



SUGARLOAF CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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"Protecting our rural legacy"

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Another Threat to Sugarloaf Mountain

You may not believe this but there is an application pending to permit a large commercial firing range complex at the foot of Sugarloaf Mountain! Although it is proposed to be located in Frederick County, Sugarloaf Citizens' Association (SCA) believes that this request for a Special Exception demonstrates a breathtaking lack of understanding of the entire Sugarloaf region.

The applicant suggests that the proposed shooting range is consistent with the 2010 Frederick County Comprehensive Development Plan because it supports a diversified economy, helps preserve the agricultural nature of the land, and includes environmentally friendly initiatives. The SCA strenuously disagrees since a firing range would neither "support Frederick County's farming economy" nor "support land use initiatives to maintain and enhance Rural Communities to service the agricultural industry". In fact the applicant removes acres of land from potential agricultural activity. And it is clearly evident that a commercial firing range is not an environmentally friendly initiative.

The agricultural community in the area consists of people who bought their properties in a reasonable expectation of hearing shooting in connection with annual hunting on private land but certainly not the din of repetitive shooting on a commercial shooting range. The Sugarloaf mountain is not an appropriate buffer zone and the 250,000 people who annually hike, picnic, and horseback ride on the mountain came for the scenic beauty, tranquility and the sounds of nature and not never-ending gunshots from a commercial shooting range.

A most devastating economic effect will be suffered by the owners of existing commercial equine businesses. Who would pay to board and/or train a horse at a facility close to incessant gunfire? Horses have become an important part of the agricultural community in both Frederick County and northern Montgomery County and the proposed firing range will have a deepening impact on the viability of farming in the Sugarloaf region.

Then there is the suggestion that the 20 foot wide Thurston Road would be adequate for the anticipated peak traffic to the firing range of up to 100 people six days a week. However, the application also suggests the construction of nearly 200 parking spaces - are you wondering whether there is any connection with the anticipated peak traffic flow?

In response to the applicant's request for a Special Exception to convert the 262 acre parcel to an outdoor shooting range, SCA believes that the proposed use is **not** consistent with the purpose and intent of the Frederick County Development Plan, is **not** in harmony with the appropriate and orderly development of the Sugarloaf region, and **will have an adverse effect** on all neighboring properties.