



Ravenwood Park Citizens Association

October 25, 2021

Mason District SSPA Task Force
ATTN: Michael Burton, Planner, Fairfax County (via e-mail)

Re: First Christian Church of Falls Church (FCCFC) Development Proposal (PC19-MA-001)

Dear Mr. Burton:

Please share this letter with members of the Mason District SSPA Task Force.

On behalf of the Ravenwood Park Citizens Association (RPCA), representing 256 households immediately to the west and south of the proposed 113-unit apartment building on the land of the First Christian Church of Falls Church, we submit this letter to document our concerns and requests relative to PC19-MA-001.

Members of the RPCA community have been tracking and communicating about the proposed project since we first became aware of it several years ago. Representatives of RPCA toured the church property with FCCFC Pastor Steven Moore and representatives from the church's engineering vendor, and participated in an online meeting on September 10, 2020 with representatives from FCCFC, the engineering firm and the developer, Wesley Housing. We also held an in-person meeting with representatives from FCCFC, the engineering firm and Wesley Housing on August 23rd.

RPCA appreciates and welcomes FCCFC's and the Wesley Housing's decision to de-couple the rezoning application from the plan amendment. This commitment ensures that RPCA and other neighbors are informed and able to participate fully in each phase the county's development process.

RPCA also appreciates and welcomes the detailed conditions adopted by the task force in Phase 1 of the SSPA process. The conditions addressed several of the concerns and reservations raised by RPCA.

Notwithstanding the open and frequent communications with FCCFC and the developer and the conditions adopted by the task force, RPCA still has significant concerns and reservations regarding PC19-MA-001 outlined below.

We ask that the Mason District SSPA Task Force consider and again incorporate our concerns and reservations into its final recommendation on the proposed plan amendment. Your decision, the language you adopt, the items you address with detail will affect our ability to advocate effectively for our neighbors when the plan amendment and, eventually, the rezoning application are considered by the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors.

Concerns raised

DENSITY AND PROTECTING AND MAINTAINING THE ESTABLISHED RESIDENTIAL RAVENWOOD PARK NEIGHBORHOOD

If the project's proposal for subdividing the property are approved, the new lot will have up to 30 units per acre. That is 10X that of Ravenwood Park, a R-3 neighborhood established 60+ years ago. We're concerned that regardless of what other measures are taken, this is simply too high a density for the 400-foot boundary we share.

TREES

The woods on the lot between FCCFC and Ravenwood Park currently deliver many 'services' in addition to their own intrinsic worth: retaining/absorbing rain, creating a visual and sound buffer, providing a transition between lots of differing densities, etc. Residents are worried about loss of trees.

STORMWATER

As has been discussed repeatedly in various fora the stormwater system serving Ravenwood Park now routinely backs up and floods the yards and basements of some residents. Hence there seems to be no capacity to handle any more water were the development to direct more water into the stormwater system that services Ravenwood Park. Also, there is already water running off of the FCCFC lot in sheets to the southeast into, and across, the yards of adjacent Ravenwood Park residents.

LIGHT POLLUTION

Even with the current woods, headlights of cars on the FCCFC lot beam into the windows of Ravenwood Park residents. With the addition of 113 units there will be greatly increased activity. Plus there will be many parking lot light poles. Those light sources, combined with reduced and thinned out woods could result in substantial light pollution.

PRIVACY

At times there has been a problem of people camping in the woods and using the woods or church parking lot to drink. This results in an unpredictable and significant loss of privacy. With a far greater number of people on the property, the development brings new kinds of privacy concerns. Wesley Housing mentioned the possibility of creating pathways in the “elbow” of the building. Currently, there are no walking paths in the woods. We would like to know how the privacy of Ravenwood Park residents will be preserved by the proposed development. Wesley Housing also mentioned planting a hedge along the edge of the parking lot to create a barrier. We don't believe this is at all sufficient given how close the property abuts some residences. A solid wall along the length of the property is much preferred.

TRASH DUMPSTER(S)

As it is, periodically some residents adjacent to the church can smell the church's dumpster. The development will generate many times more garbage and could lead to a greater problem.

Recommendations Offered in Relation to the Above Concerns

1. Decrease the density and intensity of uses by reducing the number of residential units and reducing associated parking requirements
2. Require stormwater to be retained and managed on site and not released untreated into the stormwater system that services the Ravenwood Park and other communities and flows into Lake Barcroft.

3. Use low profile filtration facilities to capture storm water (to ensure said facility has no deleterious effect of any kind—water, visual, or noise-related, to nearby homes)
4. Reduce the building's footprint by adding one floor, while reducing the horizontal length, especially on the building's southern wing. This was raised as a possibility, but we are concerned a reduced tree line and thinning of the woods from construction and post-construction would fail to preserve backyard views and add to light pollution
5. Place a solid fence or wall along the Ravenwood Park side of the parking lot to block headlights, provide privacy and deter trespassers
6. Extend said fence as necessary to discourage unauthorized use of the woods
7. Thoroughly shield parking lot lights, keeping in mind the Ravenwood Park homes that are 10-20 feet below the parking lot, hence standard shading may not suffice
8. Drop the current plan to add parking capacity earmarked for possible future expansion of the congregation
9. Locate dumpsters (including for church use) to eastern corner of new building
10. Maintain as much as possible of the current woods, plant as many new trees, understory trees, and other plantings as possible between FCCFC and the Ravenwood Park properties behind it: create a robust new tree buffer on the church property.

We thank you for entering this letter into the record and ask to be apprised of all upcoming actions related to the proposed project through our central point of contact, Barbara Wolf, at the_wolves@verizon.net, (703) 531-1171.

Sincerely,

Barbara Wolf
President, Ravenwood Park Citizens Association Board of Directors

cc: Penny Gross, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
Julie Strandlie, Fairfax County Planning Commission
Marty Machowsky, Mason District SSPA Task Force