



MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Zoning Commission

FROM: *JL for* Jennifer Steingasser, Deputy Director

DATE: July 10, 2020

SUBJECT: ZC #12-01C – Catholic University – Campus Plan Amendments and Further Processing for a New Dorm

I. SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Pursuant to Subtitle X § 101, the applicant requests a special exception for campus plan amendments and a further processing of the approved Catholic University 2012 Campus Master Plan. The application proposes a new dorm and chapel generally in the location shown in the campus plan, but with a larger scale and in a configuration altered from that shown in the plan.

The Office of Planning (OP) is supportive of the addition of a dorm and chapel, which would help to address the need for new beds on campus, and address the campus plan goal of creating residential clusters focused on a chapel. OP recommends approval of the campus plan amendments, as the changes proposed would have no significant impacts on surrounding neighborhoods, and the revised campus plan would still achieve most of the goals of the approved campus plan. OP also recommends approval of the further processing; The design proposed is consistent with the campus plan, as revised, and the architecture is appropriate for the campus as a whole and for the specific site in question.

II. APPLICATION IN BRIEF

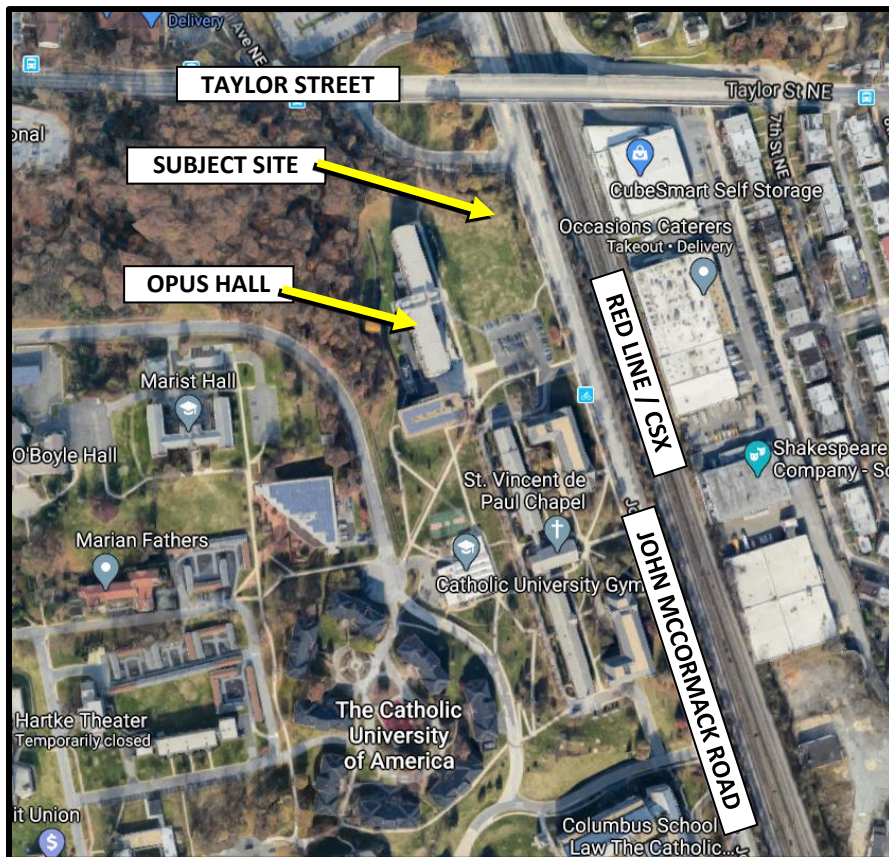
Applicant	Catholic University of America
Location	Northeast corner of the Catholic University main campus, between existing Opus Hall and John McCormack Road Ward 5, ANC 5A Square 3821, Lot 44
Zoning	RA-1 – Low Density Apartment Zone; University uses permitted by special exception
Existing Use of Property	Vacant land / parking
Comp. Plan Policy Map	Institutional Uses
Comp. Plan Future Land Use	Institutional Uses



Application and Proposed Use of Property	<p>The application requires two campus plan amendments. The first would relocate a chapel from the position shown in the campus plan. The second would increase the size of the building from 66,500 combined square feet (dorm and chapel) to 103,829 square feet.</p> <p>The further processing request proposes a new dorm with a chapel and accessory spaces on a site that is currently vacant and used for parking that is not required under the Campus Plan. The total height is approximately 65'. The application also includes a conceptual design for the courtyard between the new dorm and existing Opus Hall, a dorm to the west of the subject site.</p>
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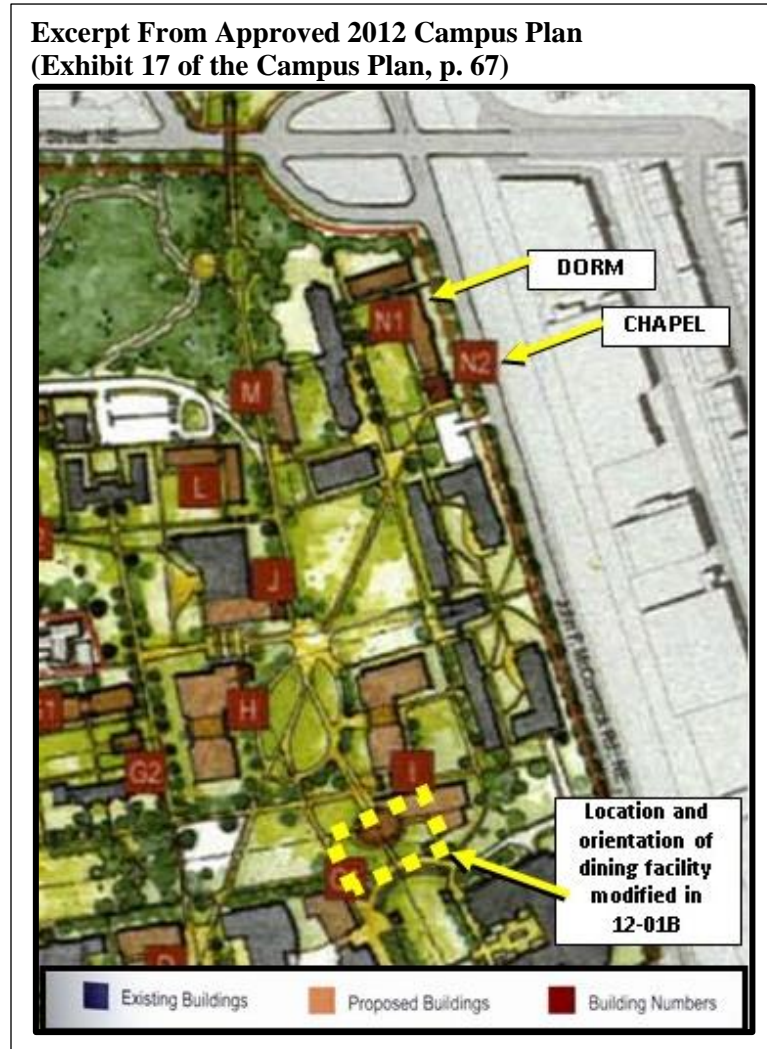
III. SITE AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The subject site is at the northeast corner of Catholic University’s main campus, near the intersection of John McCormack Road and Taylor Street. The proposed dorm would sit on what is currently vacant land and a parking lot and would form a small quadrangle with the existing Opus Hall, a seven-story dorm to the east of the site. The chapel portion of the building would sit roughly in the center of that quadrangle. Through the site, the topography slopes up from east to west and from south to north. See the existing conditions vicinity map below.



Campus Plan Amendments

The application requires two amendments to the campus plan. The first amendment would adjust the location of a chapel from where the campus plan had proposed it. Please see the excerpt from the approved campus plan below, where the dorm in question is labeled “N1” and the chapel “N2”. See also Attachment 2, a conceptual rendering of the chapel and dorm from the campus plan.



The present application proposes that the chapel be located roughly at the center of the quad formed by the new dorm and Opus Hall, although still attached to the new building. The dorm itself would then extend further to the south to occupy the space left from the move of the chapel.

This amendment would move the chapel off of a primary view axis shown in the approved Campus Plan, which would have visually and thematically linked the chapel with the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. See Attachment 4 for a diagram of the view axes proposed in the plan. As buildings on campus are demolished, in conformance with the plan, the view of the Shrine from the chapel’s approved location, now limited to the very top of the Shrine’s dome and tower, will be more complete. See existing conditions photo in Attachment 3.

Under the proposed change, the chapel would no longer serve as a visual terminus for this viewshed. Rather, the viewshed at this end would generally terminate at the south end of the new quadrangle and the south-west corner of the dorm. The relocated chapel would serve as the visual focal point for the immediate quadrangle, both upon entering the space and for those using the courtyard. The applicant stated to OP that the move would allow for the creation of two defined courtyard areas – one more passive and one more active – rather than one and would allow for a more successful integration of the chapel into the daily life of the students. Because the dorm would be divided into male and female wings, having the chapel and other student activity areas in the center would allow for easier access from both portions of the building. In addition, the entrance to the chapel wing is intended to be easily accessible from Opus Hall.

The second required amendment is an increase in the size of the combined buildings. The dorm in the campus plan was estimated to have a floor area of 64,000 square feet, and the chapel 2,500 square feet. In the present application, both buildings would have a combined floor area of 103,829 square feet. Due to topography, the building would have five exposed floors above grade at some locations, but the bulk of the building would have four floors, as contemplated by the plan.

The overall result of the proposed campus plan amendments would be a new dorm in a location prescribed by the campus plan, with a relocated chapel still serving as a focal point for the residential cluster. Although it would have more floor area than originally proposed, the new building would not be out of scale with nearby buildings.

Further Processing

The further processing application would provide a dorm, chapel, and associated spaces such as lounges, study areas and meeting rooms. The dorm itself would be divided into north and south wings, with study areas and meeting rooms throughout, but with most communal spaces, including the chapel, clustered in the center, with the chapel located in a westward-projecting wing. The chapel wing would divide the courtyard into two areas – the northern one more quiet and contemplative, and the southern more active. The architecture of the building would be in character with the Catholic University campus. Towers with crenellations mark entrances, corners and stairwells. Because the applicant proposes to move the chapel wing and have it serve as the visual focal point for the courtyard, OP encouraged the applicant to further study the south wall of the chapel and attempt to provide a stronger visual focal point for pedestrians entering the quad. Similarly, because the chapel has moved, OP encouraged the applicant to examine the southern end of the dorm to see if a greater visual presence could serve as a terminus of the long southwestern viewshed.

IV. CAMPUS PLAN AMENDMENT AND FURTHER PROCESSING REVIEW

University or college use in a low or moderate density residential zone is permitted as a special exception as part of a campus plan. In addition to the campus plan application itself, reviews are required for individual buildings in “further processing” applications, which may be evaluated concurrently with campus plan amendments, if necessary. Subtitle X Section 101 of the Zoning Regulations provide standards for reviewing campus plan and further processing applications. OP’s analysis of the application against those criteria is below.

101.1 Education use by a college or university shall be permitted as a special exception subject to review and approval by the Zoning Commission after its determination that the use meets the applicable standards and condition of this chapter.

Catholic University is an educational use with associated residential dorms. The proposed dorm would fulfill a need for additional and modern living facilities on campus.

101.2 The uses shall be located so that they are not likely to become objectionable to neighboring property because of noise, traffic, parking, number of students, or other objectionable conditions.

The proposed dorm would be located in the northeast corner of the main campus, approximately 430 feet and across the metro tracks, railroad tracks and Taylor Street bridge from the nearest off-campus residence. OP does not anticipate that the noise potentially generated by the new concentration of students should be significant; The building would not have balconies, and the new center of activity would be the internal courtyard. The use would add move-in and move-out trips, but those would be limited to certain times of year. There would also be an increase in deliveries and trash truck trips to the site, but that should not impact the neighborhoods across the railroad tracks. No new parking is proposed with the building.

- 101.3 *Any commercial use customarily incidental to a university use in an R, RF, or RA zone, or as an adjunct use to a university building, shall be subject to the following conditions:*
- a) *There shall be a demonstrated and necessary relationship between the use and the university functions;*
 - b) *The total floor area of all commercial uses, including basement or cellar space, shall occupy no more than ten percent (10%) of the gross floor area of the total campus plan floor area; and*
 - c) *The commercial use shall be located so that it will not become objectionable to non-university residential neighbors due to hours of operation, noise, parking, loading, lighting, trash, or other operational characteristics that are not customarily associated with a residential use.*

The application does not propose a commercial use.

- 101.4 *The campus plan process shall not serve as a process to create general commercial activities or developments unrelated to the educational mission of the applicant or that would be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan.*

The proposal would not create commercial activities.

- 101.5 *The following development standards shall apply to the maximum total density of all buildings and structures on the campus in an R, RF, RA, or RC-1 zone:*

TABLE X § 101.5: MAXIMUM TOTAL DENSITY OF ALL BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

Zone	Maximum Height (Feet)	Maximum Floor Area Ratio
All R and RF zones	50	1.8
RA-1, RA-2, RA-6, RA-7, RA-8, RC-1	50	1.8
RA-3, RA-4, RA-5, RA-9, RA-10	90	3.5

The campus plan established a limit of 0.39 FAR for the entire campus. That limit was the result of all proposed building construction and demolition contemplated in the plan, as well as the transfer of five acres to the control of the Basilica. The applicant has informed OP that the FAR would be 0.26 after construction of the new dorm. According to page 1 of Exhibit 2A, the height

of the building would be approximately 65’.

101.6 Because of permissive increases as applicable to normal bulk requirements in the low-density zones regulated by this title, it is the intent of this subsection to prevent unreasonable campus expansion into improved low-density zones.

The proposed dorm would not result in an expansion into low-density zones. The use is consistent with the approved Campus Plan, would be within the existing boundaries of the campus, and should not result in impacts to nearby residential areas.

101.7 In calculating floor area ratio (FAR), the land area shall not include public streets and alleys, but may include interior private streets and alleys within the campus boundaries.

Although not yet in the record, the applicant has informed OP that the FAR of the campus would be 0.26 after construction of the new building. The calculation included private streets within the campus, but not public streets.

101.8 As a prerequisite to requesting a further processing for each college or university use, the applicant shall have submitted to the Zoning Commission for its approval a plan for developing the campus as a whole, showing the location, height, and bulk, where appropriate, of all present and proposed improvements including, but not limited to, the following:

- a) Buildings and parking and loading facilities;*
- b) Screening, signs, streets, and public utility facilities;*
- c) Athletic and other recreational facilities; and*
- d) A description of all activities conducted or to be conducted on the campus, and of the capacity of all present and proposed campus development.*

The applicant has generally submitted information sufficient for review of the proposal consistent with the provisions of this section, although some information provided to OP has not yet been added to the record.

Campus Plan Amendment

With application #12-01, the Commission approved the Catholic University campus plan, which illustrated, among other items, the locations of buildings, open spaces, parking facilities, loading facilities, pedestrian ways, streets, and athletic and recreation facilities, and also described the capacity of the campus in terms of students, faculty and staff.

The campus plan amendment would result in a modification to one of the organizing concepts of the 2012 plan, which showed a series of view axes and view corridors linking important locations on and adjacent to the campus, both visually and thematically. This, combined with key building demolition and new construction, was intended to add regularity and cohesiveness to the campus. The proposed move of the chapel would remove it as the terminus of a long, diagonal viewsheds to the Basilica. Instead, the proposed new location would provide the possibility of the chapel serving as the visual focal point for the immediate quadrangle, both upon entering the space and

for those using the courtyard, while the south end of the dormitory would terminate the longer viewshed to the Basilica. The relocated chapel, together with the proposed contemplative courtyard, would still fulfill one of the stated goals of the campus plan, that “Interior spiritual spaces, such as chapels, should be accompanied by landscaped exterior spaces” (Campus Plan, p. 54).

The campus plan called for the dorm and chapel in this location to have a combined floor area of 66,500 square feet. The proposed building would have about 103,000 square feet, and while larger, the building would not be out of scale with nearby buildings. The plan also stated that the building should be four stories tall, but did not specify a height in feet. The proposed dorm would be four stories and approximately 65 feet tall, measured to the midpoint of the pitched roof.

OP has no objection to the proposed campus plan amendments, as they would have no impact on surrounding neighborhoods, and the proposal would still achieve goals of the campus plan, such as adding needed housing and providing a residential cluster with a chapel as its focus.

Further Processing

Given the changes to the campus plan, OP generally supports the further processing application. The appearance of the building is appropriate for the university, and the building fulfills key objectives of the campus plan to provide additional and modern residential facilities. The building would also form an appropriate boundary to the residential cluster, enhance the appearance of the campus from John McCormack Road, and the entrance to the campus from that direction.

101.9 The further processing of specific buildings, structures, and uses within an approved campus plan shall be processed as a special exception unless the campus plan approval was included in an order granting a first-stage planned unit development (PUD) for the campus, in which case the further processing shall be in the form of second-stage planned unit development applications filed consistent with the conditions of the approved campus plan/PUD.

The present application is appropriately filed as a special exception for a further processing to the original campus plan, as well as an amendment to the campus plan.

101.10 Within a reasonable distance of the college or university campus, and subject to compliance with Subtitle X § 101.2, the Zoning Commission may also permit the interim use of land or improved property with any use that the Zoning Commission may determine is a proper college or university function. The land need not be included in the campus plan. When a major new building that has been proposed in a campus plan is instead moved off-campus, the previously designated site shall not be designated for, or devoted to, a different major new building unless the Zoning Commission has approved an amendment to the campus plan applicable to the site; provided, that for this purpose a major new building is defined as one specifically identified in the campus plan.

The Applicant is not proposing an interim use of property.

101.11 In reviewing and deciding a campus plan application or new building construction pursuant to a campus plan, the Zoning Commission shall consider, to the extent they are relevant, the policies of the District Elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

As part of Zoning Commission case #12-01, the Commission found that the overall campus plan was not inconsistent with the policies of the Comprehensive Plan, including the Upper Northeast Area Element and the Brookland Small Area Plan. Please refer to ZC #12-01, Exhibit 30, page 5, paragraph 31. The present application should not change the relationship of the campus or campus plan to the Comprehensive Plan. The Plan's Generalized Policy Map and Future Land Use Map both describe the site as appropriate for institutional uses, and the provision of a dorm on a university campus would be consistent with those designations.

101.12 As an integral part of the application requesting approval of new building construction pursuant to a campus plan, the college or university shall certify and document that the proposed building or amendment is within the FAR limit for the campus as a whole, based upon the computation included in the most recently approved campus plan and the FARs of any other buildings constructed or demolished since the campus plan was approved.

The campus plan established a limit of 0.39 FAR for the entire campus. The applicant has provided calculations to the Office of Planning that indicate that the total FAR after construction of the new building would be 0.26. In conformance with this subsection, the applicant should provide that information to the record.

101.13 Pursuant to Subtitle Z § 405.1, as soon as the application is accepted, the Office of Zoning shall refer the application to the Office of Planning, the Department of Transportation, and the Department of Energy and Environment for review and written reports.

DOEE provided OP with comments, included as Attachment 1. As of this writing the record contains no reports from other District agencies.

101.14 Approval of a campus plan shall be based on the determination by the Zoning Commission that the application will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps, and will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property, in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps, subject to the special conditions specified in this section.

It is the intent of the Regulations that university uses should be compatible with their surroundings, especially in lower density residential zones. OP concludes that the proposed dorm would be

consistent with the existing scale of buildings on the campus, and, given its location – buffered by streets and railroad tracks – should have no detrimental impacts on nearby properties.

101.15 Small deviations from plans approved under further processing that are determined necessary by the Zoning Administrator for compliance with life, safety, or building codes, may be permitted without an amendment to a further processing provided the deviation does not result in an increase in gross floor area of more than four-hundred and fifty square feet (450 sq. ft.) and the addition shall only be used for purposes of ingress, egress, or handicap access.

OP does not anticipate that deviations from the plans for the building would be required, should the application be approved by the Commission.

101.16 A further processing of a campus building shall not be filed simultaneously with a full campus plan application. However, an amendment to an approved campus plan may be considered simultaneously with the further processing if determined necessary by the Zoning Commission.

Pursuant to this section, the applicant requests a campus plan amendment as well as a further processing.

V. COMMENTS OF OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

DOEE provided OP with comments, included as Attachment 1. As of this writing the record contains no reports from District agencies.

VI. ANC COMMENTS

As of this writing the record contains no comments from the ANC.

VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

As of this writing the record contains no comments from the community.

VIII. ATTACHMENTS

1. DOEE Comments
2. Rendering of Chapel and Associated Dorm from Approved Campus Plan
3. Existing View of Basilica from Approximate Location of Approved Chapel
4. Diagram of View Axes from Approved Campus Plan

Attachment 1 DOEE Comments

Green Building:

- The project is not subject to the Green Building Act, however DOEE support the project’s decision to peruse a LEED Silver rating with the USGBC. Furthermore, DOEE encourages the project team to maximize energy efficiency, particularly during a new construction project. While some strategies could have minimal construction cost impacts, such as improvements to the building envelope, they will also decrease utility cost and could save valuable rooftop space. Many energy conservation measures including additional insulation, LED lighting and controls, high efficiency mechanical systems, and envelope commissioning and air sealing have a return on investment within five years and can be financed with no up-front cost through the DC PACE or green lending programs.
- The Catholic University, as a campus, will be subject to the Building Energy Performance Standard beginning January 1, 2021. For this reason, it would be highly beneficial for the university to maximize the energy efficiency of any new construction buildings, including the new residence hall. A new highly efficient building would benefit the energy performance of the entire campus. For more information on BEPS see Policy Updates below or contact DOEE: kathleen.berube@dc.gov.
- DOEE encourages projects to explore Net Zero Energy construction/certification ahead of a planned 2026 code requirement, and has put forth Appendix Z in the new Energy Conservation Code (see policy update below) in order to support this effort. If the team is interested in Net Zero Energy construction, either on this project or future projects DOEE can be of assistance. Feel free to reach out to Kathleen.berube@dc.gov.
- How will the residence hall be heated and cooled? In order to meet the goals of the Sustainable DC and Clean Energy DC plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, DOEE is encouraging projects to consider eliminating the use of fossil fuels in their buildings. Choosing efficient, electric systems can reduce indoor air pollution and save on operating costs, especially when coupled with solar energy. Accordingly, DOEE would encourage the design team to consider electric heating, cooling, and water heating systems in lieu of natural gas.

Stormwater and GAR:

- DOEE supports the project exceeding GAR requirements. Please note that if the project chooses to voluntarily install stormwater Best Management Practices, Stormwater Retention Credits (SRCs) can be registered with DOEE and sold through the Stormwater Retention Credit Trading Program. The flat roof of the planned chapel would be an excellent location for a vegetated roof. For more information please visit <https://doee.dc.gov/src>.

Solar:

- DOEE urges the team to consider utilizing open roof space for solar. Maximizing the amount of solar aligns with the critical goal of the Sustainable DC plan to increase the use of renewable energy to make up 50% of the District’s energy use. Increasing the size of the PV array would also offset

a larger portion of the building's electrical load and reduce operational costs. The District has many financial incentives for solar that can bring down upfront costs and generate revenue from the sale of Solar Renewable Energy Credits.

- At a minimum, DOEE encourages the project to specify solar-ready roofs. By minimizing penetrations and mechanical equipment footprints in prime locations, providing additional conduit where appropriate and including space in the electrical panel, future solar systems can be installed much more cost effectively and with less disruption.

EV Charging Stations:

- DOEE supports the University's sustainable transportation efforts, including adding bike spaces and reducing the number of parking spaces. DOEE encourages the project to also consider providing electric vehicle supply equipment (EVSE), or installing make-ready infrastructure so that charge points can be added at a later date for significantly lower cost and disruption. The 2017 DC Green Construction Code provides some suggested thresholds for the provision of supply equipment and make-ready infrastructure.

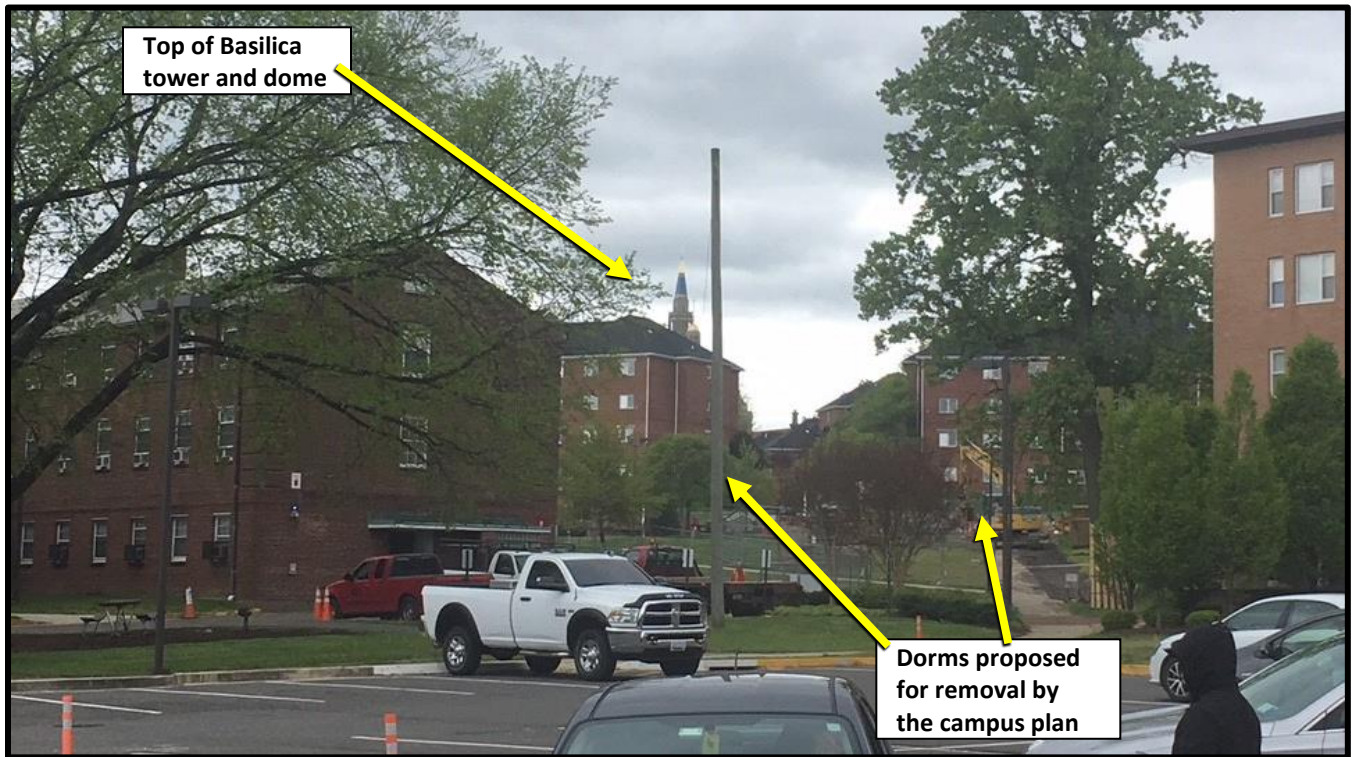
Policy Updates:

- The Building Energy Performance Standards (BEPS) were set forth in Title III of the Clean Energy DC Omnibus Act of 2018. The Act states that, starting in 2021, owners of buildings over 50,000 square feet that are below a specific energy performance threshold will be required to improve their energy efficiency over the next 5 years. Projects below the performance threshold will be able to choose between a performance pathway, which requires that they document a 20% reduction in energy usage over the 5 year compliance period, or a prescriptive list of required energy efficiency measures. For more information on the BEPS program please visit <https://doee.dc.gov/service/building-energy-performance-standards>.
- DC adopted the new 2017 DC Construction Codes on May 29th, which includes advancements in both the energy conservation and green construction codes. Projects with permits or a signed design contract prior to the effective date will be grandfathered under the previous codes for a period of one year so this project may not be required to comply with them. DOEE however encourages the project to consider the updated 2017 DC Energy Conservation and Green Construction Codes when designing the project.

Attachment 2
Rendering of Chapel and Associated Dorm from Approved Campus Plan (p. 70)



Attachment 3
Existing View of Basilica from Approximate Location of Approved Chapel



Attachment 4
Diagram of View Axes from Approved Campus Plan (p. 81)

