recreation, outdoor play, and time outdoors, which supports physical and mental well-being.
- **Family friendly:** High-quality playgrounds and shaded areas make the neighborhood more attractive to families, helping with retention and new residents.
- **Pet owners:** A dog park provides safe, off-leash space for pets and helps reduce conflicts in streets or other open areas.
- **Civic identity & pride:** A beautiful, well-kept park becomes a neighborhood signature, enhancing aesthetics and property values.

- **Multigenerational usage:** Design elements (e.g. seating, performance lawns, walking loops, exercise nodes) can serve all ages and abilities.

3. Aquatic Center + Tennis Complex

We propose an aquatic center and tennis complex similar to the **Silver Spring Recreation & Aquatic Center (SSRAC)**, which includes multiple pools for general swimming, leisure, training, aquatic play, as well as gym and multipurpose rooms ([Montgomery Community Media+3Montgomery County+3Montgomery County+3](#)).

Key community benefits:

- **Year-round recreation:** Such a facility supports lap swimming, swim lessons, water fitness, aquatic therapy, dive training, and family recreation — vital amenities not always present in urban neighborhoods.
- **Health & social equity:** Aquatics can support all ages and fitness levels; providing a local facility ensures equitable access rather than forcing residents to travel.
- **Tennis & racket sports:** Adding tennis courts (indoor/outdoor, with lighting, support facilities) gives people from children to seniors a sport option close to home.
- **Programming & revenue:** Lessons, leagues, tournaments, and memberships can generate revenue to help sustain operations.
- **Neighborhood draw:** A high-quality aquatics + tennis center becomes a regional draw, gives nearby neighborhoods something to rally around, and raises the profile of Friendship Heights.

Each of these amenities addresses needs our residents have raised: Accessible recreation, cultural enrichment, outdoor gathering space, and community health. Together, they help foster stronger social ties, physical wellness, equitable access to resources, and pride in our neighborhood.

Village of Friendship Heights
November 10, 2025
Page 4

We would be glad to partner with Planning staff on siting, phasing, cost estimates, programming, and community input. Thank you for considering these ideas. We look forward to supporting them during the plan's development.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Roy Schaeffer".

Roy Schaeffer, Mayor
Village of Friendship Heights

Cc: Atara Margolies, Montgomery County Planning Department