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To Whom It May Concern:

The Kensington Heights Citizens Association recently asked me to render an opinion as a real estate expert regarding the impact of a large volume gas station at Westfield Shopping Town Wheaton on neighboring home values. I have been a real estate Associate Broker and salesperson working in the Kensington area for twenty years. I have a deep understanding of the nature of buyers. There are several issues in which to consider:

Question one: Would a home immediately adjacent to a gas filling station have a lower value than a similar home in the same neighborhood not backing to a gas filling station?

Question two would a home immediately adjacent to a large filling station have a lower value than they a home backing to a retail shopping center?

Buyers of real estate have heightened senses. Buyers are concerned about changes to their investment. This would include any influences that might affect the home's value. A real estate purchase is often times the largest single investment in one's life. If there is an influence, real or imagined, it impacts what one would pay for the property. These influences would include sound, sight, and health. (If another similar house priced for the same amount did not have the worry then the one without the worry would sell and sell for a higher price.) So the answer is yes a home that is adjacent to a filling station would have a lower value than one that did not back to a filling station.

The houses adjacent to the proposed large filling station have their value impacted due to the retail development at Westfield Shopping Town at Wheaton. However, this impact is minimal compared to the impact due to a large filling stations impact. The filling station would put a cloud impacting one's health in addition to the additional noise and smell. Whether real or perceived if one's health would be impacted by gasoline fumes from filling and idling would affect its value. We have seen this over the years in homes located near high tension electrical lines. Studies for years had been inconclusive on the health impact of High Tension electrical lines(see attached article by Gary Zeman). Homes backing to these lines and their associated fields had a benefit of the use of the fields and no neighbors backing to the homes. However, homes adjacent to the power lines would sell for considerable less money and take more time to sell then other similar homes in the same neighborhood. So there was no positive proof that a health hazard existed yet it had substantial effects on its value and salability. So in taking

this into account my opinion is while these homes are impacted adjacent to a shopping center they will be further impacted by being adjacent to a filling station.

In conclusion if the proposed filling station moves forward and is approved it will have a substantial impact on the value of these homes. In speaking with many of my colleagues in my Bethesda Office all said they would feel obligated to disclose the presence of a large filling station when showing buyers in this area. Whether the impact will be felt by homeowners not adjacent to the filling station is questionable. If the market see homes (the adjacent homes) selling for less than their historical numbers then appraisers and homebuyers might view this as an overall drop in neighborhood value when comparing homes that do not back to the filling station.

Sincerely,

Timothy H. Harper

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Associate Broker

Health Risks Associated with Living Near High-Voltage Power Lines

Gary Zeman, ScD, CHP

Potential health concerns about power lines were first raised in a 1979 study which associated increased risk of childhood leukemia with residential proximity to power lines. More recent studies such as that by [Draper et al.](#), confirm a reported association between elevated risk of childhood leukemia and proximity to residential power lines, but failed to clarify whether the observed association is causal or coincidental. Some scientists have argued the physical impossibility of any health effect due to weak ambient levels of EMFs, while others maintain that the potential health risks should not be dismissed even though the evidence remains equivocal and contradictory.

To address public concerns about power-line EMFs, a national program in electric and magnetic field research was authorized by Congress in the Energy Policy Act of 1992. This program was called EMF-RAPID (Electric and Magnetic Fields Research and Public Information Dissemination).

In 1995, the American Physical Society (APS) spoke out on the question of power-line EMFs and health effects. The APS policy statement reads, in part: "The scientific literature and the reports of reviews by other panels show no consistent, significant link between cancer and power line fields. While it is impossible to prove that no deleterious health effects occur from exposure to any environmental factor, it is necessary to demonstrate a consistent, significant, and causal relationship before one can conclude that such effects do occur. From this standpoint, the conjectures relating cancer to power line fields have not been scientifically substantiated." (See [APS Policy Statement 95.2](#) reaffirmed in 2005.)

In 1999 the National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council (NRC) published a review of the evidence from the EMF-RAPID program and concluded: "An earlier Research Council assessment of the available body of information on biological effects of power frequency magnetic fields (NRC 1997) led to the conclusion 'that the current body of evidence does not show that exposure to these fields presents a human health hazard. . . .' The new, largely unpublished contributions of the EMF RAPID program are consistent with that conclusion. . . . In view of the negative outcomes of EMF RAPID replication studies, it now appears even less likely that MFs [magnetic fields] in the normal domestic or occupational environment produce important health effects, including cancer." (The NRC reports are accessible by searching for EMF at the [NAS website](#).)

While the NRC review is fairly decisive in giving power-line EMFs a clean bill of health, a 1999 report by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) concluded, "The scientific evidence suggesting that ELF-EMF exposures pose any health risk is weak" but goes on to state, "The NIEHS concludes that ELF-EMF exposures cannot be recognized as entirely

safe because of weak scientific evidence that exposure may pose a leukemia hazard." ([The NIEHS report is available on its website.](#))

In conclusion, there are no known health risks that have been conclusively demonstrated to be caused by living near high-voltage power lines. But science is unable to prove a negative, including whether low-level EMFs are completely risk free. Most scientists believe that exposure to the low-level EMFs near power lines is safe, but some scientists continue research to look for possible health risks associated with these fields. If there are any risks such as cancer associated with living near power lines, then it is clear that those risks are small.