

BZA Case No. 19823  
Application of Wisconsin Avenue Baptist Church  
Statement of Cathy Wiss

Good day, Chairman Hill and Board Members. My name is Cathy Wiss. I live at 3810 Albemarle Street, NW, approximately 500 feet from Applicant's property. I oppose this application to squeeze a massive facility into the heart of our low density residential neighborhood without the setbacks, screening, and open space used by similar institutions to harmonize with the Zoning Regulations.

Our area is an oasis of assisted living facilities, not a desert as Sunrise claims. In fact, within a two-mile radius of Applicant's property there are *eleven* such facilities, the majority of those in the city. We also have smaller in-home assisted living facilities, like this one at 3815 Albemarle Street, less than 700 feet from Applicant's property. This picture shows four cars of the night staff and the facility's van. Only one employee takes public transit. This facility is as close to Metro as the Applicant.



Six of the eleven nearby assisted living facilities are located in low density residential zones, four are in apartment zones, and one is split-zoned apartment/low density residential.

Those in low density residential zones are on much larger properties, ranging from 1.32 acres for Forest Side (small memory care facility) to 16.3 acres for Knollwood (shown here). The Applicant has only 0.81 acres on which it is trying to shoehorn both a church and assisted living facility.



Facilities in low density zones also share certain design elements that make them compatible with the zone district. The Applicant is not providing these:

Most have 2-3 stories and are less than 40 feet high. Where they are higher, the buildings or upper floors are set back from the property line, as allowed by the regulations. Some are on steeply sloped properties. None has requested a variance for stories or height. All have lot occupancy lower than 40% -- many are much lower.



They have substantial setbacks from streets and surrounding properties to reduce the effects of noise, light, and activity that could adversely affect their neighbors, as shown in this picture of Forest Side (the facility is on the left; a single family home is on the far right).



Instead, the Applicant is requesting variances to eliminate the side yard setback altogether and build to the property line. *Increasing* the side and rear yard setbacks would be more compatible with surrounding homes and the R-1B Zone.

Other facilities use berms and plantings of tall trees, shrubs, and evergreens to screen their buildings, parking lots, and loading docks from neighbors, as has been done at Ingleside, shown here.



Several have set aside park-like open space for residents and neighbors to enjoy, such as at Friendship Terrace and DCPPCC (formerly the Washington Home, shown here).



Applicant will provide no open space or greenery to fit in with the surrounding community. The only open space for the property is an interior courtyard.

Assisted living facilities in low density residential zones have driveways with interior space for patient drop off/pick up and emergency vehicle parking so as not to burden neighbors and impede through traffic, like this driveway into the Lisner Louise Dickson Hurt Home.



Applicant plans to build a shallow layby on Alton Place for drop off/pick up and emergency vehicles and a long narrow driveway across the back and side yards of five homes.

These are wholly inadequate. The layby will not be able to accommodate the multiple vehicles that respond to an emergency, as shown here at the Sunrise Senior Living building on Connecticut Avenue a few blocks away, when one fire truck and two ambulances responded to an emergency. Emergency vehicles will have to park on Alton Place and block traffic.



In other facilities, neighbors are protected from noise, odors, and light by placing service driveways across from intersections or properties with no inhabitants and then separating and screening them from adjacent properties by wide, vegetated buffers. Shown here is the well-buffered parking lot and loading dock at Forest Hills of DC.



Applicant's driveway will be only 8 feet from 5 adjacent properties and screened only by a hedge of arborvitae that will block views and light of only the lowest story and do nothing to dampen noise from the driveway, trash collection, or loading dock. Elevated 13 feet over the driveway, the hedge will be impossible to maintain.

For all of these reasons, I ask you to deny this application. Thank you. (Following are descriptions of nearby assisted living facilities.)

## Nearby Assisted Living Facilities in Low Density Zone Districts

### **Friendship Terrace**

4201 Butterworth Place, NW

Washington, DC 20016

*1,425 feet from 3910 Alton Place, NW (¼ mile)*

Zoned R-1B

Zoning Cases: None on record; this building, which opened in 1970, replaced an orphanage built in 1929

Land area: 81,039 sq. ft. (1.86 acres)

Number of stories: 3+ (lower stories facing the street, upper floors set back from street, steep topography)

Distance to closest adjacent property: ~60 ft.

Screening from adjacent properties: generous setbacks, public open space with patio, benches, trees along Butterworth Place and 43rd Street, NW

Facing properties: across Butterworth Place-- St. Columba's Church opposite the building and one single family home opposite the open space; across 42<sup>nd</sup> Street -- office building complex; across Brandywine Street – the rear of townhouses facing River Road; across 43<sup>rd</sup> Street – single family detached homes.

Entrances: main driveway on Butterworth Place across from St. Columba's Church parking lot provides temporary off-street parking for cars, vans, ambulances; parking lot entrance on Brandywine Street, NW

### **DCPPCC**

3720 Upton St NW

Washington, DC 20016

*1,800 feet from 3920 Alton Place, NW*

Zoned R-1B

Zoning Cases: most recently BZA Application No. 16836 for special exception to add 4 hospice beds. The facility was recently purchased by Sidwell Friends School. Originally 189 beds, now only a few inpatient hospice beds are occupied.

248,372 sq. ft. (5.73 acres)

Topography: sloped

Number of stories: 3 (the current building replaced a 5-story building constructed in 1927)

Lot occupancy: 21% (from BZA cases)

Adjacent properties: US Post Office, Sidwell Friends School

Facing properties: single-family residences across Upton and 37th Streets

Screening: deep setback from Upton and 37th Streets; approximately 60% of land is devoted to green space and planted with mature trees and shrubs in a park-like setting.

Entrances: driveway from Upton St. into an off-street porticoed circle for drop and pick up, as well as a surface parking lot; additional parking entrance on 37th St. opposite Tilden St.

### **Forest Hills of DC (Formerly the Methodist Home)**

4901 Connecticut Ave NW

Washington, DC 20008

*3,420 feet from 3910 Alton Place, NW*

Split-zoned RA-4 and R-1A (former R-5-D, an apartment district)

150,646 sq. ft. (3.46 acres) Built in 1926

Topography: flat

Number of stories: 2; height of 32'8"; 29% lot occupancy; 0.57 FAR (from BZA order)

Entrances: long circular drive on Connecticut Avenue (arterial street); additional parking and loading entrances from Ellicott and Fessenden Streets (opposite 34<sup>th</sup> Street)

Adjacent properties: NPS land along Connecticut Ave.; 3 single-family residences on Ellicott and Fessenden Streets

Distance to closest adjacent property: 61' rear yard

Facing properties: Semi-detached homes on Fessenden Street; apartment building on Ellicott Street; firehouse and gas station on Connecticut Avenue

Screening: required by BZA Application No. 15831 (October 6 and 14, 1993):

The landscaping proposed by the applicant to be included along the northern boundary of the property facing Fessenden Street and the eastern boundary of the property facing three adjoining single-family dwellings will constitute an intensive screen which will minimize and tend to eliminate any visual and noise impacts from the proposed addition. In particular, the hedge of Foster hollies, to be planted along the eastern property line, will be planted at an initial height of ten to 12 feet and will grow to approximately 25 feet at maturity. These trees normally grow ten to 15 feet wide and will be planted approximately six feet on center. The ten to 12-foot size is the largest size generally available in sufficient quantities.

The Home shall work with the District of Columbia Department of Public Works (DPW) and the National Park Service to implement a plan to remove trash, debris and dead or undesirable vegetation from the portion of the public space and adjacent National Park Service parcel identified in Exhibit No. 28, Neighborhood Map (Exhibit X) of the record.

#### **Lisner-Louise-Dickson-Hurt Home**

5425 Western Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20015

*1.02 miles from 3920 Alton Place, NW*

Zoned R-2

Zoning case: BZA Order 15451 (February 13, 1991) to increase the number of beds to 111.

236,590 sq. ft. (5.43 acres)

Topography: mostly flat

Number of stories: 3

Adjacent properties: 3 single family detached houses along Military Rd; RA-2 PUD along Western Ave.

Distance to closest adjacent property: 107 feet

Facing properties: Shopping Center and Montgomery County Park across Western Avenue (an arterial); DC park across Livingston St; single family detached homes across 42nd St.

Screening: tall evergreens along property line adjacent to homes on Military Rd.; trees and evergreens along 42nd St., where the facility is one-story and below street grade

Entrances: main entrance with long driveway from Western Ave (arterial); parking and loading entrance on Livingston St. opposite the park

#### **Ingleside at Rock Creek**

3050 Military Rd NW 20015

Washington, DC

*1.2 miles from 3920 Alton Place, NW*

Zoned R-1A

BZA APPLICATION NO. 18898 (Summary Order, March 20, 2015):

plant and maintain on the “berm” between the area of the Expansion Project and Military Road, N.W. . . plantings . . . to preserve the existing screening of the buildings from view from Military Road and to plant additional screening that will reasonably minimize the view of the buildings from Military Road following completion of the Expansion Project. Ingleside shall maintain the plantings on the “berm” during construction and after the Expansion Project is completed.

595,050 sq. ft. + 3,794 (3020 Military Rd) + 5,830 (3024 Military Rd) + 7,636 (5314 29th St, NW)  
(14.06 acres) complex includes retirement home

Topography: steeply sloped

Number of stories: 4, but only 3 are visible above berm on Military Road

Adjacent properties: Ingleside owns the two single family homes on Military Road and another on 29<sup>th</sup> Street, which it is using as temporary assisted living units during construction of its new facility.

Distance to closest adjacent property: 322 feet

Facing properties: single family homes on Military Road

Screening: berm planted with trees and shrubs along Military Road

Entrances: main entrance off Military Rd opposite 31<sup>st</sup> Street; secondary entrance off Broad Branch Rd.

**Forest Side (memory care)**

2701 Military Rd NW

Washington, DC 20015

*1.47 miles from 3920 Alton Place, NW*

*Zoned R-1A*

Zoning cases: Application No. 17542 (Withdrawn, 12/12/2006)

57,460 sq. ft. (1.32 acres)

Topography: sloped

Number of stories: 2

Entrances: circular driveway on Military Road (arterial street); parking lot entrance on 28<sup>th</sup> Street, NW

Adjacent properties: 2 single family homes

Facing properties: single family homes on Military Rd; St. John’s High School on 27<sup>th</sup> St; parkland on 28<sup>th</sup> Street

Screening: Because of a steep slope, the facility is below the grade of adjacent homes; tall trees screen the facility from view.

**Knollwood (Army Distaff Foundation Inc)**

6200 Oregon Ave NW

Washington, DC 20015

(202) 541-0400

*2.0 miles from 3920 Alton Place, NW*

*Zoned R-1A*

No Zoning Cases

709,912 sq. ft. (16.3 acres)

Topography: Steeply sloped

Number of stories: 3 along the street (Nebraska Avenue), more in the center of the campus hundreds of feet away

Setbacks: very generous setbacks from all surrounding streets and adjacent properties

Entrances: by long driveways from Oregon Ave.; Nebraska Ave. (arterial); and Tennyson St

Adjacent properties: single family detached homes on Tennyson Street

Facing properties: Rock Creek Park across Oregon Ave.; single family detached homes across Nebraska Ave., Stephenson, 29<sup>th</sup>, and Tennyson Streets

Screening: a substantial forested area separates the facility from adjacent homes; berms, trees, and evergreen shrubs screen the property along its perimeter

## Nearby Assisted Living Facilities in Apartment Zone Districts

### **Sunrise on Connecticut Avenue**

5111 Connecticut Ave NW

Washington, DC 20008

*4,166 feet from 3910 Alton Place, NW*

*Zoned RA-4 (former R-5-D, an apartment district)*

Zoning cases: 3 appeals of decisions of Zoning Administrator – No. 16879; 17010; 17127

27,712 sq. ft. (0.64 acres)

Topography: flat

Number of stories: 7

Adjacent and facing properties: apartment buildings

Entrances: shallow circular driveway from Connecticut Avenue (arterial street); loading and parking lot entrance from alley in the rear

### **Chevy Chase House - Meridian Senior Living**

5420 Connecticut Ave NW

Washington, DC 20015

*5,264 feet from 3910 Alton Place, NW*

*Zoned RA-4 (former R-5-D, an apartment district)*

Zoning cases: none

22,324 sq. ft. (0.51 acres)

Topography: flat

Number of stories: 6, older apartment building built before 1958

Adjacent and facing properties: apartment buildings of equivalent height lining Connecticut Ave

Main entrance: no curb cut; drop off and pick up in “no parking” zone in front along Connecticut Avenue (arterial street)

### **Brighton Gardens of Friendship Heights**

#### **(Sunrise Assisted Living)**

5555 Friendship Blvd

Chevy Chase, MD 20815

*1.34 miles from 3920 Alton Place, NW*

(Montgomery County high density residential zoning)

Topography: somewhat sloped

Number of stories: 7

Surrounding area: high rise apartment and doctor buildings; a Marriott Hotel

**Grand Oaks Assisted Living at Sibley Memorial Hospital**

5901 MacArthur Blvd NW

Washington, DC 20016

*1.93 miles from 3920 Alton Place, NW*

*Zoned RA-1 (former R-5A, an apartment district)*

893,780 sq. ft. (20.52 acres) (part of Sibley Hospital complex)

BZA Application No. 17238 (Unopposed, November 30, 2004): variances granted for building height and number of stories because of steep topography, unusually-shaped lot, to align floors of assisted living facility to those of existing hospital and to preserve green space characteristic of this neighborhood; special exception granted to add 36 beds, for a total of 140.

Topography: steeply sloped

Number of stories: 3 along the street, more in the rear near the hospital

Main entrance: driveway with turn-around from MacArthur Avenue; hospital parking lot available off Loughboro Road

Adjacent properties: Sibley Hospital; Pepco substation

Facing properties: water treatment plant (MacArthur Boulevard); single family detached home (Loughboro Road)