

Public Comment received as of Monday August 17, 2020

August 5, 2020

RE PC19-MA-002, 006

Homes on Brook Dr in Lee Blvd Heights sit in the base of essentially a V- shaped water run off . The changes since the development of the Willston shopping center have been enormous ( north side of neighborhood). Water rushes down Heather , Olin and Holly, to name a few. There are no storm sewers or curbs on much of Brook Dr., resulting in overflowing ditches, as well as standing water at all times. Attempts have been made to unclog the ditches, but a quick fix does not and will not change anything.

With the latest proposal for the neighborhood's South entrance ( Dar Al Hijrah Center), an enormous area is proposed as changing from generally open land/soil/ vegetation to acres of impervious surfaces. This change will result in yet another significant water runoff, this time from the south, into Lee Blvd Heights. Areas of Brook Dr are currently a designated flood zone.

This further proposed development, and thus creation of more impervious surfaces, requires a thorough analysis of the cumulative impact on the water table, runoff, snow melt, and flood zones.

The drainage ditch south and parallel to Brook Dr is frequently at capacity. This development must not be approved until a comprehensive study is performed and a system is developed to drain water away from these existing homes.

Judy Watson  
Ed Pretzsch

Matthew Sage  
Lee Boulevard Height Citizens Association  
6079 Brook Drive  
Falls Church, VA 22044

August 14, 2020

Mason District Supervisor Penny Gross  
Mason District Government Center  
6507 Columbia Pike  
Annandale, VA 22003

RE: Fairfax County SSPA

Dear Supervisor Gross,

I am writing to you in response to the notification regarding the SSPA nominations to the Fairfax Comprehensive Plan. The Mason District nominations include properties adjacent to the Lee Boulevard Heights neighborhood, near Seven Corners, Falls Church. Per the notification materials, the Lee Boulevard Heights Citizens Association (LBHCA) Board has reviewed the relevant SSPA Nominations and has provided review comments as an attachment to this letter.

As you know, there is a long history associated with LBHCA and the impact of the Dar Al-Hijrah Islamic Center's functions on the adjoining neighborhoods. As mentioned in the attached comments, LBHCA greatly appreciates the cultural diversity provided to the community by the Center, as well as the warmth and generosity of its congregants.

However, the LBHCA **cannot** approve any expansion of the Dar Al-Hijrah Islamic Center until several significant Land Use and Design issues have been addressed and codified prior to any Fairfax County Planning Commission approval of the SSPA Nomination.

LBHCA has established an SSPA Review Committee to further evaluate the SSPA Nominations and monitor their development through the Planning Commission process. We look forward to working with the Planning Commission staff and the Dar Al-Hijrah Islamic Center to achieve a successful result for both the LBH Neighborhood and the Center.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew M Sage". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'M' and 'S'.

Matthew Sage

President

Lee Boulevard Heights Citizen Association

leeblvdheights@gmail.com

CC: Deena Kennedy, Vice President LBHCA  
Kathryn Killeen, Treasurer LBHCA  
Becky Bowman, Communications LBHCA

## Nomination PC19-MA-006 (Dar Al-Hijrah Islamic Center)

### General

The residents of Lee Boulevard Heights Citizens Association (LBHCA) and the Dar Al-Hijrah Islamic Center have been close neighbors for nearly 30 years. LBHCA greatly appreciates the cultural diversity provided to the community by the Center, as well as the warmth and generosity of its congregants.

However, the LBHCA **cannot** approve any expansion of the Dar Al-Hijrah Islamic Center until several significant Land Use and Design issues have been addressed and codified prior to any Fairfax County Planning Commission approval of the SSPA Nomination.

### Relevant Zoning Criteria

The following is a partial listing of current pertinent Zoning and Land Use parameters, as understood by the LBHCA Board (and edited for brevity):

Existing Lot Area: 3.3168 acres (144,480 sq. ft.) (Per Fairfax County Property Search)

Existing Zoning District: R-3 (Residential 3 DU/AC) (Per Fairfax County Property Search)

Applicable Fairfax County Zoning Code:

Article 3 - Fairfax County Zoning Code – Article 3 Residential District Regulations:

Section 3-304 - Special Exception Uses:

2. Category 3 - Quasi-Public Uses, limited to:

D. Churches, chapels, temples, synagogues and other such places of worship with a child care center, nursery school or private school of general or special education

Section 3-305 - Use Limitations:

1. No sale of goods or products shall be permitted, except as accessory and incidental to a permitted, special permit or special exception use.

Section 3-307 - Bulk Regulations (R-3):

1. Maximum building height:

A. Single family dwellings: 35 feet

B. All other structures: 60 feet

3. Maximum floor area ratio (FAR):

A. 0.25 for uses other than residential or public

B. 0.30 for public uses

Section 3-310 - Affordable Dwelling Unit Developments:

3. Maximum building height:

A. Single family detached dwellings: 35 feet

B. Single family attached dwellings: 40 feet

Article 11 - Fairfax County Zoning Code – Off Street Parking and Loading, Private Streets

Section 11-101 - Applicability:

2. The provision of off-street parking for a change in use and/or an expansion or enlargement of an existing structure and/or use shall be in accordance with the following:

- A. When there is a change to a use which has a greater parking requirement than the previous use, the minimum off-street parking requirement in accordance with the provisions of this Article shall be provided for the new use.
- B. When an existing structure and/or use is expanded or enlarged, the minimum off-street parking requirements in accordance with the provisions of this Article shall be provided for the area or capacity of such expansion or enlargement.

Section 11-102 – General Provisions:

16. Parking spaces required on an employee/person basis in the Sections that follow shall be based on the maximum number of employees/persons on duty or residing, or both, on the premises at any one time, or the occupancy load of the building, whichever is greater.

Section 11-102 - General Provisions:

24. Additional off-street parking may be added to an existing development which met the parking requirement in effect at the time of its development, but which does not comply with the current requirements, in order to minimize the degree of current noncompliance.

Section 11-104 - Minimum Required Spaces for Commercial and Related Uses:

Minimum off-street parking spaces accessory to the uses hereinafter designated shall be provided as follows:

20. Retail Sales Establishment and Retail Sales Establishment-Large, except Furniture or Carpet Store: One (1) space per 200 square feet of net floor area for the first 1000 square feet, plus six (6) spaces per each additional 1000 square feet.

Section 11-106 Minimum Required Spaces for Other Uses:

3. Child Care Center or Nursery School:

- A. 0.19 space per child for a center or school which has a maximum daily enrollment of 99 children or less
- B. 0.16 space per child for a center or school which has a maximum daily enrollment of 100 or more children

4. Church, Chapel, Temple, Synagogue or Other Such Place of Worship: One (1) space per four (4) seats in the principal place of worship; provided that the number of spaces thus required may be reduced by the Director, subject to conditions the Director deems appropriate, by not more than fifty (50) percent if the place of worship is generally located within 500 feet of any public parking lot or any commercial parking lot where sufficient spaces are available by permission of the owner(s) without charge, during the time of services to make up the additional spaces required.

## **Land Use**

The Dar Al-Hijrah Islamic Center SSPA Nomination does not clearly summarize either the existing or the proposed extents of development. The Nomination requests a 0.5 FAR, however, LBHCA does not consider a 67% increase over the allowed by-right 0.3 FAR to be “minor”, as stated in the application. Given the proposed acquisition of a number of adjacent lots, the requested exception to the FAR could create an oversized development compared to the existing residential scale. The Nomination also notes other 0.5 FAR non-residential properties along Route 7, but fails to mention that none are within the immediate vicinity of Lee Boulevard Heights.

The proposed Retail component is similarly undefined, and difficult to envision in this location. A retail function is not a by-right use within an R-3 Zoning District. Depending on the type of retail, the potential noise and traffic would be detrimental to the neighborhood. In addition, the proposed retail component runs counter to Objective 6 of the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, Seven Corners CBC:

*“Ensure the pattern of land uses protects the stability of neighboring residential areas by establishing transitional areas and preventing commercial encroachment into such areas.”*

It is our opinion that any increased retail offerings should be devoted to the Seven Corners and Bailey’s Crossroads CBCs, and not in the residential areas between the two.

We concur with the Nomination language that the development can “create a unified streetscape along Leesburg Pike”. To that end, the Nomination should develop the structures with the larger and taller public components of the design located adjacent to Leesburg Pike. The lower-height residential components, adhering to the 35-40 foot residential height limitation, should be located closer to the existing residential areas along Munson Hill Road. Similarly, site plan required open space areas should be located closer to the existing residential areas, to provide a buffer between public and private functions.

## **Stormwater Management**

The site plan open space requirement should be coordinated closely with the requirements for stormwater management. The portions of Lee Boulevard Heights adjacent to Long Branch Creek are currently designated as 100-year flood zones. Long Branch Creek typically fills to capacity, and beyond, during even moderate rain events. The lack of effective stormwater management on the north side of the creek results in frequent yard and basement flooding.

The Nomination’s proposed development has the potential to remove generally open land and vegetation and create significantly more impervious surfaces. This change will result in additional substantial water runoff, this time from the south, into Long Branch Creek and Lee Boulevard Heights.

Approval of this Nomination must be contingent upon completion of a comprehensive stormwater study in keeping with the guidelines of the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, Seven Corners CBC:

*“Environmentally-friendly stormwater design should be an integral design principle that is part of the conceptual stage of site development...The stormwater design should first seek to minimize the effect of impervious cover, followed by the application of stormwater reuse, retention, detention, extended filtration and, where soils and infrastructure allow, infiltration to improve downstream waters.”*

The Nomination requires a thorough analysis of the cumulative impact on the water table, runoff, snow melt, and flood zones on the adjacent residential areas using the Comprehensive Plan recommended “Low Impact Development (LID) Stormwater Techniques”.

### **Traffic and Parking**

Overflow vehicular traffic and parking within the Lee Boulevard Heights neighborhood has been an ongoing issue since the Dar Al-Hijrah Islamic Center opened in March 1991. The original vehicle estimates on which the permit was approved were a total of 360 attendees, requiring 90 parking spaces.

Since 1991, the number of Friday noontime prayer services has increased from one to three, with the corresponding number of worshipers increasing from approximately 1,000 to over 3,000. The number of congregants attending during Islamic holidays, such as Eid -al-Fitr at the end of Ramadan, are significantly higher still. In the past thirty years, the amount of on-site parking has not increased, while the number and scope of Center’s programs has greatly expanded. In response to this growth, Center’s staff are posted at the mosque entrance and along Row Street in an effort to aid Friday parking and traffic flow. Satellite parking at nearby churches has been established for additional vehicle capacity. Despite the Center’s mitigation efforts, the overwhelming number of Friday worshippers still result in congested neighborhood streets during Friday midday hours and holidays.

A large number of illegally parked cars add to the traffic bottleneck. A Residential Permit Parking District was established in 1992, but has limitations. The District does not cover Olin Drive between Route 50 and Brook Drive, allowing unrestricted parking. The District permit parking hours currently range only from 12:30 PM to 5:00 AM, which does not include the earlier Center prayer times. Lastly, the large number of vehicles on Fridays, coupled with two-sided street parking on Row Street, Munson Hill Road, and Row place, form a bottleneck for school buses and emergency vehicles, creating a dangerous condition for children and the neighborhood at large.

It is our strong recommendation that the Nomination and new site plan address the critical shortage of on-site Center parking and its impact on the surrounding neighborhood. Approval of this Nomination must be contingent upon completion of a comprehensive traffic study and parking analysis. The parking study and Nomination should review and incorporate the following LBHCA recommendations:

- The Nomination's expansion areas should be strictly held to the minimum parking requirements given per Fairfax County Zoning Code Article 11, Sections 11-101.2, Section 11-102.24, and Section 11-106.4, with **no** reductions or exceptions granted. In addition, the Nomination should be strongly encouraged to provide additional parking to comply with current Zoning Code requirements of the **existing** facility, per Article 11, Section 11-102.
- Modify the existing Lee Boulevard Heights Residential Permit Parking District to include the entire length of Olin Drive, and other adjacent streets as deemed appropriate.
- Modify the existing Lee Boulevard Heights Residential Permit Parking District to commence parking restrictions no later than 11:00 AM daily.
- Increase enforcement of permit parking restrictions within Lee Boulevard Heights Residential Permit Parking District. Increased enforcement to include both ticketing and towing of illegally parked vehicles.
- Within the Nomination site plan footprint, increase the street width at Munson Hill Road from Olin Drive to the eastern edge of the proposed site boundary. A larger street width will alleviate traffic congestion which prevents clear access of school buses and emergency vehicles at peak service times.
- In conjunction with increasing the street width at Munson Hill Road, on-street parking should be limited to the north side of Munson Hill road only.

It bears repeating that LBHCA is opposed to any reduction in the Code required Center parking given the many reasons stated above. If, however, the Zoning Administrator Parking grants a reduction in required parking, the Special Exception must document and codify all required ongoing traffic mitigation efforts including, but not limited to: Center programs, Center hours of operations, offsite parking locations, and onsite traffic management. The Special Exception should also detail a list of remedies for non-compliance.

Lastly, the traffic congestion from the Center's Friday services is not limited to the interior neighborhood roads. Significant delays are also common along Leesburg Pike during Friday Center service times. The Nomination should address, again through a traffic and parking study, the proposed site access from Leesburg Pike to Row Street, for the anticipated number of increased vehicles and pedestrians. The Nomination should coordinate with the proposed Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan CBC Road Transportation Improvements.



## **Nomination PC19-MA-002 (Gibson Property)**

### **General**

In general, the residents of Lee Boulevard Heights Citizens Association (LBHCA) have no objection to the modification to the Gibson property as stated in the Nomination. LBHCA is in favor of affordable senior housing proposals, which are in keeping with the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan.

As with the Dar Al-Hijrah Islamic Center, however, there are several significant Land Use and Design issues that must be addressed and codified prior to any BZA approval of the SSPA Nomination. Please refer above to the Dar Al-Hijrah Islamic Center Nomination comments relating to Land use, Stormwater Management and Traffic and Parking.

LBHCA strongly encourages close coordination of the design and execution of this Nomination with the Dar Al-Hijrah Islamic Center Nomination.

## **Nomination PC19-MA-001 (6152 Leesburg Pike)**

### **General**

In general, the residents of Lee Boulevard Heights Citizens Association (LBHCA) have no objection to the proposed affordable senior housing at the First Christian Church of Falls Church. LBHCA is in favor of affordable housing proposals, which are in keeping with the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan.

### **End of Document**