

**Testimony of Frederick W. (Derry) Allen**  
**Before the DC Zoning Commission**  
**RE: Wesley Theological Seminary Draft Campus Plan (ZC Case 22-13)**  
**June 13, 2022**

I am Derry Allen. I live in Spring Valley, and I have been a close neighbor of Wesley Theological Seminary for over 40 years, first across the street and now two blocks away. During the past four decades I have served the neighborhood in a variety of capacities. Over the past months I have been active with the Community Liaison Committee with Wesley in the discussions about their draft campus plan. I am speaking today as part of the Spring Valley Neighborhood Association team.

I would like to make three points, all relating to possible actions by the Zoning Commission.

1. First, I support the comments by ANC3D and hope you will give them great weight. The letter makes the right point – an offer of “qualified support,” subject to a detailed series of conditions and concerns described in the letter.
  - In this connection, I want to say that a number of neighbors worked hard with Wesley in the meetings of the Community Liaison Committee, and the ANC3D letter fairly represents the general feeling among those actively participating when we had our most recent meeting on May 24. When the letter was presented to ANC3D in draft form on June 1, the only neighborhood comments were positive and it was approved unanimously by the commissioners present.
2. Second, I want to emphasize that there is a good deal more work for Wesley, the neighbors and the Zoning Commission on this case, mostly in the form of issues left for further processing.
  - There is virtually unanimous agreement in the neighborhood that we are all best off with Wesley thriving in place. The alternatives of not having Wesley there are not nearly as good. We are all glad that the open space that faces Spring Valley is being preserved.
  - In fact, we all want to thrive in place in our neighborhood.
  - The trick here is how to balance what Wesley says it needs to thrive in place with impacts on neighbors. We have made some progress with the Community Liaison Committee, but the reality is that a lot of work remains. Wesley’s plan leaves more details to further processing than I would like to see. That is a weakness in the plan. The reason for that weakness is that Wesley has moved this plan forward at a pace that would allow them to open the dorm on what I think is an understandable but optimistic schedule.
  - I mention this because we are going to need time to address these issues and the schedule for further processing will need to allow for this. You should make this point very clearly to Wesley.

- Please pay particular attention to what the letter says about the mass of the proposed dormitory – encouraging the Seminary to reduce the size – as this is the major factor influencing the impact on the neighborhood.
  - On the issue of “commercial use,” you will see that ANC3D has examined the issue, identified several compelling points, and concluded that “the proposed dormitory should be reviewed carefully by experts from the appropriate District agencies.”
3. Third, it would be very useful if the Zoning Commission could help bring American University (AU) to the table for open and neighborly collaboration, to address a set of risks that are entirely avoidable and help the Wesley plan to work as best it can, to the benefit of Wesley, AU and the neighbors.
- There are a lot of risks that could affect the success of this plan, risks that could affect Wesley and the neighborhood.
  - Some of the risks fall most immediately on the Landmark company, but those risks are ultimately risks to Wesley and the neighborhood. And remember, Landmark does not live here.
  - As I have told the Community Liaison Committee and ANC3D, there is a lot of money and a large building at stake here. We need to get it right the first time.
  - There is one set of risks that should be avoidable: those that depend in whole or in part on collaboration with AU, such as the fence around AU, security, parking and traffic, pedestrian flow, and student life issues, to name only the most obvious.
  - More generally, it is very clear that good planning and zoning will work best when we think about these two contiguous institutions together. The ANC3D letter urges you to take this wider view as the plans for AU and Wesley move forward.
  - Unfortunately, AU has so far chosen not to participate (at least openly) in the discussions about Wesley’s plan. Unless there is something else going on here that they haven’t told us about, this is a very selfish and unneighborly approach. If they oppose Wesley’s plan and will impede its success, we should hear it now.
  - This lack of collaboration is a major weakness in Wesley’s plan – unavoidable to Wesley, but a weakness nevertheless. Wesley is going ahead without AU at this point, but this can not continue into further processing.
  - ANC3D’s letter asks you for help on this problem. You can help by making it clear to AU that you urge and expect them to collaborate with Wesley and the neighbors. If it comes to it, don’t be afraid to hold back your approval when they come to you for further processing on their own campus plan. Don’t be shy.
  - Please make it clear to AU that you want them to be a good neighbor and collaborate openly and in good faith to address risks that are avoidable. We would all benefit.

Thank you.