

From:
Douglas Wonderlic
3815 Alton Place NW
Washington, DC 20016
November 2, 2018

To:
Board of Zoning Adjustment
Honorable Frederick L. Hill, Chairperson
Honorable Anthony J. Hood, Chairperson, Zoning Commission
Honorable Lesyllee M. White
Honorable Lorna John
Honorable Carlton Hart, National Capital Planning Commission Designee
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 200S
Washington, DC 20001

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Subject:
BZA Case No. 19823
Sunrise Senior Living and Wisconsin Avenue Baptist Church Project at 3920 Alton Place
Hearing Date: November 14, 2018

Dear Chairperson Hill and Members of the Board

I strongly support the Sunrise/Wisconsin Avenue Baptist Church project. My wife and I live on Alton Place three houses east of 39th Street, less than a block from the project.

Appropriateness of Site and Proposed Use

This is a very attractively designed building as viewed from Alton Place, Yuma Street, and Tenley Circle. The building's site on Tenley Circle relates it to St. Ann's Catholic Church and American University/Washington College of Law's Capital Hall (formerly Immaculata College). The building is appropriate for a purpose and design that is civic in nature: a small community-minded church and an assisted-living center for seniors, both of which are admirable uses.

The proposed Sunrise/Baptist Church project would extend into the Alton Place/Yuma Street neighborhood less than many of the established institutions in Tenleytown extend into their neighborhoods, including Janney Elementary School, Georgetown Day School, St. Columba's Church, and Friendship Terrace. All of these institutions are in the middle of residential neighborhoods but all are a vital part of our community. Without these and other Tenleytown institutions, our community would be a sterile and boring place in which to live.

Appropriateness of Structure Size

A four-story structure is suitable for this site. The neighborhood already lives comfortably with the equivalent of three-story historic and new residential properties within the neighborhood (e.g., the historic Rest and the more recent townhouses at Albemarle and Nebraska). One additional story for a building that is on the edge of the neighborhood and faces Wisconsin and Nebraska Avenues is a modest increase over the current situation. Other neighborhoods in Tenleytown live with structures that are four stories or more (e.g., Friendship Terrace).

The proposed lot coverage also is reasonable when taking into account the National Park Service land that adjoins the front of the property. This Park Service land is expected to remain a permanent buffer. Whether the Park Service or Sunrise owned this property, the buffer would be effectively the same.

Stabilizing Impact on Neighborhood

The types of use and high quality of the facilities should have a stabilizing influence on the neighborhood by eliminating speculation about what might be built there someday. The Reverend Lynn Bergfalk has stated that he and the board of directors of the Baptist Church want to retain the site for religious use. We understand that a religious institution could build a larger free-standing facility at this site that would likely generate more activity than the uses proposed by Sunrise and the Baptist Church.

If the current proposed Sunrise/Baptist Church project is approved, then schedules and plans can be finalized and construction can begin on a project with a known use and impact. If approving authorities reject this project and it is cancelled, we will begin a period of instability where no one knows what will be built on the site or whether new owners will even engage the community if “matter of right” zoning applies.

Shared Social Responsibility

Our neighbors west of Wisconsin Avenue share their neighborhood with several churches, schools, Friendship Terrace/Seabury senior living, the Washington College of Law, and other civic institutions. Our neighborhood should be able to accommodate a senior living facility and a small church. Both Sunrise and the Baptist Church have expressed a strong desire to be good neighbors and share their assets with the neighborhood, including making space available for community events and meetings.

In the early 1970s, I worked as a planner for a state housing agency. The agency planned and built two kinds of multi-family housing: mixed-use projects accommodating moderate income, low income, and elderly residents in the same building; and projects that were exclusively for

the elderly. Although there were occasional objections to mixed-used projects, I don't recall any neighborhoods that did not welcome housing for the elderly. Sunrise is providing specialized high-quality housing and services for the elderly when they are most in need.

Landscaping

I appreciate the major improvements to landscaping that have been proposed. I hope that the National Park Service will cooperate in planning and implementing these improvements.

Construction

I sympathize with immediate neighbors who will be inconvenienced during construction. However, new construction is likely to occur at this site regardless of the ownership and proposed use.

Observations of Other Assisted Living Facilities

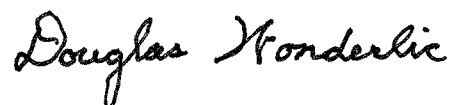
Over the past ten years, my wife and I have made weekly visits to a friend who has lived in four different assisted living or nursing home facilities in Washington, DC and Maryland. On these visits, we have not witnessed any problems associated with traffic, noise, or other potential disruptions to the neighborhoods. In none of our several hundred visits did we hear a single siren from an emergency vehicle. These are very peaceful places with staffs that make every effort to be good neighbors.

Availability of Sunrise Services

I also support this project because my wife and I may require the services offered by Sunrise within the next ten years. In ten years, we will be about the same age as Sandra Day O'Connor who recently announced that she suffers from dementia. Her situation is a reminder that any one of us could become the victim of that debilitating disease. There are many people living in our area who will need the kind of care that Sunrise offers. How nice it would be to have a high-quality assisted living facility so close to our home. Our younger neighbors could also benefit if a parent required such care.

I ask that the BZA approve the proposed Sunrise/Wisconsin Avenue Baptist Church project.

Sincerely,



Douglas Wonderlic