

From: Josie Scholz jtscholz@msn.com
Subject: Re:
Date: November 18, 2024 at 9:01 PM
To:

JS

On Nov 18, 2024, at 3:58 PM, Josie Scholz <jtscholz@msn.com> wrote:

RE: ZC #24-09 Wesley Theological Seminary Text Amendments

I'm Josie Scholz, living for 40+ years across from Wesley. I opposed their Campus Plan and PUD in '22 and '23 and I oppose their text amendments.

Our neighborhood associations, NLC and SVWHCA, argued from the first that Wesley's Campus Plan and PUD violated zoning regs, and now that Wesley and the ZC agree that they do, they want the ZC to amend their regs, creating a "spot-zoning carve out," so that they, alone among DC academic campuses, can significantly monetize their campus property.

I strongly agree with our neighborhood associations and ANC3E that these text amendments do not fit ZC rules.

Wesley, a good neighbor, wants to thrive in place, but I wish they could do so other than by building a super-size luxury residence with swimming pool to target AU students for their rent. In Wesley's fall issue of Calling, Wesley's president states that Wesley is "planning to build a new student residence hall which will not only make Wesley one of the finest physical campuses in the country but it will also produce significant financial resources from the AU students who will occupy most of the building."

Wesley, Landmark the developer, and Landmark's investors are winners. But there will be losers:

1. AU, with a current 60 million dollar shortfall, having students and their rent poached by their "sister Methodist institution" next door,
2. AU students, enrolled for an academic year, paying market rate rent for 12 months, while harming their institution's finances,
3. Wesley grad students, being in the minority on their own campus,
4. The ZC, asked to subvert its rules for one institution,
5. Neighbors, living across from a building covering 72% of the built campus and at 8 stories, more than 2x taller than the rest of the campus buildings, and violating the residential zoning height (RA-1). The building will bring at around 500 more residents to University Avenue, a quiet corner of Spring Valley,
6. Even Wesley and Landmark might be losers when AU begins to require undergrads to live on campus for two years, reducing the number of students Landmark can draw on to fill its rooms. Landmark usually builds near campuses with at least 10,000 students. AU's juniors and seniors number less than that. If Wesley wants to sell its campus, the 99 year ground lease will limit their options.

In neighborhood meetings, Wesley made some adaptations to neighbor's concerns. But the height, mass, and occupant number virtually never changed, because for the three principals to gain the financial benefit they seek, the building must be large enough to be cost effective for the builder. For IZ Landmark offers 8 million dollars, the amount they would save decreasing the parking requested by ANC3E, not an amount of IZ equal to what would be required of such a build for 99 years.

When ANC3D recommends approval of these amendments, they write: "there will certainly be impacts on the neighborhood, but it will not have such objectionable impacts...that we should oppose this project." I do not agree with ANC3D. Thank you.
Josie Scholz

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Monday, November 18, 2024

Ref: ZC # 24-09 Wesley Theological Seminary Text Amendments;

Dear Members of the Zoning Commission,

My name is Bob Scholz. I'm a retired licensed Civil Engineer having worked in real estate development and construction. Josie and I live at 3900 University Ave., across from Wesley's exit road onto University Avenue.

1. We oppose these text amendments, and support the opposition presented by (1) the Neighbors for a Livable Community (2) the Spring Valley-Wesley Heights Citizens Association, and (3) ANC3E.
2. I disagree with ANC 3D's recent letter stating: *"while the new building will still be visible to a few homes, this visual impact compares very favorably to that of campus buildings on the nearby American University and George Washington Mount Vernon campuses."* This is a specious and misleading representation: the proposed 8-storey building is perhaps 50 yards from University Ave., and its ground-floor would be placed atop a 50-foot hill above University Avenue, making it from our point of view, and that of our neighbors, a 13-storey building. The Zoning is RA-1, land to be developed with low to moderate density development, and Wesley has refused to consider reducing the size of the building as suggested by a previous ANC 3D chair. The tall AU buildings are farther from University Avenue and are **significantly less objectionable**. Additional foreseeable impacts are: parking, traffic, and any rowdy behavior of 500+ AU undergraduates on our side of the AU security fence, which was agreed to over 20 years ago in part to address these impacts.
3. Following the zoning laws and rules is in the best interests of the entire community. There are many uncertainties that could lead to unintended consequences during the 99 years of the proposed lease. The ZC has already approved in AU's campus plan a 500 bed dormitory that will compete with the project under consideration.
4. During this long process between the neighbors and Wesley, the split in the United Methodist church has partially healed. Wesley has been a good neighbor, and I hope the differences between the two Methodist factions continues to improve, creating an increasingly larger pool of donors to support Wesley, as it is now developed, so that it cannot only survive, but also thrive, as Wesley defines "thrive".

In summary, I oppose Wesley's text amendments, and humbly ask commissioners, as good stewards of the regulations, to deny these two text amendments, and bring this long process to an end.