



Testimony of  
Kristin Taddei, Planning Advocate, Casey Trees  
December 15, 2016

Before the Zoning Commission  
on  
The Holy Redeemer College Townhome Development  
ZC Case No. 15-02: MHI-Brookland, LLC

Good evening Commissioners. I am Kristin Taddei, Planning Advocate with Casey Trees. Casey Trees is a Washington DC-based nonprofit with a mission “to restore, enhance, and protect the tree canopy of the nation’s capital.” To fulfill this mission, we plant trees; monitor the city’s tree canopy; and work with developers to ensure trees are planted and protected on public and private property. We are dedicated to helping the District reach its 40 percent tree canopy goal by 2032. As a city, we will achieve this goal when development projects achieve a net gain in tree canopy.

We hope to collaborate with Madison Homes to prioritize trees during development of Redemptorist property into the Brookland Townhomes given that the new residents will also be our neighbors in the Brookland community. Madison Homes’ proposal for 22 townhomes would impact a grove of mature trees, which currently cover 63% of the project site (Figure 1). Besides offering beauty and shade, these trees serve as an essential neighborhood amenity, adding value and privacy to homes, and reducing the potential damages caused by pollution, runoff, and erosion. Our analysis shows that there is a real opportunity to both redevelop the site and to regrow a healthy and beautifully tree canopy. I am excited to present to you our recommendations.

The proposed plan for these townhomes will require the removal of 26 trees in total. Five of these are Special Trees, designated by the Urban Forest Preservation Act of 2002 as any tree greater than 55 inches circumference (Figure 2). The law requires that property owners pay for a permit to remove Special Trees.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This law was recently amended by the Tree Canopy Protection Amendment Act of 2016, which redefines Special Trees as those 44-99.9 inches in circumference, protects Heritage Trees greater than 100 inches in circumference, and increases fees and fines for removing these trees.

It will take a generation or more before newly planted trees can produce the kinds of benefits these large trees provide. Removing these trees drastically reduces the site's total tree canopy. Madison Homes' landscaping plan includes new trees that would only reach a 29% canopy at maturity (Figure 3).

After carefully examining the site and plans, our analysis shows that it is possible to achieve a 65% tree canopy on site while maintaining the proposed building footprints (Figure 4). To account for lost tree canopy, we recommend Madison Homes take the following actions:

1. **Adopt a 65% tree canopy goal for this development.** Plant replacement trees at a ratio of 3 new trees for every 1 tree removed. When selecting new trees, choose appropriate species based on available sunlight and rooting space to grow a healthy tree canopy. Where possible, prioritize shade trees to maximize benefits.
2. **Plant replacement trees in the yards of all townhomes and in the remaining green space around the Holy Redeemer College building.** Providing a tree for every home will increase property values and create a more inviting space. Madison Homes can take advantage of Casey Trees' fee-for-service program, which will allow the development team to work with the community to plant replacement trees.
3. **Work with Casey Trees to preserve green space in a [conservation easement](#).** The DC Comprehensive Plan prioritizes converting institutional property in the upper Northeast into park space.<sup>2</sup> Protecting the remaining green space around the Holy Redeemer College building would set this property apart from others, and would give trees space to grow long, undisturbed lives. Casey Trees is available to serve as a conservation easement holder for this property.
4. **Amend the Existing Conditions Plan (C.01), Landscaping Plan (C.04), and Erosion & Sediment Control Plan (C.05).**
  - Update C.01 and C.05 to include 6 existing trees not currently shown (see Figure 2).
  - Consult [Casey Trees' Urban Tree Selection Guide](#) to select shade trees and trees for the proposed rain gardens. Amend C.04's shade tree list to include only large trees.
  - C.04 shows that some trees will be preserved around the Holy Redeemer College building. Commit to protecting all existing trees outside the LOD, and update C.04 accordingly.

These four actions offer Madison Homes a real opportunity to transform this space into a destination for the community while maintaining the proposed footprint for the townhomes. We would be happy to work with Madison Homes to provide additional information for this development. Thank you for your consideration.

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<sup>2</sup> See page 24-10 of the [Upper Northeast Area Element](#) of the District's Comprehensive Plan

# Holy Redeemer College Townhome Development

## Existing Tree Canopy



- Existing Tree Canopy (63%)
- Limit of Disturbance

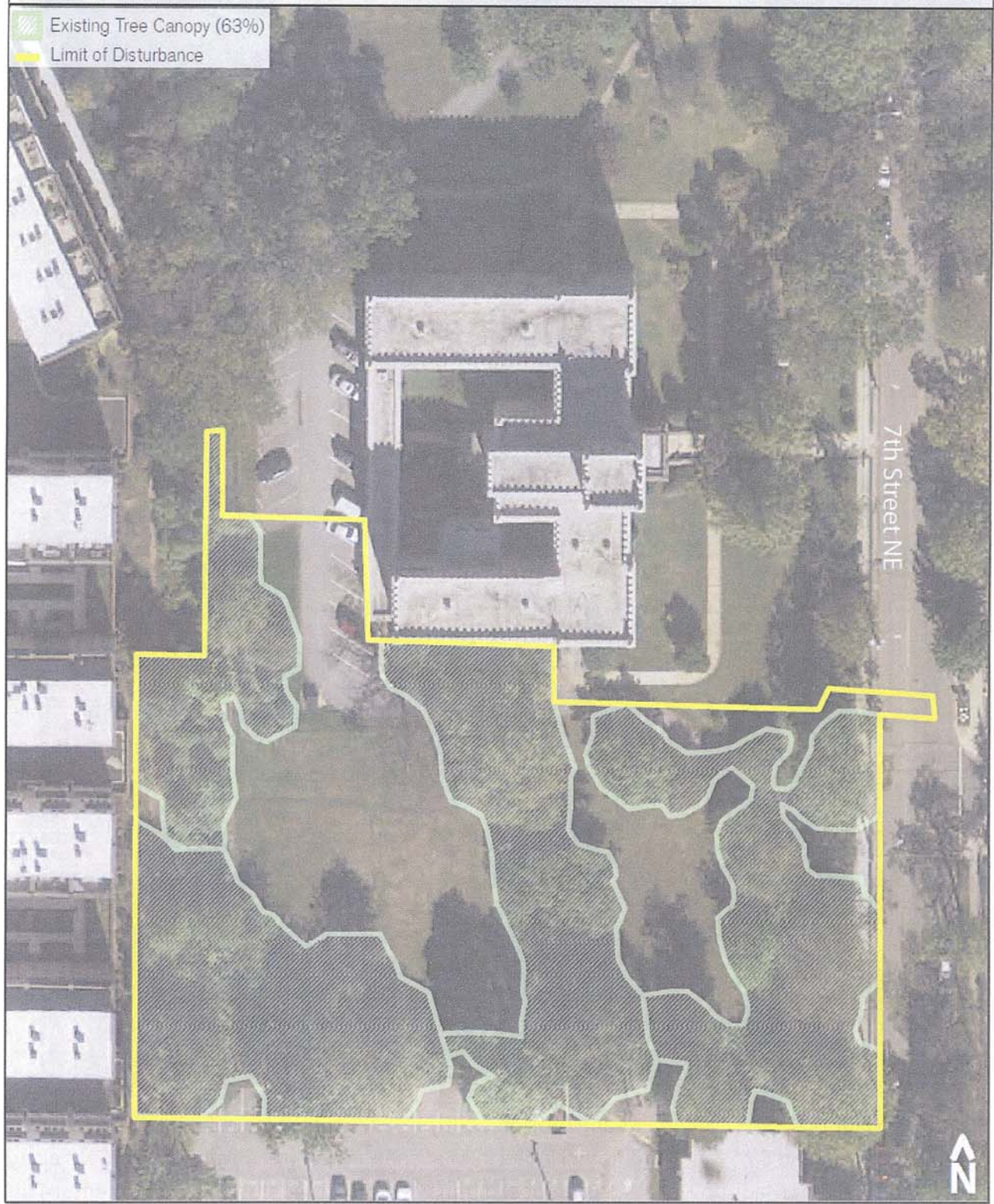
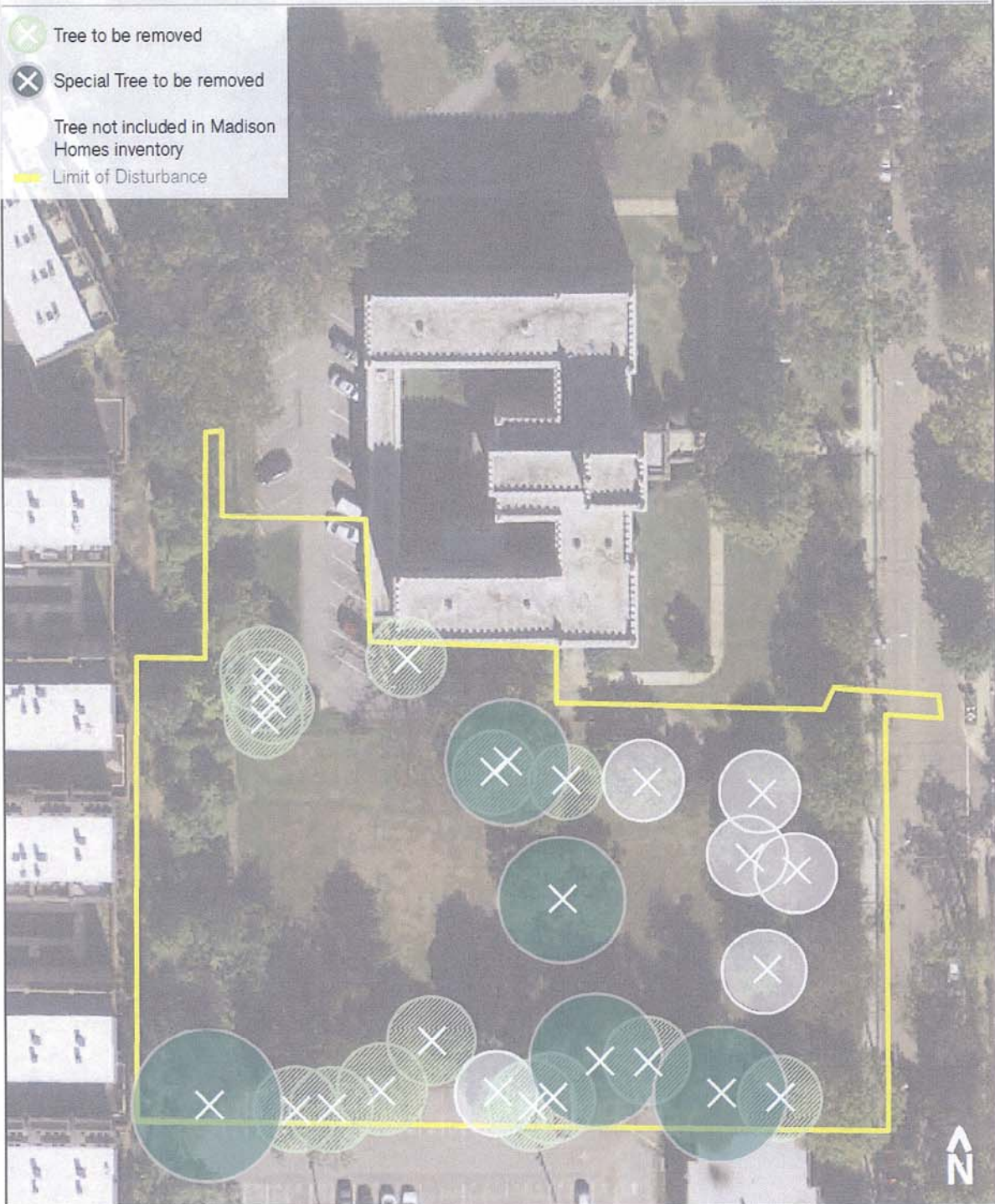


Figure 1. Existing tree canopy covers 63% of the project site.

# Holy Redeemer College Townhome Development Madison Homes' Tree Removal Plan



- Tree to be removed
- Special Tree to be removed
- Tree not included in Madison Homes inventory
- Limit of Disturbance



**Figure 2.** Madison Homes' Sediment and Erosion Control Plan would remove 26 trees, 5 of which are Special Trees, and 6 of which are not included in Madison Homes' tree inventory. There is also 1 Heritage Tree that Madison Homes has proposed removing. However, it is unlawful to remove a Heritage Tree without a Mayor's order.

# Holy Redeemer College Townhome Development

## Proposed Tree Canopy



- Proposed Tree Canopy (29%)
- Limit of Disturbance

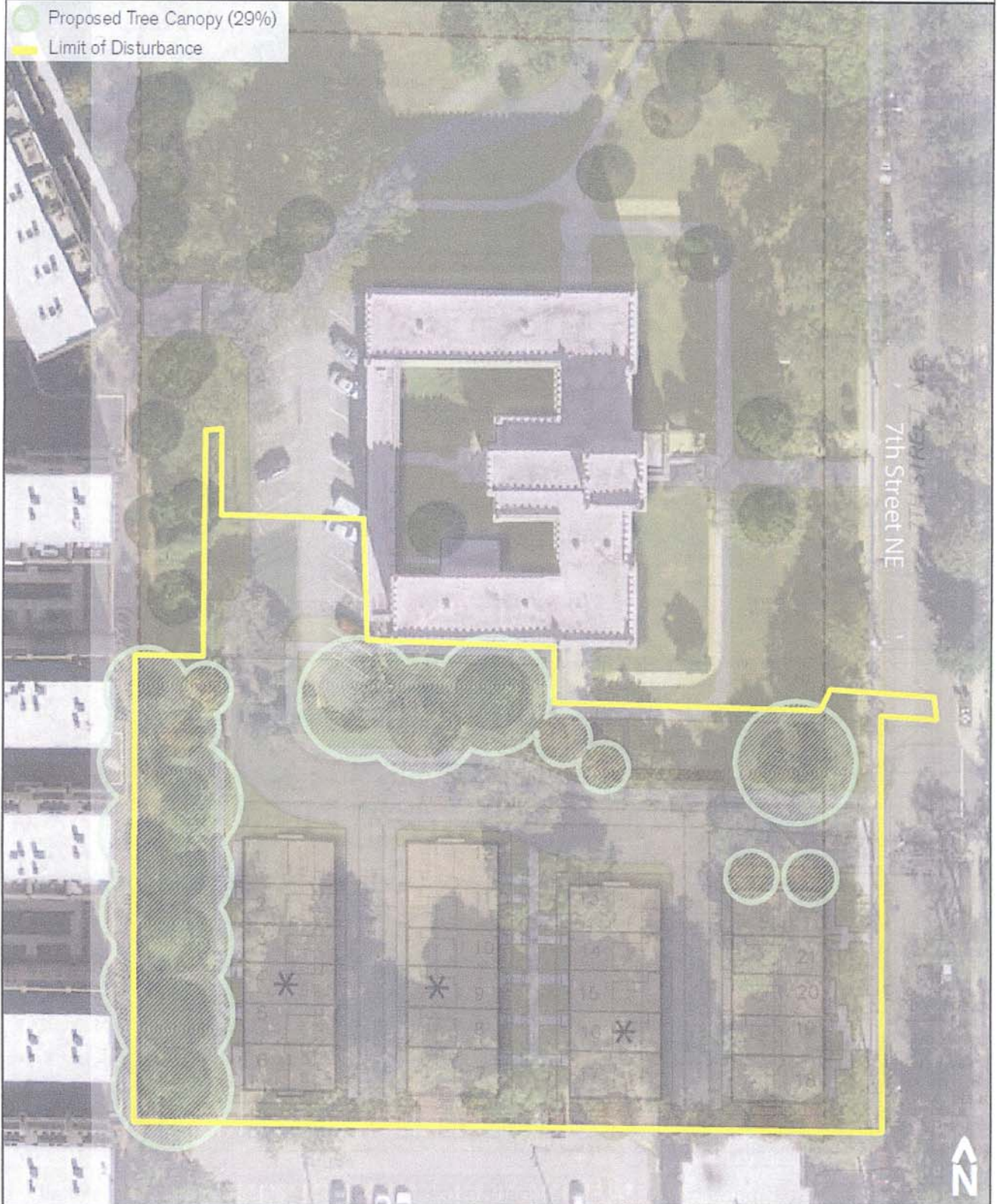
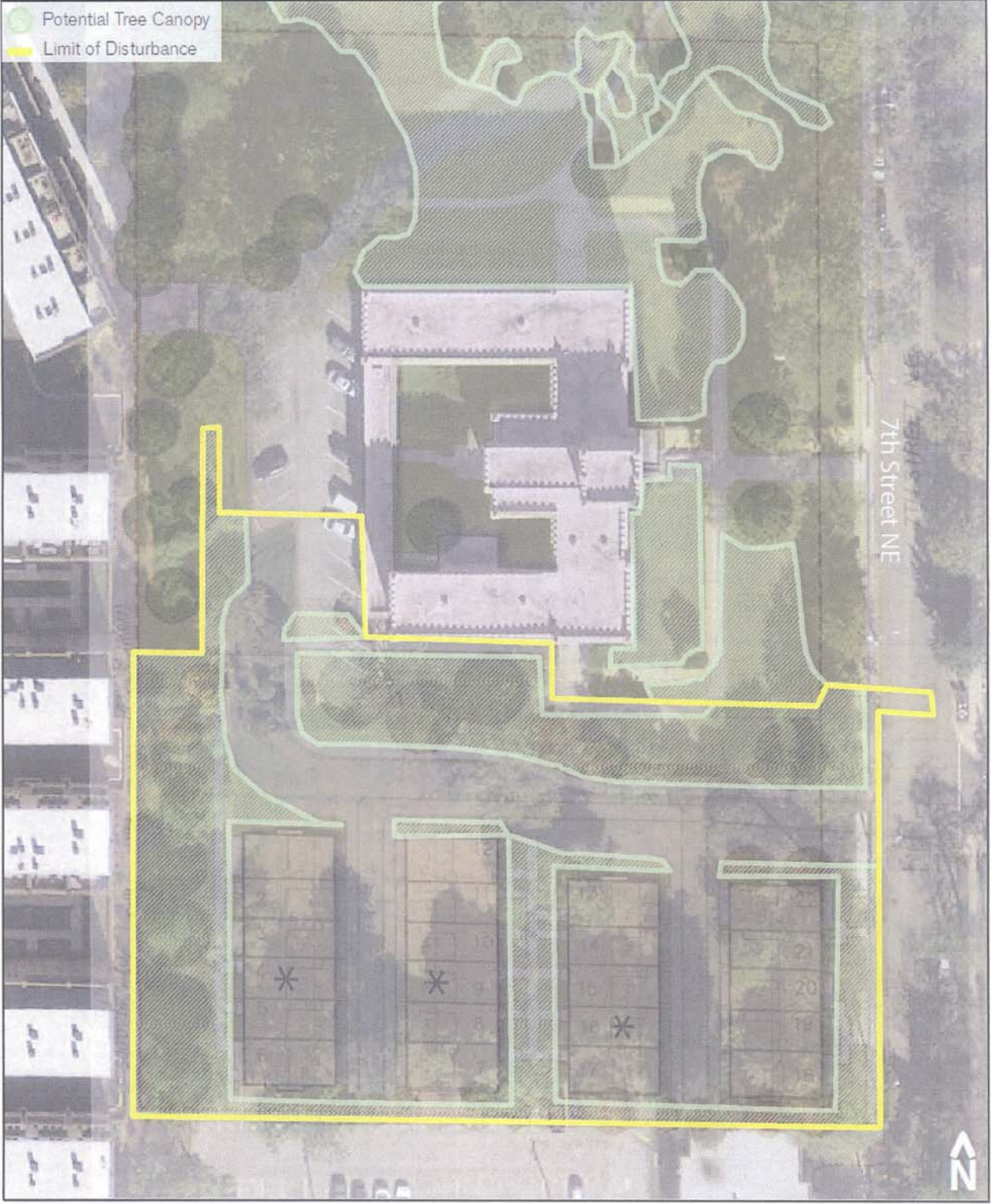


Figure 3. Madison Homes' proposed tree canopy covers 29% of the project site.

# Holy Redeemer College Townhome Development Potential Tree Canopy



- Potential Tree Canopy
- Limit of Disturbance



**Figure 4.** There is potential to replace all lost tree canopy by planting trees in the yards of all townhomes and in the remaining green space around the Holy Redeemer College building.