

October 14, 2018
David Wickenden
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Washington, DC 20016

The Washington, DC Board of Zoning:
Hon. Frederick L. Hill, Chairperson
Hon. Anthony J. Hood, Chairperson, Zoning Commission
Hon. Lesyllee M. White
Hon. Lorna John
Hon. Carlton Hart, National Capital Planning Commission Designee
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th St., NW, Suite 200S
Washington, DC 20001

RE: BZA Case No. 19823

Wisconsin Ave. Baptist Church – Sunrise Senior Living, 3920 Alton Place, NW

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the BZA:

I'm writing to express my carefully considered strong opposition to Sunrise Corporation's plan to construct an assisted living facility at 3920 Alton Place, NW.

I have been a property owner and resident of the immediate neighborhood for more than 20 years -- two blocks away from the proposed facility. I have attended several ANC meetings about the project. I've listened carefully to Sunrise's proposals and arguments. And it has become abundantly clear that this project should be rejected.

It's not only a matter of what is appropriate or inappropriate to insert into a quiet residential DC neighborhood whose special character is so appealing to young families and retirees alike, which would be irrevocably harmed.

It's also that many of Sunrise's arguments have been specious, false or misleading. They are asking for numerous zoning-law exceptions or variances that are impossible to justify. The size of the proposed construction is entirely out of proportion to the land it wants to build on, which has been zoned as a residential lot.

They are asking for: (a) 58% land occupancy when only 40% is permissible for a commercial business like Sunrise's; (b) 4 stories when only 3 are permissible, even for a church (not counting the penthouse which technically doesn't count as a story); (c) a 13+-ft. retaining wall when only 4 ft. is allowed in a residential zone; (d) elimination of a required 8-ft. setback, which will result in the building sitting on the property line shared with the National Park Service; and, (e) a parking plan of 66 spaces to accommodate 121 residents, 70 full-time staff, and many other part-time staff, doctors, family, private aids and others, who will drive to the facility and seek to find a place to park in the neighborhood.

It's specious for Sunrise Corporation to argue that it can occupy 60% of the land when they know that a for-profit entity can occupy only 40% of property zoned R-1-B. The only way it can plausibly do so is by co-opting the Church as a building partner and cloaking the proposal as one that supports a religious institution and public "community interests." There are many offensive falsehoods about this.

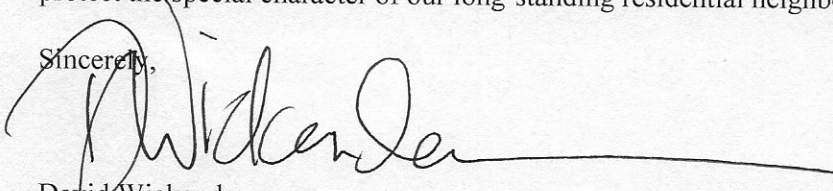
The Wisconsin Avenue Baptist Church has less than 20 congregants, is not growing, and has never played any meaningful role in the neighborhood. According to the Sunrise plan, the current church building will be razed and they will build an out-of-proportion commercial building in both height and land occupation, of which only 10%, will supposedly be occupied by the church. This is a ruse. It's a misuse of non-profit/religious standing to justify an unjustifiable commercial intrusion into a special residential neighborhood.

It's made worse by the fact that Sunrise is attempting to cloak its plans under the mantle of "serving the needs of the neighborhood for elder care," when in fact they already have a virtual monopoly on several assisted living facilities within a several-mile radius of the proposed site. I say this as an "elder" myself (age 66) who seeks to age in place and in the present community and sees no need whatsoever for what Sunrise is proposing.

Finally, the BZA must consider the impact on the residential neighborhood: (a) Sunrise Corp's own figures say they will bring 20 trucks to the site every week, including a 7-ton shuttle multiple times a day and several 28-ton food and linen delivery trucks; (b) their proposed underground parking covers approximately 60 cars and yet there will be at least 70 full-time staff and many other part-time staff, doctors, family, private aids and others, who will drive to the facility every day and will have to find a place to park in the neighborhood; resulting in the destruction of one of Washington's oldest and most special quiet residential neighborhoods.

I urge you in the strongest possible terms to vote NO on this manipulative, unnecessary and unwanted project that flouts the letter and spirit of our city's zoning laws and our collective efforts to preserve and protect the special character of our long-standing residential neighborhoods.

Sincerely,



David Wickenden