

Cynthia Snyder
3803 Yuma Street NW
Washington, DC 20016
October 14, 2018

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 register 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 23 years – one and a half blocks away from the proposed facility, and I walk or drive by there most every day. 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.

Zoning laws should be respected. And while there are times when they should be reviewed or considered a-new, this case does not merit that they be changed or that exceptions be made to them.

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. But that they are asking for enormous variances, and it's all based on a dishonest premise to boot.

A large number of Sunrise's arguments are specious, false or misleading. The church has a miniscule membership, less than 20 people, but even if they had 50 people, to call the Sunrise senior living facility a church, in order to garner the building requirements needed to turn a profit for Sunrise, when the church will be a tiny area in the vast assisted living building, is a rather shameful ask in the first place.

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.

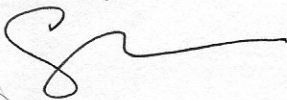
It's made worse by the fact that Sunrise is attempting to cloak its plans under the mantle of "serving the needs of the neighborhood for elder care," when in fact they already have a virtual monopoly on several assisted living facilities within a several-mile radius of the proposed site.

By the way, if the neighborhood wishes to attract more elder care facilities to the area, they should make sure they are not-for-profit places. While for-profit and not-for-profit elder care facilities charge the same amount, and while both screen potential residents to see if they're financially worth gambling on — e.g.; that they will not outlive their resources — a not-for-profit facility will not toss out a resident who outlives their resources, they will keep the person in place and accept what Medicaid pays out for their care.

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,



Cynthia Snyder