

I am writing as a member of the parish council at Saint George Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church, located at the corner of 16th and Webster Streets, NW. In conversations with our neighbors along 15th, Webster and Varnum Streets, reading the plans submitted and attending community meetings concerning the demolition of a single-family home and the new construction of a large, multi-unit apartment facility on the property adjacent to our church, I have several concerns about this project.

We have not been contacted concerning any changes that may occur to our facilities. We have not seen nor been presented with a disclosure of a time-line for noise and construction disruptions for our church. We have been in the present location since 1954 and have been part of the DC community since 1907.

I am writing from my perspective of this project and its impact on our church.

The building will affect our sight lines (how can a structure be allowed that removes two large, majestic trees and adds another floor and a roof top deck?). This new construction will add cars to the neighborhood (although parking has been marked for four (4) spaces, neighborhood parking is more restrictive and more difficult, especially for our parishioners and the parishioners that meet at the church across the street from us). This demolition/new construction will remove trees that are at least 100 years old (I would think that oxygen creation and nesting areas for birds and squirrels are important as well). This new construction will add additional run-off rainwater that will add to the current storm drains and pump extra water into the alley between Webster Street and Varnum Street (potentially flooding basements along 15th Street). This new construction adds cars that potentially might choose to park illegally (we are able to provide our members and visitors with parking spaces but do not want to run the risk of calling for a tow truck on a Sunday morning when our parishioners arrive for services). This new construction will add foot traffic near the back of our church (always a concern is that foot traffic creates trash or easy smash-and-grabs in any parking lot. We are thankful that MPD has been patrolling the alley on a regular basis, but we do not want to add a parking-lot-security force when our members arrive). With this newly constructed building we are fearful that our garbage cans will be used illegally by the new construction building and future tenants increasing our dumping fees. With sagging utility lines and power poles that are leaning over, what affect will there be on the existing power service to our church? Many people have commented that the power lines that run down the alley between Webster Street and Varnum Street do not look safe.

I have attended community meetings at the Petworth Library to hear horror stories presented by residents of adjacent neighborhoods concerning the construction of new building in established neighborhoods and the many issues that arise that cannot be anticipated. I am fearful that our church would have to suffer through those same issues.

I trust that these reasons and many others that have been presented as opposition for this new construction will prevent this project to move forward as submitted. Submitted Monday, 14 September 2015.