



THE WESLEY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



PRE-HEARING STATEMENT FOR A CAMPUS PLAN TO THRIVE IN PLACE YEAR 2022 THROUGH 2032 MAY 23, 2022

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.22-13
EXHIBIT NO.12A1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page Nos.</u>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
I. THE SEMINARY AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	9
A. Overview, Mission and History	9
B. Accreditation and Institutional Affiliations	10
C. Programs	12
D. Research	13
E. The Wesley Seminary Community	15
1. Enrollment	15
2. Faculty	17
3. Governance and Management	18
4. The Financial Picture	19
F. Wesley's Ministry in the Neighborhood, Washington and the World	20
II. SHAPING THE WESLEY SEMINARY CAMPUS OF THE FUTURE	23
III. SPRING VALLEY CAMPUS 2021	26
IV. CAMPUS PLAN TO THRIVE IN PLACE (2022-2032)	26
A. Demolish Old President's House and Restore Site with Landscaping	27
B. Demolish Carroll and Straughn Halls and Surface Parking Lot	27
C. New Student Housing for Wesley and American University	28
1. Landmark Properties	30
2. No Agreement with American University	31
D. New Residential Style/Scale Admin/Faculty/Maintenance Building	34
E. No Development of University Avenue Residential Lots	34
F. Maintain "Hilltop" Campus	34
G. Maintain and Enhance Green Open Space Buffer Zone on University Avenue and Massachusetts Avenue	35
H. 270,000 Square Feet of Unused Gross Floor Area	36
I. Community Playground	38
V. COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND PARTICIPATION	38
VI. THE WESLEY CAMPUS: EXISTING AND PROPOSED	40
A. Location, Boundaries and Zoning	41
B. Property Ownership	41
C. Land Use	42
D. Built Environment	44

E.	Open Space and Pedestrian Network	45
F.	Historic Preservation	47
G.	Campus Identity	47
H.	Transportation	47
I.	Utilities	49
VII.	ZONING REGULATION COMPLIANCE	50
A.	College or University which is an Academic Institution of Higher Learning	50
B.	The Use is Located So That It Is Not Likely to Become Objectionable to Neighboring Property	50
1.	Noise	51
2.	Traffic	51
3.	Number of Students	53
a.	Enrollment and Residents	53
b.	Personnel	54
C.	Compliance with The Maximum Bulk Requirements	54
D.	Submission of a Plan for Developing the Campus as a Whole	54
1.	Building, Parking and Loading Facilities	55
a.	Buildings	55
b.	Parking	56
c.	Loading	57
2.	Screening, Signs, Streets, Public Utility Facilities	57
a.	Screening	57
b.	Signs	58
c.	Streets	58
d.	Public Utilities	58
3.	Athletic and Other Recreational Facilities	59
4.	Description of All Activities and Capacity of All Present and Proposed Campus Development	59
E.	Interim Use of Land is Continued	59
F.	No New Use Sought for Approved Site of Buildings Moved Off-Campus	59
G.	Compliance with the Policies of the District Elements of the Comprehensive Plan	60
H.	Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Social Engagement	60
I.	The Proposed Buildings are Within the Floor Area Limit for the Campus as a Whole	62
J.	Referral to the District of Columbia Agencies	62
VIII.	PROPOSED CONDITIONS	64
IX.	CONCLUSION	69

TABLE OF EXHIBITS

Exhibit A:	Site Location
Exhibit B:	Student Enrollment Trends
Exhibit C:	Board of Governors
Exhibit D:	Zoning Commission Order No. 05-40C
Exhibit E:	Site Zoning Plan
Exhibit F:	Building Elevations
Exhibit G:	Street View Renderings
Exhibit H:	Landscaping Plan
Exhibit I:	Intentionally Deleted
Exhibit J:	Existing and Proposed Property Boundary
Exhibit K:	Existing Zoning
Exhibit L:	Existing Land Use
Exhibit M:	Existing Building Use and Infrastructure
Exhibit N:	Existing Building Heights
Exhibit O:	Existing Open Space and Pedestrian System
Exhibit P:	Proposed Open Space and Pedestrian System
Exhibit Q:	Existing Site Amenities
Exhibit R:	Existing Vehicular Circulation Network
Exhibit S:	Proposed Vehicular Circulation Network
Exhibit T:	Major Utilities
Exhibit U:	Proposed Land Use
Exhibit V:	Proposed Building Use and Infrastructure
Exhibit W:	Proposed Building Heights
Exhibit X:	Proposed Site Amenities
Exhibit Y:	Wesley Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



The figure of Christ on the exterior wall of the chapel facing Massachusetts Avenue was carved on site.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SUMMARY OF THIS APPLICATION

In 2006, the Wesley Theological Seminary of the United Methodist Church (“Wesley Seminary”) obtained approval for its first Campus Plan (2006-2015). Since then, changing circumstances required Wesley Seminary to reevaluate and restructure its original Campus Plan on several occasions. Through this process, Wesley Seminary has successfully evolved in its educational mission and facilities to serve that mission. This new Campus Plan for 2022 through 2032 and beyond, provides facilities and resources for Wesley Seminary to Thrive in Place as one of the top twenty theological seminaries and continue its leadership locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

CAMPUS PLAN (2006-2015)

In 2006, the Zoning Commission in Z.C. Case No. 05-40 approved Wesley Seminary’s first Campus Plan which supported its academic and religious mission with a 21st century campus achieved by a combination of renovation, demolition, and new construction while maintaining the scale and feel of the existing hilltop campus. This Plan maintained the current level of enrollment and added 72,500 square feet of gross floor area. Approximately 30,000 square feet of Residential Space; approximately another 30,000 square feet of Academic Space; approximately 5,000 square feet of Chapel Space; and 7,500 square feet of Support Space were to be added to the Campus.

CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES RESULT IN RE-EVALUATION OF CAMPUS PLAN

The original Campus Plan was an ambitious and aspirational vision for the Seminary. A prolonged economic downturn, declining enrollment, and changes in theological education forced a re-evaluation of that Campus Plan. While the Campus Plan was being restructured, Wesley Seminary continued to invest in its facilities and programs, including an upgrade of its underground utilities, removal and/or remediation of all asbestos, establishing the “Wesley at Mount Vernon Square” offsite facility, and renovations of the existing Library and Chapel.

AMENDED CAMPUS PLAN (2012-2025)

Approved in Z.C. Case 05-40A, this Plan was developed to meet the Seminary’s strategic vision with more limited resources and evolving needs. The approved amendment and extension of the original Campus Plan until 2025 maintained the levels of student, faculty, and staff, but substantially reduced the previously approved new construction. The existing Campus facilities were maintained without demolition and several previously approved new buildings were eliminated. The only addition to the Campus was the new 3-story, 76 bed Residence Hall that was opened in 2014 (“2014 Dorm”). Additionally, the two existing 1960-era residential buildings, Chapel and Library were renovated, all buildings were made handicapped accessible, major renovation and “greening” of utilities was accomplished and IT was brought to current standards. Surface parking was increased, and other campus enhancements made.

MODIFICATION OF CAMPUS PLAN (2016-2019)

In 2016, in the aftermath of the economic recovery from 2008, nationwide seminary enrollment continued to be weak and in decline. Despite its top-tier reputation and unique location, Wesley Seminary was not immune from this trend. In Zoning Commission Order No.

05-40B, the Zoning Commission authorized Wesley Seminary to allow up to fifty-five (55) non-Wesley graduate students to occupy Straughn Hall through May 2019.

MODIFICATION OF CAMPUS PLAN (2017-2019)

In Zoning Commission Case No. 05-40C, the Zoning Commission approved the expansion of housing on campus for non-Wesley graduate students. Through December 2019, fifty-five (55) non-Wesley graduate students were permitted in Straughn Hall, six (6) in Carroll Hall and twenty-six (26) in the New Residence Hall. (Exhibit D).

MODIFICATION OF CAMPUS PLAN (2019-2020)

Wesley requested, and the Zoning Commission in Case Number 05-40D approved a one-year extension of its current Campus Plan under the existing conditions until December 31, 2020.

AUTOMATIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE TIME EXTENSIONS.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and D.C. public health emergency, the Zoning Commission automatically extended the current Campus Plan six-months until June 30, 2021. Wesley Seminary requested and received an additional six-month extension until December 31, 2021 by Zoning Commission Order No. 05-40-D(1). In order to continue its community engagement process, Wesley Seminary requested and received an additional six-month extension until June 30, 2022 in Zoning Commission Order No. 05-40D(2).

THRIVE IN PLACE CAMPUS PLAN (2022–2032)

The 2022 Plan is a renewed commitment by Wesley Seminary, a leading national and international theological educational institution, to its Spring Valley Campus and its role in

Washington, D.C., regionally, nationally and internationally. This Plan will allow Wesley Seminary to “Thrive in Place” for the long-term.

The 2022 Plan proposes to demolish two 1960 - era dormitories (Straughn Hall and Carrol Hall) with ninety beds and demolish the Old President’s House (including parking area, driveway and curb cut) on University Avenue and re-landscape that area, including a small neighborhood playground. The existing surface parking lot (143 spaces) and adjacent one-story maintenance building will be demolished and replaced with a new dormitory with approximately 659 beds and 300-350 underground parking spaces to be constructed by Landmark Properties, a leading nationwide student housing provider, under a long-term ground lease with Wesley Seminary. This new dormitory will be offered exclusively to Wesley Seminary students (and their immediate families) and to American University students needing local housing. A new two-story residential scale and design administrative building with lower-level maintenance facility will be constructed at the top of the University Avenue driveway adjacent to the New Residence Hall constructed in 2014. The other existing Wesley Seminary buildings, including Kresge Academic Hall, Trott Administration Building and Chapel, Library and New Residence Hall will remain in place as the perimeter of the existing hilltop campus.

The 2022 Plan will maintain and enhance the existing Green Open Space Area Buffer with the adjoining neighborhoods on University and Massachusetts Avenues. Fully 55% (210,000 square feet) of the Campus area will remain Green Open Space. The total gross floor area proposed will result in a total floor area ratio (“FAR”) of approximately 1.1, well below the maximum 1.8 FAR permitted. No further development of the property is contemplated; approximately 270,000 square feet of gross floor area will not be developed.

INTRODUCTION TO WESLEY SEMINARY

Wesley Seminary, founded in 1882, is one of the nation's leading and largest graduate theological schools (most of which are known as "seminaries" or "divinity schools"). Wesley moved to this campus 63 years ago from what is now McDaniel University in Westminster, Maryland. Most of the current buildings were constructed at that time, except for the 2014 Dorm. All other buildings are renovated.

Wesley Seminary came to this site and designed our campus to share this academic hilltop with American University, a sister school in the United Methodist denomination. This was part of a larger plan of a Methodist Bishop who chaired the boards of both schools and who also established the A.U. School of International Service and relocated Sibley Hospital with a vision for a "Methodist Center" in this region, joining with the National United Methodist Church in Wesley Heights.

Wesley is considered one of the few truly national and international seminaries. Center-progressive and one of the most ethnically diverse, our alumni serve as pastors and leaders of non-profit human service organizations around the world, including a strong presence here in Washington. We are broadly ecumenical, with students from 26 denominations and a similar number of both states and foreign countries. We offer three Master's degrees and a Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) and several non-degree programs, with three substantial centers of research and teaching: Leadership, Arts and Religion, and Community Engagement. Our current (Fall 2021) enrollment is 258 Masters students and 172 D.Min. students. Pre-Covid, two-thirds of Master's students commuted. D.Min. students come to campus for two-week intensive sessions between regular semesters, while some special tracks meet overseas.