



October 29, 2021

Hon. Casey Anderson, Chair
Montgomery County Planning
Board 2425 Reddie Drive
Silver Spring, MD 20902

Re: 5500 Wisconsin Avenue Development Proposal

Dear Chair Anderson and Planning Board Members,

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Somerset House II Condominium Association concerning the proposed development at 5500 Wisconsin Avenue. Our condominium building lies directly north of the project, separated only by the Chevy Chase Medical Building and Somerset Terrace, which is a private access road to our community that is subject to a public easement from Wisconsin Avenue to The Hills Plaza. We would like to express the following concerns about the proposed Sketch Plan for the project.

1. Density. Section 59.7.3.E.2 of the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance requires a Sketch Plan to substantially conform with the recommendations of the applicable master or sector plan. Here, the applicable plan is the 1998 Friendship Heights Sector Plan ("Sector Plan" or "Plan").

The density or floor area ratio ("FAR") proposed for 5500 Wisconsin Avenue in the Sector Plan is 3.0. Plan, pp. 35-36. Similarly, the FAR limit in the property's CR zone is 3.0, with a potential square foot bonus for Moderately Priced Dwelling Units ("MPDUs").

At a meeting with the developers' team last summer, they stated that the proposed FAR for the project was 3.4, which would include an MPDU bonus of 0.4. However, we have since learned from reviewing the Sketch Plan that the FAR for the proposed development is now over 5.0, because it includes prior street dedications. This excessive FAR is clearly inconsistent with the provisions of the Sector Plan.

Moreover, the FAR limits in the CR zones are density maximums, not densities that are allowed as a matter of right. Section 59.7.3.E.7 of the Zoning Ordinance requires a Sketch Plan to include an outline of proposed public benefits that will support the density (FAR) requested for the project in question, and that are appropriate for the specific community.

We urge the Planning Staff to carefully review the developers' FAR calculations, their prior street dedications, and their proffered public benefit points to ensure the proposed development meets all the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.

Somerset House II Condominium Association, Inc.
5610 Wisconsin Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD 20815
Tel: 301-656-5610 Fax: 301-656-0403

2. Building Height. The height limit for 5500 Wisconsin Avenue set forth in the Sector Plan is 90 feet. Plan, pp. 35-36. A height of 90 feet is also the limit for the property under the applicable Commercial Residential ("CR") Zone. In their Sketch Plan, however, the developers are proposing a residential building with a total height of 213 feet (approximately 21 stories) including rooftop structures.

The Zoning Ordinance also requires a Sketch Plan to achieve compatible relationships with nearby existing development. See Sec. 59.7.3.E.5. In this case, the Sketch Plan for 5500 Wisconsin Avenue proposes an "infill" building reaching 213 feet in height to be located on Wisconsin Avenue between the 12-story Marriott hotel and 14-story Chevy Chase Medical Office buildings to the north, and the 15-story Highland House residential building to the south.

A building of this height will clearly create the "canyon" effect specifically discouraged by the 1998 Sector Plan. Plan, pp. 31. The proposed development of the last remaining open parcel in the Village of Friendship Heights along Wisconsin Avenue will also effectively eliminate the views of many Somerset House II residents looking southeast toward the District of Columbia.

We note that a main goal of the current Friendship Heights Sector Plan is to "Preserve and enhance the environment for residents of high-rise buildings. This principle can be achieved. . . by limiting the height of new buildings close to high rise apartments to preserve views." (Emphasis added.) Plan, p. 31.

The Sketch Plan relies on the height averaging provisions of the zoning code to justify the building's 213-foot height. However, the electronic exhibits furnished by the developers showing the calculations of roof dimensions for averaging purposes are not readable. We urge the Planning Staff to review carefully the calculations provided by the developer's architects and engineers that purportedly justify a 213-foot building, which will be approximately 123 feet higher than the 90-foot building allowed by the 1998 Sector Plan and the base CR zone.

We also note that several of the exhibits to the Sketch Plan are misleading from a compatibility perspective. They purport to show that the proposed 21-story building height is compatible with the heights of nearby residential buildings in the immediate area. These include the three Somerset House buildings (18, 20 and 21 stories), the Elizabeth (18 stories), and Highland House West (17 stories). However, these exhibits ignore the topographical realities of the Village of Friendship Heights and the Somerset House community.

In fact, the proposed building is on the highest point of land in the area. The "Friendship Heights" area came by its name for a reason. The property at 5500 Wisconsin Avenue is at the top of the "Heights." The topography of the area then slopes down significantly to the south, west, and north. No compatibility analyses of the proposed height of the new building with the heights of surrounding buildings can be valid without topographical sections showing the relative elevations of the nearby buildings.

3. Traffic Generation. According to the Sketch Plan, the 5500 Wisconsin apartment building will include up to 380 rental units, the same number of underground parking spaces for cars, additional spaces for moving vans, service vehicles, and delivery trucks, as well as approximately 15,000 square feet of new retail space. Zoning Ordinance Section 59.7.3.3.E.6 requires a Sketch Plan to provide satisfactory vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle circulation as well as satisfactory provisions for parking and loading.

The developers' traffic consultant claims that this proposed development will generate less vehicle traffic than the vehicle traffic from the 49,292 square feet of retail space currently on the property, most of which is vacant. This claim is based on traffic generation rates from the Institute of Traffic Engineers ("ITE") Traffic Generation Manual 10th Edition that are shown in the developers' traffic report.

However, the developers' traffic consultant has used ITE traffic generation rates for an urban "Shopping Center" to calculate traffic from the current retail space despite the fact that the retail use on the property has never approached the level of activity of an urban shopping center.

Instead, the much lower ITE generation rates for "Apparel Stores" should have been used to reflect the fact that upscale clothing stores have historically occupied the now mostly empty commercial space (e.g., Brooks Brothers, Saks Jandel, Sylene, Eduardo DePandi, etc.).

When the appropriate "Apparel Stores" generation rates are used, the calculations below show that the developers' traffic consultant has overstated by 180 trips the PM vehicle trips that the current retail space would generate if reopened. The correct figure should be 55 vehicles, not the 235 vehicles shown in the consultant's report.

Current Retail Space	49,292 square feet
Shopping Center Generation Rate	<u>x4.90</u> vehicles per 1,000 square feet
Total PM Rush Hour Vehicles	235 vehicles

Current Retail Space	49,292 square feet
Apparel Store Generation Rate	<u>x 1.12</u> vehicles per 1,000 square feet
Total PM Rush Hour Vehicles	55 vehicles

In addition, based on the data in the developers' traffic report and appropriate Apparel Store traffic generation rates, the proposed new residential and commercial development will generate approximately 125 PM peak hour vehicles.

380 Rental Apartment Units	108 PM peak hour trips
Commercial (15,000 s.ft.)	+17 vehicles (1.12 vehicles per 1,000 sq.ft.)
Total PM Rush Hour Vehicles	125 vehicles

Thus, the developers' claim that their new development will generate less traffic than the current retail space is clearly inaccurate. As these figures show, the new development will generate substantially more traffic (125 PM vehicles) than the current retail space (55 PM vehicles) if the now-closed apparel stores were reopened.

4. Somerset Terrace Traffic. The Zoning Ordinance also requires a Sketch Plan to provide satisfactory circulation patterns for vehicle, pedestrians, and bicycles, as well as adequate parking and loading facilities. Sec. 59.7.3.3 E.6.

The Somerset House II community is particularly concerned about traffic impacts from the proposed development on Somerset Terrace, the two-way street just north of the Chevy Chase Medical Building that runs east-west from Wisconsin Avenue to the main entrance of the Somerset House community.

As the Sketch Plan shows, all bicycles and vehicles (cars, delivery trucks, service vehicles, and moving vans) will exit the new Building's parking garage on the two-way internal street (the "Woonerf") that will run between The Hills Plaza and Wisconsin Avenue. If the vehicles turn right (east) from the garage to reach Wisconsin Avenue, they will have to turn right again and travel south because the Wisconsin Avenue median will block a left turn traveling north.

To travel north, they will have to turn left (west) out of the parking garage to reach The Hills Plaza from which they can access Wisconsin Avenue at the intersection of either South Park Avenue or Somerset Terrace. However, both these local streets are already heavily congested during much of the day.

For example, traffic trying to enter the Chevy Chase Medical Building garage on Wisconsin Avenue backs up and blocks the intersection with Somerset Terrace at all hours of the day. Moreover, trucks delivering supplies to the Medical Building, as well as taxis and cars dropping off, picking up, and waiting for patients, routinely park or stand illegally in the right lanes of Somerset Terrace in both directions, leaving only the left lanes for through traffic to and from Wisconsin Avenue.

To exacerbate the problem, because Somerset Terrace is a private street subject to a public easement between The Hills Plaza and Wisconsin Avenue, neither County police nor the Village's security personnel can ticket or otherwise enforce the "No Parking" and "No Standing" signs along the block between The Hills Plaza and Wisconsin.

Based on the data in the developers' traffic report adjusted for applicable traffic generation rates, the new development will clearly generate over 100 new vehicle trips in each of the AM and PM peak hours. It is also clear that some significant portion of that traffic will head north on Wisconsin Avenue via Somerset Terrace. However, this local side street simply cannot handle the additional traffic that will inevitably flow from the new development. Thus, the Sketch Plan does not provide for satisfactory traffic circulation.

5. Design and Public Benefit Issues. Finally, we are concerned about the so-called "Woonerf," the internal street between the residential building and the hotel. The developers claim that this street, which the Sketch Plan shows as approximately 47-feet wide, should be treated as a public benefit that qualifies for density (FAR) bonus points because it features "exceptional design" and because it serves as a "through block connection."

As to "exceptional design," we understand that a minimum width for a suburban two-way street is approximately 28 feet, and that any sidewalks on either side should each be a minimum of 5 to 6 feet wide to accommodate two persons walking together.

If these design standards are applied to the 47-foot wide Woonerf, there will be virtually no space left for all the retail and restaurant activities that are supposed to energize what the developers are calling a "predominately pedestrian street." It is inconceivable that the attractive renderings and photos attached to the Sketch Plan as illustrative amenities could be realized given the Woonerfs current design.

Regarding traffic flows, this "through block connection" is really nothing more than an alley between the new residential building and the existing hotel that will provides access to the sole point of entry and exit into and out of the residential building.

This alley will have to handle all the two-way traffic between Wisconsin Avenue and Hills Plaza for the cars and bicycles using the parking spaces in the building, as well as all the traffic from moving vans, service trucks and delivery vehicles serving the 380 rental apartment units and 15,000 square feet of commercial space in the building.

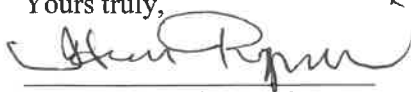
Dangerous vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian conflicts will be inevitable. This internal street is not just poorly designed to serve as a "predominately pedestrian street that will enliven the neighborhood," it will also be a dangerous safety hazard for all the vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian traffic that the new development will generate.

As a result, the Sketch Plan for 5500 Wisconsin Avenue does not provide a satisfactory circulation pattern for vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians as required by Section 59.7.3.E.6 of the Zoning Ordinance. Similarly, the proposed Woonerf does not qualify under Section 59.7.3.E.7 as a public benefit that would support the height and density (FAR) requested for the new development.

6. **Conclusion.** The Board of Directors of the Somerset House II Condominium Association understands that the property at 5500 Wisconsin Avenue is ripe for redevelopment. However, as is usually the case with major residential and commercial projects, the proverbial devil is in the detail.

We urge the Planning Board and Staff to review the developers' height, FAR, traffic generation, and public benefit calculations closely, and to consider the impacts of this proposed development on our Somerset House community as well as on the Village of Friendship Heights carefully.

Yours truly,



Hossein Razavi, President
Somerset House II Condominium Association

CC: Elza Hisel-McCoy, Division Chief
Down-County Planning
Montgomery County Planning Department

Grace Bogdan, Planning Coordinator
Montgomery County Planning Department

Melanie Rose White, Mayor
Village of Friendship Heights

Jeffrey Z. Slavin, Mayor
Town of Somerset

Shana Davis-Cook, Manager
Chevy Chase Village

David Forman, Chair
Citizens Coordinating Committee on
Friendship Heights

From: [Carol B](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Bogdan, Grace](#); [Hisel-McCoy, Elza](#); [Dickel, Stephanie](#)
Subject: 5500 Wisconsin Ave
Date: Saturday, October 30, 2021 3:20:49 PM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chairman Anderson,

I have lived at Parc Somerset Condominiums for more than 15 years and have lived in Montgomery County most of my life. I recently learned of the plans to build a new apartment building at 5500 Wisconsin Avenue, accompanied by new retail and restaurants on the ground floor. I support this proposal.

I've seen Friendship Heights go through a number of cycles over the years. There are many nice places to go nearby; Clydes, SushiKo, and Whole Foods. Just last weekend I saw a Farmers Market and a new restaurant opening. It would be great to have that type of activity on the east side of Wisconsin.

The proposal for 5500 Wisconsin moves us in the right direction.

The presentation highlights street activation with restaurants and shopping. The proximity to Friendship Heights Metro makes this the perfect location for new housing that is not car dependent. We should welcome more housing in our neighborhood and throughout Montgomery County.

I was an admirer of the classic storefronts of Brooks Brothers and that stretch of retail. But by opening up the street level to dining and shopping, the community will certainly benefit in new ways.

I encourage you and your Planning Board colleagues to support of the 5500 Wisconsin redevelopment proposal.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Carol K. Bindeman

Carol K. Bindeman

5630 Wisconsin Avenue Apt 101
Chevy Chase, MD 20815
301-652-7077

From: [Hazel Keimowitz](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Bogdan, Grace](#); [Hisel-McCoy, Elza](#); stephaie.dickel@montgomeryplanning.org
Subject: 5500 Wisconsin Avenue
Date: Wednesday, September 29, 2021 11:48:21 AM

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To the Montgomery County Planning Board:

I am writing this letter in support of the plan to develop 5500 Wisconsin Avenue. I have lived in the neighborhood for nearly 15 years and have watched, with dismay, the closing of many shops and restaurants. The neighborhood is sorely in need of a boost, and I believe that a retail/rental property would be an excellent addition to Friendship Heights. It would help to rejuvenate the neighborhood.

I know many of my neighbors have concerns about parking and traffic, but I was satisfied by the responses given to their questions during the presentation made to 4620 North Park residents last week. I think many people automatically oppose new development but I believe this is a mistake. Without new development, there will be even more closings. The neighborhood needs more retail and more younger people who are the likely renters.

Thank you for your consideration.

--

Hazel Kahn Keimowitz
4620 North Park Ave., 706W
Chevy Chase, MD 20815
hazelkeimowitz@gmail.com
202 422-2902

From: [Morris Antonelli](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Bogdan, Grace](#); [Hisel-McCoy, Elza](#); [Dickel, Stephanie](#)
Subject: Approval of 5500 Wisconsin Avenue
Date: Sunday, October 24, 2021 9:15:24 PM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chairman Anderson,

I live at 4620 North Park and am writing to express my strong support for the Sketch Plan application to redevelop 5500 Wisconsin Avenue and to ask that the Planning Board support it as well. The site is in need of redevelopment with an infusion of desirable shops, cafes, restaurants, along with new neighbors.

Friendship Heights has been faltering in recent years, accelerated by the COVID crisis. We have lost a good number of stores and restaurants, in part because so many of our residents – like me – are older and don't patronize the shops on a regular basis. I view the 5500 Wisconsin redevelopment as an important step to bringing our Village back to the vibrant community it once was.

The proposal is consistent with the Friendship Heights Sector Plan. The apartment building is consistent with the County's approach to smart growth, building density where it belongs - near our Metro station and bus transit center.

The proposed 18-story maximum height is entirely appropriate since the building is located directly on Wisconsin Avenue and away from the Village. The step back design will give architectural interest. The fact that the apartments will be rentals makes them attractive to younger professionals, which will give us the energy we need to bring our Village back to life. Even better, members of the younger generation tend to rely less on cars, purchasing them at much lower rates than prior generations. They rely more on ride-share and transit. So, while the new building will have an underground garage for parking, this doesn't necessarily translate into creating undue traffic problems.

I've seen the studies that show the impact of shadows cast by the new building onto Humphrey Park. They clearly show that the building won't throw shadows onto the Park, no matter the season or time of day.

The area along South Park and Wisconsin Avenues is in need of improvement, not just in terms of bringing back retail but also to make the sidewalks more attractive. The plans for 5500 Wisconsin are just what we need.

Please support the Sketch Plan application for 5500 Wisconsin Avenue.

Thank you for all that you do for Montgomery County.

Sincerely,

Morris Antonelli, D.D.S.
4620 North Park Ave., 906W
Chevy Chase, MD 20815

Roger Cochetti 10/30/2021

Two developers have proposed to redevelop the 5500 block of Wisconsin Avenue in the Village of Friendship Heights, Maryland. While the developers seem to have only submitted a non-binding “sketch plan” that sets forth ideas, they have provided enough information about their ideas to make comments possible and necessary.

As introduction, I would note that I presently live in Friendship Heights about one block from the proposed construction site and that I have lived within about one mile of the proposed construction site for around the past 30 years.

First, the community in which the new construction is proposed straddles Montgomery County and Washington, DC for about a quarter mile. It includes around 8,000 residents in condominiums and apartment buildings surrounded for several miles by neighborhoods of single-family homes, including several churches and schools. The stretch of Wisconsin Avenue where the new construction is proposed lies in the business zone of the greater Friendship Heights neighborhood, which zone includes a Metro station. This business zone consists of low-rise office buildings and retail stores and restaurants, all of which range in height from around 20 feet to around 90 feet. The larger community includes at least three nursing homes and several very small parks.

The developers are proposing the construction of a new apartment building over 200 feet high, with the nowadays standard “retail on the ground floor, residences upstairs” and they would add a new street to accommodate the increased traffic brought into the community.

1. According to the Census Bureau’s most recent estimates, Friendship Heights Village (not the entire neighborhood) is the most densely populated Census Designated Place (CDP) in the United States, with a population density of around 80,000 people per square mile (vs Manhattan, with around 60,000.) Without any doubt, the half mile area around the Friendship Heights Metro station is the most densely-populated area of its size around any Metro station in the Metro system. So, any suggestion that Friendship Heights desperately needs more residents, or that it is significantly underpopulated, or that it would benefit from more high-rise residences is simply not accurate. The construction would add a minimum of 200 cars, 50 daily delivery trucks and at least 20 daily visitors looking for a parking space to an already densely populated community. Moreover, anyone traveling on Wisconsin Avenue knows that the thoroughfare from Georgetown to Rockville is already overcrowded. Adding a minimum of 200 cars to the existing traffic jams is in no one’s interest. The Friendship Heights community needs many things, but 200-400 more

automobiles and around 600 more residents are not among them. There are many areas within walking distance of many Metro stations that could dramatically improve with the addition of these autos and residents, but Friendship Heights is not one of them

2. Regardless of whether additional cars and residents are needed in Friendship Heights, the particular design of the proposed residential complex — a new 200+ foot tall tower surrounded by medium height buildings-- simply does not fit this neighborhood. A 200-foot-tall structure would dominate the suburban landscape for miles around; and utterly dominate the skyline of the adjacent office buildings, stores and residential buildings...none of which are more than about 100 feet tall. The proposed tower not only does not fit in with the normal 100-foot height of this business zone, it will stick out for miles around and will clash with everything nearby.
3. Because the neighborhood happens to be located on a natural hill, it's children and adults often enjoy a pleasant view of the stars, moon, clouds, and the skyline from the streets, the parks, their homes or from their workplace. For a large number of people in Friendship Heights, this tower would dramatically reduce, and sometimes eliminate, their view of the evening and daytime sky and the horizon. This will significantly lower the quality of their lives, to say nothing of their property values.
4. As densely populated as it is, the Friendship Heights neighborhood needs both green and blue spaces. Green consists of the several, very, very small, parks and blue consists of one's view of the clouds, the stars, the moon, the sun and all of the things about the sky that enrich our lives. This 200-foot-tall tower would take that enrichment away for no one's benefit other than for its investors.
5. The developers assert that the few hundred new residents in their proposed extra-tall apartment building are needed to revitalize Friendship Heights, bring in new restaurants, shops, etc. Since the community already is home to around 8,000 people, it's hard to imagine that around 600 more will make much difference. In fact, three new restaurants are already being built within 200 feet of the proposed building and at least two more within 600 feet. Friendship Heights is perfectly capable of revitalizing itself without over 200 more cars and a 200-foot-tall apartment building.
6. There's simply no question that due to competition from other neighborhoods and online shopping as well as the pandemic and widespread looting in 2020, much of Friendship Heights' destination shopping and some of its stores/restaurants have gone. These need to be replaced with a carefully-thought-out mixture of office, commercial and residential replacements; not an off-the-shelf "high-rise apartment building with retail on the ground floor."
7. Planning officials should be creative and consider the potential for Friendship Heights to build on its existing outstanding qualities.
8. Friendship Heights is:

- a. the home of, and located close to, enormous medical capabilities and could easily attract one or more medical research or similar facilities
- b. the home of several major broadcast centers and close to downtown Washington, DC and could easily host a major media center
- c. the home of one of the world's largest insurance companies and could easily host the offices of regional or national insurance companies
- d. the home of the Washington DC Federal offices of the world's largest software company and it's within easy reach of almost every major Federal IT customer and it could easily host the Federal offices of numerous software and computer-related companies.
- e. Located close enough to Washington DC so that it could easily host the Washington campuses of major foreign and domestic universities, think tanks or schools.

These are only a few of the creative possibilities that I, as a non-urban-planner, can suggest in a few moments. Imagine what planning professionals could develop if they were imaginative and sought to enhance the existing community; rather than simply add another high-rise apartment building with hundreds more cars and delivery trucks to what the Census Bureau already describes as the most densely populated CDP in the United States.

Among the weak justifications put forward for an enormous apartment building in Friendship Heights is the theory that Friendship heights is demographically aging and it “needs” young people. It is true that the Census Bureau estimated that the leading demographic of Friendship Heights is unmarried, college educated females over the age of 50. Age or sex discrimination aside, this leading demographic volunteers, creates, contributes, donates, spends, educates and is, in every way, a positive leading demographic for Friendship Heights. Our leading demographic is a strength, not a weakness that needs to be replaced.

But anyone taking a few moments to consider the demographic issues underlying this enormous construction proposal will quickly understand that time has a way of changing the demographics of any community characterized by “Baby Boomers.” And that change is already in full bloom. Although the Census Bureau has not issued any estimates since 2019, simply walking around the neighborhood over the past few years will show a rapid increase in the presence of Gen X ers, Millennials, and Gen Z ers...to say nothing of families pushing strollers or parents with toddlers. The supposed “demographic benefits” of this new structure were never valid and they are certainly not even accurate.

If one were to conclude that, even at the cost of increased auto congestion and population density, Friendship Heights needs lots more cars and people (presumably more than it needs a medical research center, a broadcast center, a college facility, etc.), then achieving that through a building roughly twice

the height of everything around it is not the way to do so. As someone who has modestly invested in residential real estate for over 30 years, I fully understand that in almost any real estate investment, every floor of rental or selling space that you add (up to some limit) to a building substantially increases your return on investment. In this calculation, the neighbors and the neighborhood pay the long-term price.

The costs of adding a floor of living space are normally a small fraction of the added revenue from it.

So, it is entirely understandable that investors would prefer the tallest possible structure in Friendship Heights that the planning authorities would allow. Fundamentally, however, such outsized towers represent a wealth transfer from the local residents to the real estate investors. If the proposed building does not add value to the local community (which a 200-foot-tall building here would not), then the local residents will pay the real costs (in eyesores, congestion, parking, pollution, etc.) and the real estate investors will increase the return on their investment.

If I were purely an investor, I would encourage the developers to propose the tallest possible building that the authorities would allow. I am, however, not. I am a local resident and I would encourage that any new structure be well within the scale and skyline of the existing community recognizing that this community has many needs, but “additional autos and residents” is not among their most pressing.

For ideas on how residential structures up to 100 feet in height can tastefully add to a local community, we need look no further than Bethesda Row in Bethesda, Wisconsin Avenue near Tenley, or elsewhere nearby.

For these reasons, in considering the future of 5500 Wisconsin Avenue, I would ask the Planning Board to both reject this and any proposed 200-foot-tall building and simultaneously collaborate with the Washington DC planning authorities, the Village of Friendship Heights and the other local jurisdictions to creatively and imaginatively develop a plan for the future of the Friendship Heights neighborhood.

The need to do this is compelling since the Washington, DC Planning authorities recently commissioned a comprehensive report on the future of Friendship Heights which, although technically focused on the part of the community on the DC side, actually sets forth plans for the entirety of Friendship Heights, Maryland and its nearby Maryland communities.

Roger Cochetti

www.cochetti.us

From: [Cheryl Cort](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Bogdan, Grace](#); [Hisel-McCoy, Elza](#); [Dickel, Stephanie](#)
Subject: CSG letter of support for 5500 Wisc. Ave. Sketch Plan Application
Date: Thursday, October 28, 2021 4:53:04 PM

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October 28, 2021

Mr. Casey Anderson
Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reedie Drive, 14th Floor, Wheaton, MD 20902
Via email: mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org

RE: Support for Sketch Plan Application to redevelop a portion of the 5500 block of Wisconsin Avenue in Friendship Heights

Dear Chair Anderson:

Please accept these comments on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the leading non-profit organization in the D.C. region advocating for walkable, bikeable, inclusive, transit-oriented communities as the most sustainable and equitable way for the DC region to grow and provide opportunities for all.

We wish to express our support for the Sketch Plan Application to redevelop a portion of the 5500 block of Wisconsin Avenue in Friendship Heights.

This proposal for a new multi-family apartment community addresses a critical need in Montgomery County. With the county projected to grow by 230,000 residents over the next 25 years, providing more housing close to high-frequency transit is essential for the county to handle that growth while minimizing driving, generating the tax revenues necessary to maintain high-quality services, and thrive as a sustainable, equitable, and economically-competitive community. We wish to note a number of specific reasons why we support this application:

- The proposal is consistent with the core tenets of smart growth. It places density where it belongs – just ¼ mile from the Friendship Heights Metro and bus station, minimizing combined housing and transportation costs, providing walkable access to nearby services, and maximizing non-auto travel, helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- The proposed shared street - or Woonerf - will significantly enhance the walkability of the community by breaking up a superblock and inserting an attractive, pedestrian friendly connection from Wisconsin Avenue to Hubert Humphrey Park. The applicant's plans to improve the streetscape on the Hills Plaza, South Park Avenue and Wisconsin Avenue will further add to the area's walkability.

- The proposal addresses our housing shortage by adding up to 380 new apartments. Even better, it addresses our affordable housing shortage by bringing Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDUs) to Friendship Heights. No affordable housing exists in the Village of Friendship Heights, which hurts its ability to attract young professionals, provide access to opportunity for families that are seeking to climb the economic ladder. Fifteen percent of the 380 units (up to 57) will be MPDUs.
- The design of the new building is compatible with its surroundings. The 18-story maximum height is entirely appropriate for Friendship Heights, where the heights of the existing multi-family buildings go up to 21 stories. The applicant changed the original design of the building to create a stepped-back design, based on Village Council and community comments. And the new building is located directly on Wisconsin Avenue, away from the other multi-family buildings and avoiding casting shadows on the park or neighboring multifamily buildings.

For the reasons listed above, the Coalition for Smarter Growth respectfully asks the Planning Board to approve the Sketch Plan application for 5500 Wisconsin Avenue.

Sincerely,

/s/

Cheryl Cort

Policy Director

Cheryl Cort (she/her)

Policy Director

Coalition for Smarter Growth

Mobile: 202-251-7516

(e) cheryl@smartergrowth.net | www.smartergrowth.net

Twitter [@betterDCregion](https://twitter.com/betterDCregion) | [@cherylcort](https://twitter.com/cherylcort)

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From: [Marlene Snyder](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Bogdan, Grace](#); [Hisel-McCoy, Elza](#); stephanie.dickel@montgomeryplanningl.org
Subject: Development of 5500 Wisconsin Ave.
Date: Monday, October 11, 2021 4:03:23 PM

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Dear Chairman Anderson -

I've lived in the Village of Friendship Heights for 35+ years. In that amount of time I've seen the area go from vibrant to uninteresting. The area is failing unfortunately. We need a much younger demographic, gathering places such as bakeries, cafes and coffee shops, interesting retail, green space and more similar to Bethesda in type. I walk into Bethesda often and am always impressed by all of the activity. It's alive! Vitality needs to be brought back to our neighborhood.

I'm very concerned about the property values which appear to be going in the wrong direction. I feel that development of 5500 Wisconsin Ave. would be beneficial to our area.

I have another concern - the height of the proposed building. Bethesda is now full of uninteresting buildings and the scale of the buildings is overwhelming. The area is lacking charm but it does have plenty of streets that are going to be wind tunnels. That's the opposite of the way we want Friendship Heights to be.

I'm relieved to know that 5500 Wisconsin is going to be developed. And I'm excited to see the result!

Marlene Snyder
4620 N. Park Ave.
1208W
Chevy Chase, MD 20815

From: [Anita Weinblatt](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Bogdan, Grace](#); [Hisel-McCoy, Elza](#); [Dickel, Stephanie](#)
Subject: Development of 5500 Wisconsin Avenue
Date: Wednesday, October 20, 2021 12:27:16 PM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chairman Anderson,

I am a resident of Friendship Heights in Chevy Chase. I moved here after graduate school when I received a position at the National Institute of Health. I have now lived in Friendship Heights for 44 years and have watched it evolve from a vibrant commercial area with small businesses, as well as multiple department stores, to today, when it has become a commercial dead zone.

The area needs new development and I understand plans to develop 5500 Wisconsin Avenue are now being considered by the Montgomery County Planning board.

Like many of my neighbors, I believe that for Friendship Heights to be revived, it needs new development which will lead to a broader demographic profile and a new approach to retail. It will be very important that any new development include plans for inviting seating areas and cafes. In addition, the development should be an attractive location for local retail establishments. I do not think we need high end retail establishments where a pair of shoes costs \$700.00 or more, nor do we need to be infiltrated with chain stores that do not provide anything unique.

I have been disappointed that the Friendship Heights Village Council has been so negative in its comments, and I hope that the Council will work with the Planning board to find a mutually agreeable development plan. This plan should include sufficient areas identified for outdoor use by pedestrians, which are not suffocated by commercial traffic.

My hope is that new development will reinvigorate Friendship Heights. I think the plan for the development of 5500 Wisconsin Avenue has many attractive features.

Anita Weinblatt
4620 North Park Avenue
Apt 1404W
Chevy Chase, MD 20815

From: [Constance Row](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Bogdan, Grace](#); [Dickel, Stephanie](#)
Subject: Development of 5500 Wisconsin Avenue
Date: Wednesday, October 13, 2021 1:42:11 PM

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Dear Chairman Anderson,

As a Friendship Heights resident, I am concerned about the serious decline in retail along Wisconsin Avenue and its effect not just on me, but on our quality of life and the value of our condominiums. I have attended the meetings where the plans to develop 5500 Wisconsin Avenue were discussed. We need more residents to support retail, especially younger residents, and the plan seems to me to have great promise for doing that. I like the set asides for moderate income residents, and the overall plan including "locally sourced" more moderately-priced retail that is more likely to succeed than the high end retail that has failed.

The plan for managing the impact on the neighborhood sounds reasonable. In my view, the Planning Commission should not let concerns about shade blot out the need for greater density. Look at the recent census data. High income residents should not be allowed to dominate. We need diversity, density, and attention to the needs of residents of ALL income levels.

Sincerely,

Constance Row
4601 North Park Ave. #1719
Chevy Chase, MD 20815
410-937-3370 (cell)

From: [Linda Jacobson](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Bogdan, Grace](#); [Hisel-McCoy, Elza](#); [Dickel, Stephanie](#)
Subject: Development of 5500 Wisconsin Avenue
Date: Sunday, September 26, 2021 5:28:58 PM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chairman Anderson,

I am writing in support of the proposal by Donahoe Development Company for the development of 5500 Wisconsin Ave. I have lived in Friendship Heights for 8 years now, and watch with dismay the decline of retail options, restaurants, and diverse housing. It is clear that we need some innovative development that will bring in young people and shops, while at the same time beautifying the bland, green-less spaces on that stretch of Wisconsin Avenue and South Park Avenue.

I initially reacted to the Donahue proposal with skepticism because I had read the letter from the Village Council lawyer containing a litany of criticism. After careful study, I have come to the conclusion that many of the criticisms are unfair and fail to take into account that the project is in the preliminary sketch stage. In particular I take issue with the statement that the density and height of the proposal are not compatible with existing development, does not substantially conform to the recommendations of the Sector Plan and the roads cannot satisfactorily accommodate the traffic and parking.

I attended an information session with Donahoe at 4620 North Park Ave and read through the proposals posted on their website. I was particularly impressed with Donahoe's transparency and willingness to reconsider setbacks, height, traffic and loading dock complaints that had previously been made. The sketch I saw recently is an excellent start. It addressed height, parking and traffic issues satisfactorily.

In conclusion, unless the community is willing to work in good faith with responsible developers such as Donahoe, we will live in a neighborhood devoid of vibrancy and diversity. I hope the Planning Board will take into consideration the views of neighbors who support the Donohoe plan.

Thank you,
Linda Jacobson
4620 North Park Ave. #807W
Chevy Chase MD 20815
2403838175

Thank you,

From: nancypeavy@gmail.com
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Bogdan, Grace](#); [Hisel-McCoy, Elza](#); [Dickel, Stephanie](#)
Subject: Development of 5500 Wisconsin avenue
Date: Sunday, September 26, 2021 9:32:25 PM

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Dear Chairman Anderson,

We are residents of Friendship Heights in Chevy Chase. We moved here from Bethesda in 2002. When we moved here it was an exciting place to live. My husband had retired then and I continued to work taking the subway downtown while he enjoyed the grocery chains, the quick but good restaurants and the huge variety of retail options.

We are so sad that this is no longer Friendship heights. Thus we were very pleased to hear about the plans for 5500 Wisconsin development. We know your board is looking at these plans and we wanted you to know that we and a great many other residents are excited about revitalization. We have heard from the friendship village council and their lawyer about a great number of problems including people, cars, rental units, retail, parking, moving in, construction, and even shadows. However we are pleased that the new building will have a variety of apartment sizes and costs bringing in a new population which is the only hope for our success.

We have great hope that your appreciation of the need for changes in our community will help you approve this new plan. We thank you for your consistent concern about making Montgomery county a vibrant successful county

Nancy and Bob Peavy
4620 North Park Ave.
206w
Chevy Chase, Md. 20815
202 549-5005/

From: [Pat Donovan](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Bogdan, Grace](#); [Hisel-McCoy, Elza](#); [Dickel, Stephanie](#); [Pat Donovan](#)
Subject: Development of 5500 Wisconsin Avenue
Date: Sunday, September 26, 2021 3:20:33 PM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chairman Anderson,

I am a resident of Friendship Heights in Chevy Chase. When I moved into my condo in 2008, Friendship Heights had a vibrant commercial area; indeed, it was one of the reasons I moved here. Sadly, those days are over. Friendship Heights has become a dead zone commercially.

I have been heartened by the plans to develop 5500 Wisconsin Avenue, which I understand are under consideration by the Montgomery County Planning Board. If Friendship Heights is to thrive again, it needs new residents with a broader demographic profile, which I believe a new rental building can address and a new approach to retail. I like the design of the building, especially the setback and the plans for inviting seating areas and cafes at various points around it, the fact that it would offer both small and large units, and the idea of "locally sourced" retail, which may have a greater likelihood of success than many of the establishments that have gone out of business in recent years.

I have been disappointed that the Friendship Heights Village Council has been so negative in its comments. I can't speak to the the county's height requirements and of course there needs to be sufficient parking, but I think some of the Council's arguments are bogus, especially the issue of shade (given its location, the new building would not block the sun from Humphrey Park or other buildings in the area) and the loss of a view for residents of The Somerset.

I have loved living in Friendship Heights 13 years. I believe the addition of 5500 Wisconsin Avenue would inject new vitality into the community. I hope the Planning Board will support the plan.

Sincerely,

Pat Donovan
4620 North Park Avenue
Apt 607W
Chevy Chase, MD 20815
301-986-8455

From: [David L Rabin](#)
To: [Bogdan, Grace](#); [Hisel-McCoy, Elza](#); [Dickel, Stephanie](#)
Subject: Fwd: 5500 Wisconsin Ave.
Date: Sunday, October 24, 2021 9:19:31 AM

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **David L Rabin** <dlrabin3714@gmail.com>
Date: Sun, Oct 24, 2021 at 8:22 AM
Subject: 5500 Wisconsin Ave.
To: <mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org>

To Casey Anderson and staff,

I am a resident of Friendship Heights and am enthusiastic about the current plan for the redevelopment of the 5500 Wisconsin site. The area badly needs additional residential and small business sites. The Montgomery Co. side of Friendship heights has suffered from high priced retail sites ill-suited for the local population. The Covid related loss of some of those sites has depressed the area reducing its appeal to residents and restricting both rental and condo values.

I support the plan to add residential and retail Donohoe plan but suggest one additional feature. While there is accommodation made for mid-priced residential apartments there is no such commitment for retail sites. To make the area useful to local residents some business rents low enough to attract services businesses such as a tailor, shoemaker, bistro, a hardware store is necessary.

Respectfully,

David Rabin MD
4701 Willard Ave,
Chevy Chase Md. 20815

From: [Allie Williams](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Bogdan, Grace](#); [Hisel-McCoy, Elza](#); [Dickel, Stephanie](#); [Allie Williams](#)
Subject: Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce Supports Sketch Plan Application 320220010
Date: Thursday, October 28, 2021 6:10:41 PM
Attachments: [image004.png](#)
Importance: High

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Dear Chair Anderson,

I am writing on behalf of the more than 500 members of the Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce in support of Sketch Plan Application 320220010, the proposal by Donohoe Development and Carr City Centers to redevelop a portion of the 5500 block of Wisconsin Avenue in Friendship Heights.

The Greater Bethesda Chamber supports government policies that focus on creating new housing that is affordable to a variety of incomes, as well as building new housing near high-capacity transit. The application for an 18-story (maximum) apartment building just steps away from Metro is certainly consistent with those policies.

Friendship Heights offers no affordable housing to potential residents. We have an opportunity to finally make homes affordable to those who earn a good living but can't afford the high prices commanded by market-rate housing in the area. With the proposed apartment building offering 15 percent of its 380 (maximum) units as MPDUs, approximately 57 of those units will be affordable to a variety of potential tenants. This is a significant addition to the County's affordable housing stock and will bring with it the age and cultural diversity that will enliven the entire community and help attract new retail.

The proposed height and density of the building is most certainly appropriate for the site. It is located within one-quarter mile from Friendship Heights Metro and will be attractive to potential residents that don't rely on vehicles for transportation. And the location of the building on Wisconsin Avenue places it away from the center of the Village, causing little disruption to current residents, preserving views and casting no shadows on Humphrey Park or neighboring multifamily buildings.

From a compatibility standpoint, the proposed 18-story building is similar in height to other multi-family buildings in the area, some of which go as high as 21 stories. Additionally, we understand that the applicant re-sited the building to make it less obtrusive to the Village after receiving comments from Village officials and residents, making it even more compatible.

From a pedestrian safety standpoint, the plans include moving all loading, unloading and garbage pickup to a new Shared Street to avoid creating additional traffic and safety issues on the surrounding streets. We applaud the Applicant for making the Shared Street extremely wide to ensure that pedestrians can safely traverse on their own dedicated pathways, away from vehicle traffic.

Finally, we believe that this application is in substantial conformance with the Friendship Heights Sector Plan. The Sector Plan “seeks to encourage economic growth in Friendship Heights” and recommends “concentrating new growth in the Metro-served area while preserving the surrounding neighborhoods, in support of County policies.” This is most certainly the case with this proposal.

While one building alone will not resolve all of Friendship Height’s challenges, it will most certainly move the needle in a positive way. We therefore request that the Planning Board vote to approve Sketch Plan Application 320220010.

Thank you for your excellent service and dedication to making Montgomery County the best it can be.

Sincerely,



**Allie Williams,
IOM President &
CEO**

The Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce
*BETHESDA | CABIN JOHN | CHEVY CHASE | FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS | GARRETT PARK
 GLEN ECHO | NORTH BETHESDA | POTOMAC | PIKE DISTRICT | ROCK SPRING | WESTBARD*
 7910 Woodmont Ave., Suite 1204, Bethesda, MD 20814

P: (301) 652-4900 x 203; C: (301) 768-2212

F: (301) 657-1973

AWilliams@greaterbethesdachamber.org

www.greaterbethesdachamber.org

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From: [Joe Bucherer](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Bogdan, Grace](#); [Hisel-McCoy, Elza](#); [Dickel, Stephanie](#)
Subject: Letter in Support of Sketch Plan for 5500 Wisconsin Ave Development
Date: Thursday, September 23, 2021 11:32:52 AM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

September 23, 2021

Planning Board Chair Casey Anderson

Montgomery County Planning Board

Via Email

I write this letter in support of the development planned for 5500 Wisconsin Ave. Chevy Chase, and urge your considered support of the sketch plan and future movement.

There are several reasons for my support.

First, the developer has worked in collaboration with the County, Village Council, and area residents in discussing the plans and listening to concerns. As a result, to ameliorate the canyon like feel of tall brick structures, they have set the residential portion of the building back from the base giving relief to walkers and adding a design element to the corridor. In fact, the sketch plan visual suggests that the building when completed will integrate quite nicely with other development along Wisconsin Ave. at the Collection site.

Second, their proposal to add a pedestrian transit way from Friendship Blvd. to Wisconsin Ave. improves access to the main throughfare and services such as doctors, pharmacy and the post office, not to mention retail. Currently existing towers on S. Park Ave. have loading and unloading which obstruct traffic and pedestrian movement. This is a safer alternative. Unfortunately, those structures were built in a time when urban planning and considerations for pedestrian movement were not apparently top of mind. There are frequent complaints about the issues in walking along S. Park due to these issues.

Third, it has come up that there will be increased traffic congestion. The development team has moved all vehicle access to the building from S. Park to its private entry from the proposed pedestrian transit. In doing so it alleviates congestion, improves safety, and improves the quality of the neighborhood from current conditions.

I am aware that some have questioned the amount of parking for potential restaurants or other retail establishments. This is simply not true in my review. Paid parking is available at Highland House, across Wisconsin Ave. at the Saks and Collection sites, and at 5550 N Park. All are within less than a block or two from the development site and not dissimilar to what exists in parts of Bethesda or Bethesda Row.

Other than the Brooks Brothers store, the other retail facings have been vacant for several years now. It is time to put a fresh face on this portion of Wisconsin Ave.

In full disclosure, I offer this letter of support as a private citizen, but I am currently President of the Elizabeth Condominium Association (4601 N Park Ave) and serve as Chair of the Village of Friendship Heights Community Advisory Committee.

I respectfully urge support of the plan.

Sincerely,

Joseph V Bucherer

4601 N. Park Ave #1715

Chevy Chase, MD. 20815

856-986-8107

jbucherer@gmail.com

TO: Grace Bogdan
Area Site Plan Group
grace.bogdan@montgomeryplanning.org

FROM: Julie Davis
5610 Wisconsin Avenue, Unit 406
Chevy Chase, MD 20815
Juliedavis1606@comcast.net

DATE: September 12, 2021

SUBJECT: 5500 Wisconsin Avenue Development Proposal

I am a resident of the Somerset House Condominium community, a complex of three separate condominium associations with approximately 420 units. Our community is separated from the proposed development at 5500 Wisconsin Avenue only by the Chevy Chase Medical Building and Somerset Terrace, which is a private road providing access from Wisconsin Avenue to our complex, although there is a public easement from the intersection of Hills Plaza to Wisconsin Avenue.

I am writing as an individual because I have not had time to obtain formal approval of this letter by our Somerset House II Association's Board of Directors given cancellation of Board meetings due to summer vacations and the pandemic. However, earlier this summer, four members of our Board and I met to hear a presentation by Ellen Coren of Chesapeake Public Strategies and Jad Donohoe of Donohoe Development Company about the development plans for 5500 Wisconsin Avenue.

Following that meeting, the Somerset House II Board sent a letter to counsel for the developer team raising numerous questions regarding what we had heard. To date, we have not received satisfactory responses to those questions. Moreover, I have since done a cursory review of the Sketch Plan submitted by the developers, and I have some additional questions.

1. Building Height Issues. The Montgomery County zoning code limits the base height on the 5500 Wisconsin property to 90 feet or approximately stories. This is also the height limit for the property in the 1998 Friendship Heights Sector Plan. With this Sketch Plan, the developers are proposing a residential building with a total height of 213 feet that includes rooftop structures.

This is roughly equivalent to a 21-story "infill" building located on Wisconsin Avenue between the 10-story Marriott hotel and the 14-story Chevy Chase Medical Office building to the north, and the 15-story Highland House residential building to the south.

A building of this heights will clearly create the very "canyon" effect specifically discouraged by the 1998 Sector Plan. Moreover, even an 18-story development of the last remaining open parcel in the Village of Friendship Heights along Wisconsin Avenue will effectively eliminate the views of many Somerset House II residents looking toward the District of Columbia.

Although the Sketch Plan relies on the height averaging provisions of the zoning code, the electronic exhibits showing the calculations of roof dimensions for averaging purposes are all but unreadable. I assume the Planning Staff at Development Review or in its Staff Report concerning the proposed development will confirm the accuracy of the calculations provided by the developer's architects and engineers that purportedly justify a building approximately 123 feet or roughly 12 stories higher than the 90-foot, 9-story building allowed by the 1998 Sector Plan and the base CR zone.

I should also note that the exhibits to the Sketch Plan are misleading in that they ask the Planning Staff as well as the public to believe that the proposed 21-story building height is consistent with the heights of other high-rise residential buildings in the area, specifically the three Somerset House buildings (18, 20 and 21 stories), the Elizabeth (18 stories), and Highland House West (17 stories). What these exhibits ignore is the topographical differences throughout the Village of Friendship Heights and the Somerset House community.¹

“Friendship Heights” got its name for a reason. The property at 5500 Wisconsin Avenue is at the top of the “heights.” The topography of the area slopes down significantly from the site of the proposed residential building to the south, the west, and the north. No comparison of the proposed height of the residential building with the heights of surrounding buildings can be valid without topographical sections showing the relative elevations of the nearby buildings.

2. FAR Issues. We understand that the floor area ratio (“FAR”) limit under the applicable provisions of the County zoning code for the property is 3.0, with a potential bonus square footage for Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (“MPDUs”). This FAR of 3.0 (plus a MPDU bonus) is also prescribed for the property in the 1998 Plan.

At our meeting with the developers’ team this summer, we learned that the stated FAR planned for the project is 3.4, which includes an MPDU bonus of 0.4. Now I understand that the proposed FAR is effectively over 5.0, when prior street dedications are considered. However, the FAR limits for CR zones in the zoning code are optional method development maximums, not “by right” grants. The code’s height averaging provisions should not be used to circumvent otherwise applicable height limits even including a substantial MPDU bonus unless the height averaging calculations are carefully reviewed and supported by meaningful public benefit points.

3. Traffic Generation Issues in General. We understand that the 5500 Wisconsin apartment building will include up to 380 underground parking spaces for cars, plus spaces for moving vans, service vehicles, and delivery trucks. The developers claim that the proposed residential building and its associated retail space will generate less traffic than the current retail uses, based on traffic generation rates from the ITE Traffic Generation Manual 10th Edition.

However, the current retail use of the property is a single Brooks Brothers store; all the other retail space is empty. If one is considering the historic retail use of the residential building property, there were several high-end clothing stores plus a small bank branch in later years.. One must suspend disbelief to accept without compelling evidence the proposition that a residential building with 380 units and 15,000 sq.ft. of retail space will generate fewer vehicle trips than 49,292 square feet of prior retail use.

Here, the evidence is considerably less than compelling. In calculating the AM and PM peak hour traffic, the developers’ traffic report uses a generation rate for the current and proposed retail square footage that is based on generation rates for a “Shopping Center” (Land Use Code 820) in a “dense multi-use urban setting.” In fact, it appears that the relevant retail category is “Apparel Stores” (Land Use Code 876)

This distinction is critical because the ITE Manual shows PM traffic generation rates for a Shopping Center in a dense multi-use urban setting as 4.92 trips per 1,000 sq.ft., compared to the generation rate for an Apparel Store in a similar setting as 1.12 trips per 1,000 sq.ft.. Thus, if the comparison is between the approximately 50,000 sq.ft. of prior retail space versus the proposed 15,000 sq.ft. of retail space using the

¹ Another inaccurate exhibit showing “Connectivity” includes a large green area labeled “Vinson Park” on the northern and western borders of the Somerset House community. However, much of the “Vinson Park” area is the private property of the Somerset House Condominium community which is not open to the public as a connection between the Village of Friendship Heights and Wisconsin Avenue.

appropriate Apparel Store generation rate, the developer's traffic report would show approximately 56 prior retail PM trips rather than 322. Any argument that this project should be exempt from a LATR analysis based on the developers' flawed traffic methodology is simply unsupported by the facts.

4. The Somerset Terrace Traffic Issue in Particular. The Somerset House community is particularly concerned about this traffic generation issue because access to Wisconsin Avenue going north from the residential building will necessarily put large numbers of additional vehicles on Somerset Terrace. This additional traffic will not be limited to AM and PM peak hours inasmuch as vehicles exiting onto Wisconsin from the internal street can only go south, and the only other access to Wisconsin Avenue going north is South Park Avenue, which is already heavily congested for much of the day.

As to traffic conditions on Somerset Terrace, traffic entering the parking garage for the 14-story Chevy Chase Medical Building is a nightmare at all hours of the day and into the early evening. Backups on Wisconsin Avenue from traffic entering the building's garage are all too frequent; taxis and cars dropping off, picking up, and waiting for patients seeing medical providers in the building routinely park or stand illegally in the right lanes of Somerset Terrace in both directions, leaving only the left lanes in either direction for through traffic.

Even the developer's flawed traffic report projects that 5500 Wisconsin Avenue will generate a total of 135 trips in the AM peak hour, and 272 trips in the PM peak hour. Somerset Terrace simply cannot handle even a fraction of that additional traffic. The traffic impacts of the proposed development at 5500 Wisconsin are dangerously out of scale with the existing road capacity, and an LATR study should be required.

5. Design and Public Benefit Issues. Lastly, I would like to comment on the so-called Woonerf, the "internal street" between the residential building and the hotel, that the developers claim should be treated as a public benefit qualifying for optional method bonus points for its "exceptional design," and as a "through block connection."

As to its "exceptional design," a minimum street width for a suburban two-way street is commonly considered to be around 28 feet, and that sidewalks on either or both sides should each be a minimum of 5 to 6 feet wide to accommodate two persons walking together. If these design standards are applied to the Woonerf, there will only be 4 feet or so left between the sidewalks and the adjacent buildings for all the pedestrian-oriented activities that are supposed to energize what the developers are calling a "predominately pedestrian street." It is inconceivable that pretty pictures attached as illustrative exhibits to the Sketch Plan can ever be realized given the Woonerf's current design.

Design issues aside, for purposes of traffic flows, this "through block connection" is really nothing more than an alley between the two buildings providing internal access to the sole point of entry and exit into and out of the residential building. This alley will not only provide a two-way traffic route between Wisconsin Avenue and Hills Plaza for the 380 cars and bicycles using the vehicle and bicycle parking spaces in the building, it will also have to handle the flow of traffic from moving vans, service trucks and delivery vehicles for the 380 units, restaurants and retail space in the building; the vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians cutting through the alley to reach Wisconsin Avenue or Hills Plaza; and pedestrians coming and going from the eating, drinking and retail establishments that - space permitting - may be located on either side of the internal street.

Dangerous vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian conflicts will be inevitable. This "internal street" is not only poorly designed, it also constitutes a clear safety hazard for all the vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians anticipated to use it. It thus does not and should not qualify as a public benefit supporting the exceptional amount of additional height proposed for the residential building.

In closing, I'm relying on the Development Review team to check the developer's height averaging and traffic generation calculations closely, and to consider carefully the impacts of this proposed development on the residents of both the Somerset House community and the Village of Friendship Heights.

CC: Elza Hisel-McCoy, Chief
Montgomery County Planning Department

Melanie Rose White, Mayor
Village of Friendship Heights

Norman Knopf, Land Use Counsel
Village of Friendship Heights

Jeffrey Slavin, Mayor
Town of Somerset

Shana Davis-Cook, Manager
Chevy Chase Village

David Forman, Chair
Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights

LAW OFFICES
PETER R. ROSENBLATT
SUITE 601
1101 17TH STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036
PHONE: (202) 466-4700
FAX: (202) 223-4826
fddprosenblatt@erols.com

September 7, 2021

Intake and Regulatory Coordination
Division (IRC) M-NCPPC
2425 Reedie Drive
Wheaton, MD 20902

To the IRC:

At this stage I am principally concerned about the likely impact of this project on parking and traffic in our area.

So far as I can determine the plan calls for 380 apartments and 391 parking spaces. While a few of the future residents will not own a car and will not require a parking space for a caretaker some other residents of this high rent development will have *more* than one car. And where will domestic employees and those of the building and its commercial establishments park and where will visitors to the residents, shops and other commercial establishments park?

Apparently no provision has been made for the blockage of the nearby streets with parked cars for which no provision is made in the building's garage. So this will result in not only overcrowded streets but also in choked traffic.

Very truly yours,


Somerset Bldg #2

From: [Clara Lovett](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Bogdan, Grace](#); [Hisel-McCoy, Elza](#); [Dickel, Stephanie](#)
Subject: Proposed redevelopment of 5500 Wisconsin Avenue
Date: Friday, September 24, 2021 11:46:31 AM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

I write in support of the above mentioned project.

I have owned a condominium apartment in the Village of Friendship Heights since 2003. A part-time resident of the Village from 2003 to 2012, I became a full-time resident in 2012. I know the Village and surrounding communities well. I served on the Village Council in 2014-2017 and currently serve on the Boards of the Carleton Condominium Association and of the Montgomery Parks Foundation. I do my best to understand how the demographic and economic profile of Montgomery County has changed over the past twenty years and continues to change.

There is no question that demographic and economic changes have affected the competitive position of the Village of Friendship Heights within our County and by comparison with similar communities in a booming District of Columbia and in Northern Virginia. An example? After years of growth, in the past decade the median market value of Village condos has been flat or slightly declining. Prior to the Covid epidemic, the commercial sector near the Village was in sharp decline, several anchor stores shut down, no performance venues or other public spaces (except for the lovely but small Village Center).

The review of the above mentioned project is still in the early stages -- discussion of the sketch plan. I am aware that the development companies involved have already responded to concerns by some residents about the architectural and technical features of the proposed redevelopment, the probable impact on traffic patterns, and more.

I am confident that both proponents of this project and skeptics can muster the appropriate resources and technical knowledge to arrive at a constructive and fair evaluation of how the redevelopment of 5500 Wisconsin Avenue can benefit the Village of Friendship Heights and surrounding communities.

While I cannot comment on the technical aspects of the proposed project, I believe that it is well positioned to meet countywide needs as well as local neighborhood needs. I note, too, that similar projects (mixed-used redevelopment) are also taking place on the D.C. side of Friendship Heights.

In an ideal world, cross-jurisdictional planning might take place -- a step above and beyond the informal exchanges that I know occur between two separate sets of planning experts. But absent a more ambitious, comprehensive plan for Friendship Heights, projects of this type deserve support, on both sides of the D.C./MD boundary, for several reasons.

One, the 5500 Wisconsin Avenue proposed project meets a critical goal of our elected County government: to increase the supply of housing, and especially rental apartments. Specifically,

it meets the goal of building multi-family housing in areas where public transportation and other services are already available.

Two, once the apartments (including the proposed MPDUs) are occupied, the demographics of this neighborhood will change -- for the better. As a senior citizen who has decided, thus far, "to age in place," I value the companionship of other seniors, the senior-oriented programs at the Village Center, and our contemplative little parks. I do not believe, however, that retail businesses can do well or that the community can remain safe when entire blocks, like 5500 Wisconsin Avenue and a long stretch of Willard Avenue, are basically deserted after 6 PM. Deserted streets, even when well lit, are unattractive and over time become unsafe.

Three, Friendship Heights is not likely to become again a vibrant, competitive residential community if it is associated with one "industry" only. In the past decade, medical services of various kinds have spread through commercial spaces left vacant by other tenants. Again, this is convenient for senior citizens like me; it is not a good omen for the future of this neighborhood. A mix of residents from several age groups makes it more likely that we will also see a mix of retail stores and commercial tenants.

Four, a new rental building with apartments ranging from studios to two-bedroom units will provide needed competition for those owners of older rental buildings who have not thus far chosen to invest in upkeep and upgrades.

As is happening in the District, especially in the newly redeveloped Southwest, and in Arlington County, many younger renters forego the large expense of owning and insuring cars; they cluster in neighborhoods where they can walk or bike to work or ride public transportation. They are also the generation who don't seem to know how to cook for themselves ... they patronize eating establishments where they find both sustenance and the companionship of friends and colleagues.

A final observation: during my tenure as a member of the Friendship Heights Village Council I had the opportunity to review and to organize the historical records stored at the Village Center. Many of the arguments I hear today against redevelopment in the Friendship Heights area are very similar to those made in the 1970s and 1980s by residents of single-family subdivisions. If their views had prevailed, the high-rise Village of Friendship Heights and Somerset Towers would never have been built.

Thank you for accepting my comments and for everything you do on behalf of the residents of Montgomery County.

Clara M. Lovett
4550 North Park Avenue #508
Chevy Chase MD 20815
301 654 2629



Virus-free. www.avast.com

From: [Victor J. Basile](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Bogdan, Grace](#); [Hisel-McCoy, Elza](#); [Dickel, Stephanie](#)
Subject: Proposed redevelopment plan for 5500 Wisconsin Ave
Date: Tuesday, October 26, 2021 12:33:29 PM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chairperson Anderson,

I am writing to you in support of the proposed redevelopment plan for 5500 Wisconsin Avenue. As a twelve-year resident of Friendship Heights, I have witnessed the distressing exodus of many large and small businesses, and restaurants from this once vibrant neighborhood. This exodus makes me feel as though the neighborhood is in economic decline and that should concern every resident.

As I understand the current plan, it holds great promise as an important step in revitalizing the neighborhood by bringing in new businesses and dining options. I am pleased that the developers listened to neighbors' concerns and modified their plans accordingly. Also important to me is the real possibility of attracting a younger, more diverse population to Friendship Heights.

I appreciate the opportunity to offer my comments on the proposed plan and fervently hope that the Planning Board will act favorably on it.

Respectfully,

Victor Basile

4620 N. Park Ave

Unit 1008E

Chevy Chase, MD 20815

From: [Sunita Ramchandani](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Bogdan, Grace](#); [Hisel-McCoy, Elza](#); [Dickel, Stephanie](#)
Subject: Re: Sketch Plan Application No. 320220010
Date: Saturday, October 23, 2021 1:44:11 PM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

I forgot to provide my personal information:

Sunita Ramchandani
 Unit 510, the Carleton
 4550 North Park Avenue,
 Chevy Chase, Md, 20815

Phone 301-346-0474

On Saturday, October 23, 2021, 01:40:53 PM EDT, Sunita Ramchandani <sramchandani2@yahoo.com> wrote:

Dear Chair Anderson,

I am writing in reference to Sketch Plan Application Number 320220010 to express my support for the redevelopment of 5500 Wisconsin Avenue in Friendship Heights.

As residents of The Carleton Condominium, my husband and I are strongly committed to our community and want to ensure that the community fosters an environment that ensures our residents a high quality of life and keeps the Village competitive among similar communities. It is important, in our view, to have a more varied demographic of both age and incomes to provide interest and vitality in any neighborhood. In Friendship Heights we have seen a serious lack housing stock affordable to a variety of people. The proposed apartment building will offer 15% of its apartments as MPDUs, which will help to address a County-wide need for affordable housing. MPDUs are particularly attractive to young professionals who will help to enhance the vitality of our community and attract much-needed retail.

The pandemic has taken a toll on restaurants and retailers, causing many of them to close. There are many shuttered businesses here as in other parts of the county. Here, however, many of these businesses were about to close before the pandemic. This is because the nature of the retail did not serve our community. Our residents do not patronize the kinds of shops that people refer to as "Rodeo Drive" retail. What our community needs is restaurants and icecream shops and bakeries and just regular shops and residents of our buildings have the ability to walk to all these places, thereby reducing the need for cars on Village roads. The proposal for 5500 Wisconsin embodies the right approach.

I commend Donohoe Development and Carr City Centers for their genuine commitment to creating a new community that fits in well with Friendship Heights. They significantly revised their original plans to address concerns raised by the Village Council as well as by community members. The placement of the building was redesigned to be more compatible with the neighborhood, improve the pedestrian experience and keep our park in sunshine. Loading and unloading, originally proposed for South Park Avenue, has been shifted to a new "Woonerf" – a creative approach to accommodating both delivery vehicles and providing a safe, attractive and enjoyable new walkway for pedestrians. And the maximum 18-story height is entirely appropriate in our community of high-rises, particularly since density near Metro

is a priority.

For these reasons, I encourage the Planning Board to approve the Sketch Plan for 5500 Wisconsin Avenue. Thank you for considering my letter and for your excellent service to Montgomery County..

From: [Sandie Preiss](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Bogdan, Grace](#); [Hisel-McCoy, Elza](#); [Dickel, Stephanie](#)
Subject: Redevelopment of 5500 Wisconsin Ave
Date: Tuesday, September 21, 2021 4:35:00 PM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

I am writing as a Village of Friendship Heights homeowner to ask that you approve the Sketch Plan application for the redevelopment of 5500 Wisconsin Avenue. This proposal will give Friendship Heights the boost that it needs to enhance the viability and attractiveness of our neighborhood.

Friendship Heights has seen a dramatic increase in shuttered restaurants and shops over the past few years – an unfortunate trend that actually predates the pandemic. We need strategies that will make our community commercially viable so we can attract the kinds of retail and dining that serve our residents. The addition of a new, amenity-rich apartment community with locally serving shops and cafés will help get us there.

There are additional aspects of this proposal that make it a good fit for Friendship Heights.

It adds much-needed Moderately Priced Dwelling Units to our community, something that has been missing for years. MPDUs will help attract younger professionals that can add energy to our community and attract retailers who cater to this demographic.

The proposed design of the building fits well with the atmosphere of the Village. The 18-story height is similar to many high-rises in the neighborhood. Moreover, the developer has sited the building in such a way to avoid casting shadows on Humphrey Park, while making the streetscape on The Hills Plaza, South Park and Wisconsin Avenues much more attractive than it is today.

I've heard people express concerns that the new building will exacerbate the traffic issues on South Park Avenue. However, the creation of a new shared street that accommodates off-street loading, unloading and garbage pick-up activity will minimize the traffic impact.

There is much to recommend the redevelopment of 5500 Wisconsin. I therefore respectfully ask that you approve the Sketch Plan application.

Sincerely,

Sandie Preiss

4620 North Park Ave.

Chevy Chase, MD 20815

410-917-3490

Scott Palace
4450 S. Park Ave., Apt 1213
Chevy Chase, MD 20815

September 21, 2021

The Honorable Casey Anderson
Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reddie Dr., 14th Floor
Wheaton, MD 20902

Dear Chair Anderson,

I live at the Highland House Apartments, located directly across the street from the proposed redevelopment of 5500 Wisconsin Avenue in Friendship Heights. I am excited about Donohoe Development and Carr City Center's redevelopment plans and hope that you will approve their Sketch Plan application.

I have a unique perspective as someone who walks and uses transit instead of driving a car, as a renter who would like to remain in Friendship Heights and a resident who lives on South Park Avenue.

First, Friendship Heights has the potential to be so much more than it is today. Its location close to transit makes it convenient for people like me who don't drive. But we need more shops and restaurants to serve our needs within walking distance, particularly because so many locations have closed over the past few years. The applicant's plans for locally-serving retail and dining is just what our community needs to make it an even more walkable place to live.

Secondly, I have been renting an apartment at the Highland House for four years. I'd like to remain in Friendship Heights, but most of the apartment buildings were built in the 1970s and are showing their age. Even though many of the buildings underwent some level of renovation, they don't offer the up-to-date design and amenities that the proposed new apartment building will offer. Consequently, I started looking outside of Friendship Heights for a more modern, up-to-date place to live, even though I prefer to stay in the Village. This new building will encourage people to stay in Friendship Heights and will attract others to move here, which can only be good for our community. After learning of this proposal, I decided to remain here and hope to be one of its first residents!

Third, I'd like to touch on the traffic issue on South Park Avenue, as some people are saying the proposal will make traffic worse. I live on South Park so I have a first-hand view of traffic patterns on the street. It's interesting to me that people talk about South Park as having a

major traffic problem. Yes, there are some cars who may need to wait for a second light to enter Wisconsin Avenue because of people blocking lanes for deliveries to the Highland House, but this doesn't happen often enough to consider it a problem. In any case, Donohoe's and Carr's plans to move all deliveries off of South Park to a "Woonerf" is an excellent way to minimize traffic impact.

I understand some people feel that the proposal isn't compatible with the Village. I strongly disagree. We have all types of high-rise buildings in Friendship Heights, some even taller than the 18 stories proposed for the new apartment building. And the building has been designed to be as unobtrusive as possible, keeping our park in sunlight and making our sidewalks more inviting, safe and attractive. The applicant did an excellent job designing a project that fits well in our community. It is most certainly compatible with the neighborhood.

The proposed redevelopment of 5500 Wisconsin Avenue can only bring good things to Friendship Heights and make our community an even better place to live. For these reasons, I strongly support the Sketch Plan application and hope you will too.

Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott Palace". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Scott Palace

cc: Grace Bogdan
Stephanie Dickel
Elza Hisel-McCoy

From: [Nancy Pielemeier](mailto:Nancy.Pielemeier@mc.org)
To: chair@mncppc-mc.org
Cc: [Bogdan, Grace](#); [Hisel-McCoy, Elza](#); [Dickel, Stephanie](#)
Subject: Support for the development at 5500 Wisconsin Avenue
Date: Tuesday, November 2, 2021 11:00:19 AM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

November 2, 2021

Dear Chairman Anderson,

I am writing in support of the proposed development at 5500 Wisconsin Avenue. Having recently moved to Somerset House, I have been dismayed by the rapid deterioration of commerce on and around the Avenue in Friendship Heights.

The current property at 5500 Wisconsin contributes to a dead zone in the area and will be much improved by the mixed-use complex proposed. There is currently a lack of appealing rental property in the neighborhood, and the proposed apartments will attract a more diverse clientele, including lower income and younger individuals and families, and will likely add to the vibrancy of the neighborhood.

I have attended 2 meetings with the Donohoe team and am acquainted with the Carr family. They have made adjustments in the building plan based on community input, resulting in an improved and appealing design. I believe these organizations, as local entities, are willing to continue to negotiate in the best faith with the community, to improve the property and street life in our neighborhood.

Thank you for your careful consideration of the proposed development.

Sincerely yours,

Nancy Pielemeier

5610 Wisconsin Avenue, Apt. 1406

Chevy Chase, MD 20815

202-577-6389

From: [Noel Mccaman](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Bogdan, Grace](#); [Hisel-McCoy, Elza](#); [Dickel, Stephanie](#)
Subject: The Redevelopment Plans For 5500 Wisconsin Avenue
Date: Monday, October 18, 2021 5:53:19 PM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chair Anderson,

Twenty-plus years ago, my husband and I lived in Logan Circle, DC, I would frequently drive to Chevy Chase to shop at its four department stores and the other shops that dotted the area. When we retired and decided to move from our four-story, vertical living, townhouse, we chose a condominium in Chevy Chase with its many restaurants, medical offices, and overall great shopping--all within walking distance.

We have been living in Chevy Chase for over 13 years and, unfortunately, watched it change from a vibrant retail and restaurant hub to an area with many closed-up retail spaces, many great stores having left, and far fewer restaurants. In addition to losing those smaller businesses half of the remaining department stores are gone.

We attended a detailed presentation on the redevelopment plans for 5500 Wisconsin Avenue, and the plans appear to us to be a good start at trying to revitalize our neighborhood. We were especially pleased to hear about how their plans have changed based upon feedback from residents, businesses, and our Village Council. The proposed architectural set-back and cap on the height of the building, the creative way they are proposing to handle new-resident parking, deliveries, and move-ins and move-outs, and the prospect of more retail and restaurants look great to us. In addition, we feel the new building will enhance diversity in our neighborhood with additional younger residents and with the inclusion of moderate priced housing.

We hope that the Planning Board will support 5500 Wisconsin's redevelopment plans.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Pryor and Noel McCaman
The Carleton Condominium of Chevy Chase
4550 N. Park Avenue, Apt # 713
Chevy Chase, Md 20815
202-321-7588
Chevy Chase, MD 20815
202-321-7588

Titman, Dorothy R.

From: Julian Mansfield <jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov>
Sent: Thursday, October 28, 2021 2:04 PM
To: Silber, Stacy P.
Subject: Fw: 5500 Wisconsin Avenue Development

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Nila Vehar <nilavehar@gmail.com>
To: "jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov" <jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov>
Sent: Thursday, October 21, 2021, 03:34:12 PM EDT
Subject: 5500 Wisconsin Avenue Development

Dear Members of the Friendship Heights Village Council,

I support the proposed plan to re-develop 5520-5500 Wisconsin Avenue in Friendship Heights. This block of Wisconsin Avenue is long overdue for an update and revitalization. The proposed project will add value to our community. The architectural design fits well with the Highland House and Willoughby properties. The plan includes moderately priced dwelling units, offering affordable housing, a first for Friendship Heights.

I have lived in Friendship Heights since 1995. We are stagnant in planning to meet future needs. This is a plan that will address unmet needs in retail, eating establishments and housing. The Donohoe and Carr Companies have engaged with the public, listening to and addressing pros and cons. Their proposed plan incorporates many of the suggestions from Friendship Heights residents.

I urge the Council to support a plan that will make our wonderful community even more vibrant and diverse. It is short sighted to oppose new development. This plan is a thorough and thoughtful one.

Thank you.

Nila Vehar
4620 North Park Avenue
1602 W
Chevy Chase, MD 20815
(301) 654-3969
Cell (703) 609-5007

Sent from my iPad

Titman, Dorothy R.

From: Julian Mansfield <jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov>
Sent: Thursday, October 28, 2021 2:05 PM
To: Silber, Stacy P.
Subject: Fw: Development 5500 Wisconsin Avenue - Written Comments

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Francisco Andrieu <fjandrieu@gmail.com>
To: "jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov" <jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov>
Sent: Friday, October 22, 2021, 04:26:19 PM EDT
Subject: Development 5500 Wisconsin Avenue - Written Comments

Dear Julian Mansfield,

I wanted to write to you and the council to voice my 100% support for this development proposal as a resident of 4620 N. Park. Our neighborhood is in need of some revitalization and forward progress. The additional population that would arrive from this development will help ensure that we remain a vibrant location with good access to infrastructure and amenities. There are currently too many empty storefronts (this was true even before the pandemic) and some forward thinking development will help in this regard.

Thank you for all your work.

Regards,

Francisco Andrieu

Titman, Dorothy R.

From: Julian Mansfield <jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov>
Sent: Thursday, October 28, 2021 2:05 PM
To: Silber, Stacy P.
Subject: Fw: 5500 Wisconsin Ave. project

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: nancy peavy <nancypeavy@gmail.com>
To: "jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov" <jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov>
Sent: Saturday, October 23, 2021, 07:26:25 PM EDT
Subject: 5500 Wisconsin Ave. project

We are residents of Friendship Heights, having moved here in 2002. Back then, Friendship Heights was an exciting place to live. My husband had retired, and I continued to work -- taking the subway downtown while he enjoyed the convenience of the grocery chains, good restaurants, plentiful retail options, and an abundance of services.

We are saddened that none of these qualities currently defines Friendship Heights. Thus, we were pleased to learn about plans for a significant new development at 5500 Wisconsin Avenue. We would like the council to know that we are very favorably inclined toward this proposed project, and we are quite disappointed that the council seems always to generally oppose new projects. Evidently, the council's lawyer, and certainly some of the council members, express many objections to this project, including even "shadows." Indeed several are seemingly opposed to nearly all positive developments involving new people, cars, trucks, retail, apartments, costs of apartments, heights of, and views from, balconies of apartments, for example, structures like the Somerset apartments. We would welcome the development of smaller apartments where younger, middle-class residents will promote needed growth in Friendship Heights. These newer, younger residents will, in our view, lead to improved retail and

residential options, revitalized restaurants, and will support efforts to make Friendship Heights vital again.

Nancy and Bob Peavy

4620 North Park Avenue
Apartment 206_w
Chevy Chase, Md. 20815
202 549 5005 (cell)
301 986-8778

--
Nancy M. Peavy
4620 North Park Avenue
Apartment 206
Chevy Chase, Md. 20815
202 549 5005 (cell)
301 986-8778

Titman, Dorothy R.

From: Julian Mansfield <jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov>
Sent: Thursday, October 28, 2021 2:05 PM
To: Silber, Stacy P.
Subject: Fw: 5500 Wisconsin

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: David L Rabin <dlrabin3714@gmail.com>
To: Julian Mansfield <jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov>
Sent: Sunday, October 24, 2021, 09:29:17 AM EDT
Subject: 5500 Wisconsin

Julien,
Appreciate your sharing my thoughts with the Village Council.

I strongly support the revised plan for 5500 Wisconsin Ave. It provides additional residential and retail opportunities for an area that needs an additional population to be an attractive community for current FH residents. FH currently is a retail dead zone with the loss of retail space and a dormant condo and rental market in contrast to the Bethesda area and the adjacent DC FH area. What is needed by the Council is support for improvement and change - suggest advocacy for subsidized retail in the proposed redevelopment so lower-cost service business might be available in the area as an improvement of an already desirable plan.

No FH redevelopment plan will satisfy everyone in FH. Some apartment buildings will be temporarily affected but the community at large has a long-term need to have a dynamic retail sector on Wisconsin Ave. That long-term need affecting us all should be the dominant concern of the Council. I urge the Council to support the redevelopment plan and suggest constructive improvements.

Respectfully

David L Rabin
4701 Willard Ave.

MORRIS ANTONELLI, D.D.S.
4620 North Park Ave. 906W
Chevy Chase, MD 20815

STATEMENT REGARDING 5500 WISCONSIN REDEVELOPMENT

October 26, 2021

Good evening, Mayor White, Chair Mezey and members of the Village Council. Thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening. My name is Morris Antonelli and I live at 4620 North Park.

I'm here this evening to express my strong support for the Sketch Plan application to redevelop 5500 Wisconsin Avenue and to ask that the Village Council support it as well. The site is in need of redevelopment with an infusion of desirable shops, cafes, restaurants, along with new neighbors.

Friendship Heights has been faltering in recent years, accelerated by the COVID crisis. We have lost a good number of stores and restaurants, in part because so many of our residents – like me – are older and don't patronize the shops on a regular basis. I view the 5500 Wisconsin redevelopment as an important step to bringing our Village back to the vibrant community it once was.

The proposal is consistent with the Friendship Heights Sector Plan. The apartment building is consistent with the County's approach to smart growth, building density where it belongs - near our Metro station and bus transit center.

The proposed 18-story maximum height is entirely appropriate since the building is located directly on Wisconsin Avenue and away from the Village. The step back design will give architectural interest. The fact that the apartments will be rentals makes them attractive to younger professionals, which will give us the energy we need to bring our Village back to life. Even better, members of the younger generation tend to rely less on cars, purchasing them at much lower rates than prior generations. They rely more on ride-share and transit. So, while the new building will have an underground garage for parking, this doesn't necessarily translate into creating undue traffic problems.

I've seen the studies that show the impact of shadows cast by the new building onto Humphrey Park. They clearly show that the building won't throw shadows onto the Park, no matter the season or time of day.

The area along South Park and Wisconsin Avenues is in need of improvement, not just in terms of bringing back retail but also to make the sidewalks more attractive. The plans for 5500 Wisconsin are just what we need.

Please support the Sketch Plan application for 5500 Wisconsin Avenue.

Thank you for all that you do for our Village.

Titman, Dorothy R.

From: Julian Mansfield <jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov>
Sent: Thursday, October 28, 2021 2:15 PM
To: Silber, Stacy P.
Subject: Fw: 5550 Wisconsin Avenue

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Hazel Keimowitz <hazelkeimowitz@gmail.com>
To: "jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov" <jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov>
Sent: Monday, October 25, 2021, 01:04:28 PM EDT
Subject: 5550 Wisconsin Avenue

Der Julian,

I am writing this in support of the development plans for 5550 Wisconsin Avenue. Although I do have some questions about the proposal, I believe strongly that Friendship Heights needs development. There are too many shuttered shops and restaurants. People who are opposed to the proposal are not thinking about the need to revitalize our neighborhood. A rental apartment building with retail stores would attract younger people and would be great for the neighborhood.

Sincerely, Hazel Keimowitz

--

Hazel Kahn Keimowitz
hazelkeimowitz@gmail.com
202 422-2902

Titman, Dorothy R.

From: Julian Mansfield <jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov>
Sent: Thursday, October 28, 2021 2:15 PM
To: Silber, Stacy P.
Subject: Fw: Comments On 5500 Wisconsin Avenue

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Noel Mccaman <nmccaman@gmail.com>
To: "jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov" <jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov>
Sent: Monday, October 25, 2021, 02:04:36 PM EDT
Subject: Comments On 5500 Wisconsin Avenue

Dear Julian,

I am writing in response to your invitation to provide comments to the Village Council on the redevelopment of 5500 Wisconsin Avenue. Below is the email that my wife and I sent to the Montgomery County Planning Board supporting the redevelopment plans for 5500 Wisconsin Avenue. We are very dismayed over the loss of so many large and small businesses and restaurants in our beloved Friendship Heights neighborhood. We walk in Friendship Heights almost every day and pass so many empty shops and buildings--we see the redevelopment of 5500 Wisconsin as a very welcome step in revitalizing our neighborhood. Please pass our comments on to the Council. Also, I would like to speak at the Council meeting on Tuesday night. Please let me know if that is possible.

Sincerely,

Noel McCaman and Mary Ann Pryor
 The Carleton
 4550 N Park Avenue
 Chevy Chase, MD 20815
 Dear Chair Anderson,

Twenty-plus years ago, my husband and I lived in Logan Circle, DC, I would frequently drive to Chevy Chase to shop at its four department stores and the other shops that dotted the area. When we retired and decided to move from our four-story, vertical living, townhouse, we chose a condominium in Chevy Chase with its many restaurants, medical offices, and overall great shopping--all within walking distance.

We have been living in Chevy Chase for over 13 years and, unfortunately, watched it change from a vibrant retail and restaurant hub to an area with many closed-up retail spaces, many great stores having left, and far fewer restaurants. In addition to losing those smaller businesses half of the remaining department stores are gone.

We attended a detailed presentation on the redevelopment plans for 5500 Wisconsin Avenue, and the plans appear to us to be a good start at trying to revitalize our neighborhood. We were especially pleased to hear about how their plans have changed based upon feedback from residents, businesses, and our Village Council. The proposed architectural set-back and cap on the height of the building, the creative way they are proposing to handle new-resident parking, deliveries, and move-ins and move-outs, and the prospect of more retail and restaurants look great to us. In addition, we feel the new building will enhance diversity in our neighborhood with additional younger residents and with the inclusion of moderate priced housing.

We hope that the Planning Board will support 5500 Wisconsin's redevelopment plans.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Pryor and Noel McCaman
 The Carleton Condominium of Chevy Chase
 4550 N. Park Avenue, Apt # 713

Chevy Chase, Md 20815
202-321-7588

ATTACHMENT G

Titman, Dorothy R.

From: Julian Mansfield <jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov>
Sent: Thursday, October 28, 2021 2:16 PM
To: Silber, Stacy P.
Subject: Fw: 5500 Wisconsin Avenue

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Pat Donovan <pdonovan43@gmail.com>
To: Julian Mansfield <jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov>
Cc: Pat Donovan <pdonovan43@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, October 25, 2021, 09:08:15 PM EDT
Subject: 5500 Wisconsin Avenue

Dear Village Council Members,

When I moved into my condo in 2008, Friendship Heights had a vibrant commercial area; indeed, it was one of the reasons I moved here. Sadly, those days are over. Friendship Heights has become a dead zone commercially.

I have been heartened by the plans to develop 5500 Wisconsin Avenue. If Friendship Heights is to thrive again, it needs new residents with a broader demographic profile, which I believe a new rental building can help to provide. According to the latest Census Bureau data, nearly half of Friendship Heights residents are 65 and older, more than double the proportion of any of the surrounding neighborhoods. Conversely, less than 10% of Friendship Heights residents are 17 or younger; in most of the surrounding neighborhoods, the proportion approaches 30%. The population of Friendship Heights is also poorer than its neighbors and more likely to be disabled. Given these statistics, it is unlikely that the community will be revived without an influx of younger working people and families.

I like the design of the building, especially the setback and the plans for inviting seating areas and cafes at various points around it; the fact that it would offer both small and large units; and the idea of "locally sourced" retail, which may have a greater likelihood of success than many of the establishments that have gone out of business in recent years.

I have been deeply disappointed that the Village Council has been so negative in its comments. It says it supports development that is compatible with the community, but gives no hint of what it would actually support. Instead it talks about "canyonization of South Park Ave. (even a 5-story building could qualify as canyonization); it bemoans the shading of Humphrey Park, which is a bogus argument, given the location of the proposed building; and it worries about views of people living in The Somerset, who are more than a block away from the proposed building. And the Council maintains that approval of 5500 Wisconsin would set a dangerous precedent that could lead to towering buildings on Parcels 4 and 6. There is a world of difference between development of a parcel on a major commercial thoroughfare and one in the heart of Friendship Village. I don't believe the language in the Sector Plan supports the contention that the Planning Commission would approve an 18-story building on Parcel 4 or 6.

I have loved living in Friendship Heights for 13 years. I believe the addition of 5500 Wisconsin Avenue would inject new vitality into the community, which it desperately needs. I hope the Council will support it.

Sincerely,

Pat Donovan
4620 North Park Avenue
Apt. 607W
Chevy Chase, MD 20815

Titman, Dorothy R.

From: Julian Mansfield <jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov>
Sent: Thursday, October 28, 2021 2:16 PM
To: Silber, Stacy P.
Subject: Fw: Proposed redevelopment of 5500 Wisconsin Ave

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Victor J. Basile <vic.basile@gmail.com>
To: "jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov" <jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, October 26, 2021, 12:20:32 PM EDT
Subject: Proposed redevelopment of 5500 Wisconsin Ave

Dear Mr. Mansfield,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to the Village Council on the redevelopment plan for 5500 Wisconsin Avenue. I have sent a similar email to the Montgomery County Planning Board supporting the proposed redevelopment plans. The loss of so many businesses and restaurants in the Friendship Heights neighborhood is very distressing. The redevelopment of 5500 Wisconsin is a very welcome step in the effort to revitalize our neighborhood by bringing in new businesses and dining options. The plan also holds the promise of attracting a younger, more diverse population to Friendship Heights. For these reasons, I offer my full support for the plan.

Thank you again,

Sincerely,

Victor Basile

4620 N Park Avenue

Unit 1008E

Chevy Chase, MD 20815

Scott Palace
4450 S. Park Ave., Apt 1213
Chevy Chase, MD 20815

October 21, 2021

The Honorable Melanie Rose White
Mayor, Village of Friendship Heights
4433 South Park Ave.
Chevy Chase, MD 20915

Dear Mayor White and Village Councilmembers:

I live at the Highland House Apartments, located across the street from the proposed redevelopment of 5500 Wisconsin Avenue in Friendship Heights. I am excited about Donohoe Development and Carr City Center's redevelopment plans and hope that you will support their Sketch Plan application.

I have a unique perspective as someone who walks and uses transit instead of driving a car, as a renter who would like to remain in Friendship Heights and a resident who lives on South Park Avenue.

First, Friendship Heights has the potential to be so much more than it is today. Its location close to transit makes it convenient for people like me who don't drive. But we need more shops and restaurants to serve our needs within walking distance, particularly because so many locations have closed over the past few years. The applicant's plans for locally-serving retail and dining is just what our community needs to make it an even more walkable place to live.

Secondly, I have been renting an apartment at the Highland House for four years. I'd like to remain in Friendship Heights, but most of the apartment buildings were built in the 1970s and are showing their age. Even though many of the buildings underwent some level of renovation, they don't offer the up-to-date design and amenities that the proposed new apartment building will offer. Consequently, I started looking outside of Friendship Heights for a more modern, up-to-date place to live, even though I prefer to stay in the Village. This new building will encourage people to stay in Friendship Heights and will attract others to move here, which can only be good for our community. After learning of this proposal, I decided to remain here and hope to be one of its first residents!

Third, I'd like to touch on the traffic issue on South Park Avenue, as some people are saying the proposal will make traffic worse. I live on South Park so I have a first-hand view of traffic patterns on the street. It's interesting to me that people talk about South Park as having a

major traffic problem. Yes, there are some cars who may need to wait for a second light to enter Wisconsin Avenue because of people blocking lanes for deliveries to the Highland House, but this doesn't happen often enough to consider it a problem. In any case, Donohoe's and Carr's plans to move all deliveries off of South Park to a "Woonerf" is an excellent way to minimize traffic impact.

I understand some people feel that the proposal isn't compatible with the Village. I strongly disagree. We have all types of high-rise buildings in Friendship Heights, some even taller than the 18 stories proposed for the new apartment building. And the building has been designed to be as unobtrusive as possible, keeping our park in sunlight and making our sidewalks more inviting, safe and attractive. The applicant did an excellent job designing a project that fits well in our community. It is most certainly compatible with the neighborhood.

The proposed redevelopment of 5500 Wisconsin Avenue can only bring good things to Friendship Heights and make our community an even better place to live. For these reasons, I strongly support the Sketch Plan application and hope you will too.

Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott Palace". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Scott Palace

Titman, Dorothy R.

From: Julian Mansfield <jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov>
Sent: Thursday, October 28, 2021 2:17 PM
To: Silber, Stacy P.
Subject: Fw: Comments on Development 5500 Wisconsin

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Anita Weinblatt <anita.weinblatt@gmail.com>
To: "jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov" <jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, October 26, 2021, 04:53:19 PM EDT
Subject: Comments on Development 5500 Wisconsin

To the Village Council

I think the development proposed for 5500 Wisconsin should be seriously considered by the Village Council. Rather than being so negative, the Council should enter into negotiations with the developer and try to come to a mutually acceptable plan.

Sincerely

Anita Weinblatt
4620 North Park Avenue
#1404W
Chevy Chase, MD

Peter William Dougherty
 4620 N Park #808W
 Chevy Chase MD 20815

26 October 2021

Dear Village Council, County Plan Review Team, and interested Friendship Heights neighbors,

I am a resident of the Village of Friendship Heights, the parent of two young children in the MCPS system, and an architect with extensive urban design, commercial building, and regional sustainability experience. I am not a member of the 5500 Wisconsin project team, and comment only as an interested neighbor and professional.

The written record on this project is already extensive, and the approval process covers many specific and technical points addressed elsewhere, so my recommendations below focus on the two aspects of the 5500 proposal which I believe have most relevance to the residents of our community and to the health of the broader region:

1. Density. To increase residential capacity in Friendship Heights is a matter of clear opportunity, practical efficiency, social justice, and climate change harm reduction, and as such it should be strongly encouraged. This development should provide as much quality housing as it possibly can.
2. Design. Village neighbors have the collective right to expect that all new development will be safe and attractive, i.e., that it will create no significant dangers, and that it will raise rather than lower the overall level of urban, architectural/visual, and landscape quality in the neighborhood. Neighbors do not have the individual right to expect or demand that their specific or unique concerns will or even can be met.

These two issues are broadly but not rigidly related. In other words, moderate and high-density projects and neighborhoods can be wonderful, low-density projects can be awful, and a dense, attractive project is certainly possible to achieve on the site in question. In my view, the Village and relevant review authorities should be permissive, even aggressive, on density, and set accordingly high expectations for design.

In case it may help to expand on these two points:

1. Density.
 - Everyone living in Friendship Heights can live here because someone else once built here. We should not assume or expect the right to stop this historical process of development and change, which would prevent potential future residents from enjoying benefits that current residents enjoy.
 - Cities in general, and the DC area in particular, are suffering from an acute housing cost crisis. This pernicious problem especially affects our most economically vulnerable neighbors, and it can only be addressed by increasing housing density across the region, wherever we reasonably can.
 - There is also a major, worsening, and much more deeply dangerous climate crisis underway. Building new housing near existing, high-capacity transit is a productive way to address that threat, by reducing the significant carbon emissions from both housing and transit.
 - Those currently living in medium to high-density areas proximal to transit can be justly proud of (if not fully satisfied with) our collective contribution to the climate battle. However, it is clearly counterproductive to limit our own effectiveness by fighting for reduced density.

- FAR (floor area ratio) is a routine measure of density useful in evaluating individual projects and in comparing different projects built over time. However, it is clearly defined and should be easily presented and measured. The FAR of a project should not in itself cause debate.
- The development review process must obviously follow existing law, but any discretionary review should question development guidelines developed in or prior to 1998. As noted above and elsewhere in the record, climate, affordability, retail, and other concerns have changed.

2. Design.

- People like and dislike different things, and so it is not easy to establish definitions of good design sufficient to meet all needs. Still, weird metaphors and glib conceits, like "wall," "canyon," etc., often obscure more than they reveal. As much as possible, evaluations and expectations for design quality should reference specific, observable qualities and effects. Coherence, order, space, light, texture, durability, and comfort are some of the many useful aesthetic concepts available.
- Of course, design concerns go well beyond the aesthetic. Traffic, safety, and parking are all design concerns with design solutions. Speaking purely anecdotally: in four years of living in Friendship Heights, I have never needed more than a couple of minutes to drive safely home through the neighborhood, whether from Wisconsin, Western, River, or anywhere else. But every single time I send my kids out on their bikes, I worry.
- If the neighborhood has real traffic or parking or safety problems, then the neighborhood should study those problems and work to improve them. That general responsibility is collective, and it should not be the burden of any individual property.
- Likewise, no individual property is responsible for the topography of the overall neighborhood. Height standards have defined protocols for measurement which typically use the existing site grade as a measurement "base." That one site is higher than another is also completely typical, and not a reasonable argument for stricter height limits on higher sites.
- Other things being equal, of course, taller, bigger, and more prominent buildings should be more beautifully designed, and a source of pride and joy, rather than annoyance. However, this is an argument for design as such, rather than for some peripheral or wholly unrelated mitigation.
- Finally, to the extent that design is considered, its effects and impacts should be weighted to account for their relative importance to the entire community. One person's distant and slightly obscured view may be some other family's home.

Please feel welcome to contact me with questions, or for further respectful discussion.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Peter

Peter William Dougherty
peter@pwilliam.com

Founder and Principal
Peter William Architects
www.pwilliam.com

From: [Norman Knopf](#)
To: [Bogdan, Grace](#)
Subject: Fwd: Comments for DRC on 5500 Wisconsin Ave by Village of Friendship Heights
Date: Friday, September 10, 2021 4:37:36 PM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Norman Knopf** <norman.knopf.law@gmail.com>
Date: Fri, Sep 10, 2021 at 4:34 PM
Subject: Comments for DRC on 5500 Wisconsin Ave by Village of Friendship Heights
To: <Grace.Bogdan@mongomeryplanning.org>
Cc: Melanie Rose White <melanierosewhite@gmail.com>, Mezey, Michael <mmezey@depaul.edu>, Julian Mansfield <jmansfield@friendshipheightsmd.gov>

To Grace Bogdan:

On behalf of the Village of Friendship Heights, I am submitting comments on the sketch drawings for 5500 Wisconsin Ave. Please note that these are preliminary comments, as the timing for comments (occurring at the peak vacation time of the end of August/early September) has necessitated a quick review by the Village.

The Village supports redevelopment of the site with a project that is compatible with the neighborhood, substantially conforms to the recommendations of the Sector Plan, and provides satisfactory vehicular circulation and parking. The density and height of the proposal are not compatible with existing development, does not substantially conform to the recommendations of the Sector Plan and the roads cannot satisfactorily accommodate the traffic and parking..

1. We are greatly concerned that the information submitted by the developers does not permit the verification of the total square footage, height, density, and lot coverage, because there are no dimensions provided on the plans. We are given the developers' conclusions but no ability to verify them. For example, there are no dimensions provided for all floors of the existing and proposed buildings. Similarly, in order to verify the height average, it is necessary to have the specific dimensions of height and roof area for each portion of the building mass, including the existing structures. While the plans reflect a graphic scale, because they are pdfs they cannot be used to produce accurate calculations. For example, in computer scaling the height averaging drawing for the existing hotel (developers' Attachment A), there is a significant difference in floor-to-floor height for each of the floors above the lobby level. However, field verifications by the Village's architect indicate that the floor-to-floor heights are almost identical. And there is no overall height provided for the existing hotel. We believe it is essential that sufficient information be provided so that the Planning Board staff, DPS, and interested parties can verify the correctness of the conclusory data and confirm that the requirements of the zoning code have been met. To permit review of a project without this information, reminds one of the mistakes made in the planning process in Clarksburg, in which what was approved and what was built were not necessarily the same. Without the specified data requested, it is not possible for the Board to know accurately what is being approved and similarly not possible for DPS to accurately verify what is authorized to be built..

2. Even assuming the correctness of the conclusory calculations of the developers, the density and

heights of the project are inconsistent with the Sector Plan and incompatible with existing development.

(a) The effective FAR, what is actually seen, is 5.14, based on the actual existing lot size of some 79,000 square feet. The FAR is a little more than 3.0 only when one considers the square footage previously dedicated for streets. The Sector Plan provides for a 3.0 FAR maximum (plus bonus for MPDUs).

(b) The height specified in the Sector Plan is 90 feet maximum, although the current zoning code allows additional height by averaging.

(c) The 1974 Sector Plan down zoned Friendship Heights to expressly preclude buildings of such height and FAR. A FAR of 2.0 and a 90-foot height limit were imposed. The 1998 Sector Plan confirmed these limitations. Both Sector Plans noted that greater height and FAR has resulted in what could be characterized as "canyonization" of streets, with blockage of views from dwelling units, and obstruction of natural light and air, and called for more open space. The rezoning of Friendship Heights under the new zoning code does provide for 3.0 FAR. Having an effective FAR of over 5, with 18-story buildings, is a return to what was expressly rejected in the Sector Plans. As shown on developers' Attachment A, the height of the building is 193 feet plus 20 feet for rooftop structures, for a total of 213 feet, which is 113 feet over the 90-foot recommended maximum height. The adjacent Highland House apartment building is 15 stories, and the Chevy Chase Building (to the north of the Marriott) is 14 stories. The Barlow Building (south of Highland House) is 14 stories. A building of 213 feet in height will protrude above all the other buildings lining Wisconsin Avenue in Friendship Heights, and it would dominate the skyline.

(d) The perimeter of the Village of Friendship Heights is enclosed by high-rises along Willard Avenue and Wisconsin Avenue, with the one major exception of the open space between the hotel and South Park Avenue. This project would occupy that space with a 213-foot building. This height in this space is particularly adverse because it threatens the existing vistas and light availability in the adjacent public park and in the community generally.

(e) The community is greatly concerned about shadows produced by the proposed building. Although shadow studies have been submitted, it is impossible to evaluate their accuracy because of the missing information stated above.

(f) We are concerned about the "canyonization" effect of the block of South Park Avenue between Wisconsin Avenue and The Hills Plaza, which has the 15-story Highland House on one side and the 213-foot proposed building on the opposite side.

3. *Existing* conditions in Friendship Heights result in traffic backups on South Park Avenue at Wisconsin Avenue, the intersection of South Park Ave. and The Hills Plaza, and the intersection of Somerset Terrace and Wisconsin Ave. The traffic study submitted by the developers claims that there would be less traffic with the proposed development. This is based on the mistaken assumption that the existing retail on the site is currently generating more traffic than the proposed building would. Currently and for years the traffic generation of the Wisconsin Ave retail on this property has been minimal as many stores have been empty or doing very little business.

4. Currently on-street parking in the Village is scarce and always in high demand due to a high volume of daily visitors, particularly to the medical buildings. It is therefore important that the project have sufficient parking for the residents and for the retail uses. We question if sufficient parking is being provided in the proposed plans.

5. We are pleased that the new street to be constructed will provide access to the garage for residents, retail patrons, service vehicles, delivery vehicles and garbage trucks. However, we believe it is undersized to accommodate the through traffic and all these uses, particularly with the encouragement of pedestrian and bicycle usage as well as the represented outdoor restaurant seating.

6. The zoning code requires a public amenity of 10% onsite public use space. The proposed amenity is only 7,900 square feet, based on a 79,000 square foot lot. However, the development itself is based on a 118,775 square foot lot utilizing the prior dedicated square footage. Therefore the actual percentage of public amenity is only 6.6%. and the full 10% is clearly needed.

Thank you for considering the comments of the Village of Friendship Heights.

Norman Knopf
Land Use Counsel,
Village of Friendship Heights
202-257-9150

VILLAGE OF FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS

VILLAGE COUNCIL

MELANIE ROSE WHITE, *Mayor*
 MICHAEL MEZEY, *Chairman*
 BRUCE R. PIRNIE, *Vice Chairman*
 ALFRED MULLER, M.D., *Secretary*
 PAULA DURBIN, *Treasurer*
 MICHAEL J. DORSEY, *Parliamentarian*
 CAROLINA ZUMARAN-JONES, *Historian*
 JULIAN P. MANSFIELD, *Village Manager*

4433 SOUTH PARK AVENUE
 CHEVY CHASE, MARYLAND 20815

Phone: 301-656-2797
 Fax: 301-907-3922
 Email: info@friendshipheightsmd.gov
 Website: www.friendshipheightsmd.gov



June 21, 2021

By email

SPSilber@lerchearly.com
 Stacy Silber, Esq.
 Lerch, Early & Brewer
 7600 Wisconsin Avenue
 Suite 700
 Bethesda, MD 20814

**Re: 5500 Wisconsin Avenue Proposed Development—
 Comments of Friendship Heights Village Council Members**

Dear Ms. Silber:

As you know, on June 7, at a special public session of the Friendship Heights Village Council, you and your clients made a presentation of the proposed development for 5500 Wisconsin Avenue. On June 14, the Village Council, at its regularly scheduled public session, discussed the development proposal. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with a summary of some of the Council members' comments and concerns.

Preliminarily, the Village Council thanks you for the June 7 presentation. Although the Village had been led to believe that a meeting to discuss redevelopment of the site would be held well before formal public notice was posted, we appreciate your scheduling a presentation, as requested by the Village, shortly after the public posting.

1. The comments are tentative and incomplete because we do not have essential information that was requested. For example, what is the total square footage of the development on the lot; the square footage of existing development that is to remain; the amount of new square footage that is to be built; what is the existing FAR; what is the FAR of the total project once completed? Even the amount of square footage of the lot upon which FAR is to be based is not clear, as we were provided differing figures. Similarly, we were not provided with the height measurements of the rooftops of all buildings relied upon in calculating the height averaging which you said allows a 180-foot and taller apartment building.

2. This information is of great importance because the Village Council members believe the apartment building is too tall and the amount of square footage for the entire project is too great. Questions were raised as to whether the zoning requirements have been exceeded, which, of course, requires the information requested above.

3. Even if the zoning code permits the size and height of what is proposed, the Village Council members believe the proposal is contrary to the Sector Plan and not compatible with adjacent development. The 1974 Sector Plan, reconfirmed in the current Sector Plan, provides that the tall, very large (high FAR) buildings existing in Friendship Heights were no longer to be allowed. A height limit of 90 feet was to be the standard, and an FAR of 2.0 (with 3.0 in exceptional circumstances). Moreover, an 18-story building would be taller than adjacent existing development. Highland House to the south is 15 stories. The Barlow Building, further south, is 14 stories. North of Highland House, the hotel is 12 stories, and the Chevy Chase Office Building is 15 stories. The 18-story proposed building would stick out above all buildings along the Friendship Heights Wisconsin Avenue corridor.

4. Council members noted that existing development creates a perimeter of high-rises surrounding the interior of the Village of Friendship Heights, with one high-rise after another on Willard Avenue from the former The Irene apartments to Wisconsin Avenue, and along Wisconsin Avenue from Highland House (now called The Highlands of Chevy Chase) to the Chevy Chase Office Building, **with the exception of the open space above the low-rise Brooks Brothers and other retail stores.** This last remaining open space would now be occupied with an 18-story building (plus an additional story for rooftop structures).

5. In addition to aesthetic concerns, Village Council members raised questions about the shadow effect of such a tall building. The main park of the Village, Humphrey Park, next to the Village Center, would appear to lie within the shadow of the building. Information is needed as to when and how much shadow would be cast during each season. Similarly, concern was expressed regarding the effect of shadows on the trees and other vegetation in Humphrey Park, as well as on numerous mature trees along South Park and The Hills Plaza. Information is also needed as to the effect of light or shadows on nearby buildings, e.g., Highland House, Highland House West, The Willoughby fronting Friendship Boulevard, Brighton Gardens, and the Village Center.

6. Village Council members very much approve of the design of the apartment building in that after the first 7 stories, the building no longer parallels Wisconsin Avenue, extending from South Park Avenue to the hotel, but parallels South Park Avenue and is set back from that street and from the hotel site. A building lower in height of that design received positive comments.

7. Village Council members also were very positive about the proposal to remove from the Village streets the entrance to the parking garage, parking for delivery vehicles, and pick-up and drop-off locations for the apartment house by creating a new street between the apartment building and the hotel. However, Council members believe more room needs to be reserved on the street for delivery vehicles, e.g., Amazon, Giant Food, FedEx, etc., and more space added for pick-ups and drop offs. Concern was also expressed that there were only two loading docks for moving vehicles in the garage, and it was not clear if there were any, or enough, parking spaces in the garage for visitors and service personnel.

8. Village Council members liked the concept of a European-type street for pedestrians, bikes, and cars, lined with restaurants and other retail establishments. However, it was concluded that this was simply not achievable. The functions that the street must serve—even if made one way for vehicles—a garage entrance for 380 apartments, a passageway for moving vans and garbage trucks, parking spaces for delivery vehicles, space for cars dropping off and picking up apartment dwellers and their guests, space for vehicles entering from and/or exiting onto Wisconsin Avenue, render the street undesirable, if not hazardous, for walking and biking. It is not going to be a pleasant place to sit outside a café or restaurant. Similarly, Village Council members considered unrealistic the developers' hope that retail establishments would front the new street. Friendship Heights unfortunately now has many empty stores as the businesses have failed, notwithstanding that there currently are thousands of apartments/condos in the Village. We do not think that adding 380 apartments will somehow cure the situation so that the retail you are envisioning will be successful.

9. Village Council members were pleased that at the presentation it was represented that further attention would be given to improving the streetscape on The Hills Plaza along the area of the hotel parking lot wall. We believe even the presenters acknowledged that the current proposal was insufficient.

10. Village Council members raised questions regarding environmental measures that the project would implement, e.g., will the apartment house have a "green roof"?

11. Village Council members are concerned with the effect a project of this size will have on traffic and parking on Village streets. As you know, under the Village's Charter, the Village is responsible for the maintenance and control of its streets. There currently exists traffic back-up at South Park Avenue at Wisconsin Avenue, and at Somerset Terrace at Wisconsin Avenue. Traffic is particularly heavy when employees are going to work or leaving the medical office buildings. We understand you have traffic studies. The Village Council would appreciate having those studies made available to us. The medical office buildings also generate many cars that park on Village streets, making it difficult, if not impossible, for Village residents and their guests (including aides for the elderly) to find parking spaces. The number of parking spaces the development will provide in its garage is thus of great importance to assure apartment renters, their guests and service personnel will not have to find parking spaces on the street.

The Village Council members recognize and favor redevelopment of the site and thank you for soliciting our comments. We hope that these initial comments will be used to provide a revised plan that the Village of Friendship Heights would be able to support.

Sincerely,

FOR THE COUNCIL

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melanie Rose White". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M'.

Melanie Rose White
Mayor

Cc: Norman Knopf, attorney
Norman.knopf.law@gmail.com

Elza Hisel-McCoy, Chief, Montgomery County Planning Department, M-NCPPC
Elza.Hisel-McCoy@montgomeryplanning.org

David Forman, Chair, Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights
DavidForman01@gmail.com

Julie Davis, Somerset House Condominium
juliedavis1606@comcast.net

Bob Harris, Attorney
RRHarris@lercheearly.com

A R C H A E O N

10/07/21

Mr. Norman Knopf

Re: 5500 Wisc. Ave. Sketch Plan #320220010

Dear Norman,

As per your request, I have reviewed the applicants sketch documents to try and ascertain the accuracy of their calculations for FAR, and Building Height based on averaging, (including the revised drawings on the E-Plans site).

MISSING DATA PREVENTS VERIFICATION OF DEVELOPERS CONCLUSIONS RE F.A.R.AND HEIGHT:

Unfortunately, the plans, elevations and other proposed and existing structure drawings are lacking sufficient dimensions or even scalable accuracy to verify their submission. Key dimensions are not provided and the resolution of the .pdf files is so poor, that when entered into our CADD system, the few dimensional and/or height references provided, are completely illegible and not scalable!

The building sections provided do not indicate the heights of the existing structures or reference to the applicant's reference base elevation.

The floor-to-floor section drawings of the hotel scale at different floor-to-floor heights throughout the building, (but my cursory field measurements indicate the existing structure is remarkably consistent from floor-to-floor). These are critical elements in evaluating their height averaging submission.

A R C H I T E C T S & P L A N N E R S
7503 MAC ARTHUR BLVD. CABIN JOHN, MD 20818

(301) 229-2003 (301) 229-7365 FAX ARCHAEON.COM
FAR:

The sketch plan documents submit conclusions as the total FAR.

However, the necessary information to determine the total sq. ft. of existing and new buildings is not provided so that it is not possible to verify the conclusions.

For example, the dimensions of the buildings, each of its parts, floors, etc. are not provided or detailed.

HEIGHT AVERAGING PLAN:

Dimensions on the height averaging chart do not match the existing plat plan for the hotel. It is virtually impossible for me to check the calculations on the height averaging drawings and charts with the limited dimensional information on the provided drawings.

The plans, elevations and other proposed and existing structure drawings are lacking sufficient dimensions or even scalable accuracy to verify their submission. Submission by pdf's can not be used to produce accurate calculations due to their poor resolution.

Critical irregularities include:

The Topographic Survey sheet includes a Civil Engineering Plat with actual dimensions of the existing hotel tower, (one of the few drawings with actual dimensions).

Those dimensions result in the hotel tower roof footprint at 8,573.02 Sq. Ft. The applicant's Roof Averaging Data Chart indicates that the Hotel roof is 9,656 Sq. Ft. for a significant discrepancy of 1,082.98 Sq. Ft., making other conclusions by the applicant suspect, especially in lieu of the minimal provided dimensional and elevation data!

The Hotel Port Coacher roof has been completely omitted from the averaging calculations! At approximately 2,003 Sq. Ft. and an approximate elevation of 340, it's a substantial structure.

ARCHITECTS & PLANNERS
7503 MACARTHUR BLVD. CABIN JOHN, MD 20818

(301) 229-2003 (301) 229-7365 FAX ARCHAEON.COM
SHARED STREET:

The sketch ground floor composite plan and associated perspective drawings of the proposed "Shared Street" through street, are extremely misleading as to the open and airy space they will provide, (shown as 53 feet on the Sketch Plan. In fact, the 2ND-6TH floor proposed building overhang extends essentially to the curb line of the new "Shared Street". With the side entrance canopy for the existing hotel, also extending essentially to the curb line, these structures actually reduce the visual opening between the two structures to the width of the street, (approx. 22' between structures – see sheet A.10, N/S Section Looking West).

NEW STREET PARKING:

The 22' wide "Shared Street" street is too narrow to provide any street parking. The wider portions of the proposed street completely used by 2 loading docks and the entrance/exit ramp for the new structure. Once again, there are no dimensions provided for the street or the distance between structures on the drawings. The illusion of a spacious common area is extremely misleading and no parking can be provided.

PUBLIC OPEN SPACE PROVIDED:

Required calculation based on 10% of 79,010 sq. ft. or a minimum of 7,901 sq. ft., not on 118.775 sq. ft., as was used to calculate the FAR. They should use the same square footage for their calculation.

While they indicate they are providing 9,145 sf, as significant portion of the provided space is under the 2nd-6th floor proposed building overhang, (if the applicant had provided building dimensions, I could give you more accurate information). Regardless, the design results in a very confined, claustrophobic space and hardly an open public space.

COMPATABILITY WITH ADJACENT DEVELOPMENT:

The Somerset House residential buildings referenced as compatible for height, are in a completely different contextual area. Not only are those building at a dramatically lower grade elevation in relation to the proposed project, are over 150 feet from any public street with a densely tree lined landscape buffer of the same dimensions! The proposed structures are on the building restriction lines, only 24 feet from Wisconsin Ave. Context is critical for determining compatibility!!!

ARCHITECTS & PLANNERS
 7503 MACARTHUR BLVD. CABIN JOHN, MD 20818

(301) 229-2003 (301) 229-7365 FAX ARCHAION.COM

Sheet A.12 indicates the adjacent structures, Highland House West and Willoughby, as though they are at the same grade elevation as the proposed structure, when in fact the grade is significantly different. This is critical and misleading when analyzing Compatibility!

Sheet A.13. Since no height dimension are provided for the existing hotel, Highland House and 5530 Medical Building, it is impossible to determine if the relationship of the existing buildings to the proposed structure are accurate. This omission is critical and possibly misleading when analyzing Compatibility!

Until additional accurately and legible dimensioned drawings are provided, I have no way of evaluating the FAR or Average Height calculations in the submission, (nor does anyone else).

Please let me know if you have any questions or need any additional information.

Sincerely,

Archaeon, Architects

Robert C. Wilkoff, NCARB
President

ARCHITECTS & PLANNERS
7503 MACARTHUR BLVD. CABIN JOHN, MD 20818
(301) 229-2003 (301) 229-7365 FAX ARCHAION.COM

**OUTLINE OF VILLAGE OF FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS COMMENTS
TO PLANNING BOARD STAFF FOR OCTOBER 5, 2021 VIRTUAL MEETING**

(by Village Land Use Attorney, Norman Knopf)

I. PHOTOGRAPHS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

A. *Willard Ave (wall on exterior boundary, enclosing interior of Village)*

- | | |
|---|------------|
| 1. 1-8jpg- IRENE (former name) [rental] | 16 stories |
| 2. 2-14jpg- 4620 N. PARK [condo] | 16 stories |
| 3. 3-2jpg- CARLETON [condo] | 14 stories |
| 4. 4-17jpg- WILLOUGHBY [condo] | 20 stories |
| 5. 5-16jpg- HIGHLAND HOUSE W. (left) [rental] | 20 stories |
| Office Bldg (right, Willard to Wisc. Ave) | 12 stories |

Not fronting on Willard but in the rear of the photo

HIGHLAND HOUSE (right rear, fronts Wisc.) [rental]	15 stories
BARLOW OFFICE BLDG (right rear, fronts Wisc.)	14 stories

B. *Interior of Village- N. Park Ave "canyonazition"*

6. 6-28jpg-N. Park looking toward Irene
(4620 N. Park Ave on left (16 stories
4615 N. Park Ave on right [rental] 16 stories)
7. 7-35jpg- N. Park looking uphill to Wisc. (open space,uphill, top of photo is site of proposed project
a. right on photo-4620 N. Park (16 stories); Carleton 12 (behind tree); Willoughby (16)
b. left -4615 N. Park 16 stories;); then Elizabeth (17 stories);
- 8.. 8-37jpg Elizabeth left; (17 stories) then office bldg; right side Willoughby (16 stories)
- [9.delete-** 9-38 left- Elizabeth, Office Bldg, Brighton Gardens; right Carleton (14 stories), then Willoughby (16 stories) ;open space-site of proposed Project]
10. 10-40-38 jpg -further east on N. Park; to left Brighton Gardens (8 stories); to right Willoughby 16 stories); straight ahead one/two story Village Center; center-open space, site of proposed bldg.
- [11. delete-**11-41 left Brighton Gardens; right Willoughby; center Village Center; open space of site]
12. 12-42jpg left Brighton Gardens; rear Marriott Hotel (12stories) ; center Village Center; open space site of proposed bldg; right side -Willoughby (16 stories)

13. 13-71jpg-Project site; right Highland House (15 stories) -"canyonization" like lower N. Park; left- Marriott (12 stories)
14. 14-65jpg- Hills Plaza at S. Park toward Somerset House (outside of Village and lower elevation)
15. 15-54jpg Hills Plaza and S. Park; Marriot (12 stories); Ch Ch. Med Bldg (14 stories); Somerset House
16. 16-68jpg Hills Plaza and corner S. Park -Highland House (15 stories) confronting new bldg; - "canyonization" of S. Park, similar to "canyonization" of N. Park; w/ blocked views and light for existing and new apartments.
17. 17-61jpg Hills Plaza & S. Park; Highland House garage; relatively short street length, limits parking/delivery space (same length as new road)
18. 18-71jpg clear view of site opening and Highland House on right and Marriot on left
19. 19-72jpg Marriott (12 stories) and Ch. Ch. Med Bldg (14 stories)
20. 20-64jpg S. Park toward Willoughby, located one block from Hills Plaza; looking at portion of Willoughby on Friendship Blvd (16 stories); left ,Highland House West (16 stories)
21. 21-21jpg Wisc. Ave Barlow Bldg (14 stories); Highland House (15) space of site; hotel (12); Ch Ch. Med Bldg (14)
22. 22-22jpg Wisc. Ave same as prior photo with space of project site more visible; bldg (18 stories plus 20 ft of roof top stories and on higher elevation; 213 ft tall); tallest bldg along Wisc. in District and Maryland until mid Bethesda; sticks out like sore thumb or some other finger (south- Highland House 15 stories; Barlow 14; north-hotel 12; Ch. Ch. Med Bldg 14 stories)

C. Bottom Line

Existing development of buildings of great height and density has resulted in adverse " walling" and " canyonization effects. The proposal is on the Village's highest point and occupies one of the last relatively open spaces; will exacerbate these "walling" and "canyonization" effects.

D. Village Position

The Village Council supports redevelopment of this site that meets Zoning Code requirements. The Code mandates three principal requirements that a sketch plan must satisfy (Sec. 59-7.3.3E):

- i. substantially conform to the master plan
- ii. achieve compatibility with existing nearby development
- iii. satisfactory vehicular, pedestrian bicycle access and circulation, parking and loading

The Village is concerned that not one of these requirements appears to be met.

II. SECTOR PLAN

A. 1974 Sector Plan

The buildings in the photos, 14-16 stories and beyond; densities 5-7 FAR and beyond, were built before the 1974 Sector Plan under then existing zoning. The 1974 Plan found this development too great and down zoned all of the parcels in the Village to a maximum height of 90ft and maximum FAR of 2.0. using the new adopted CBD -1 (optional) zoning.* Down zoning was urged and approved the Planning Board staff as well as residents. I have personal knowledge, as I served on the plan's Advisory Committee.

B. 1998 Sector Plan (Current)

1. The current sector plan **reconfirms** the down zoning of the prior sector plan and the CBD-1 zoning , 90 ft height limit and 2.0 FAR . Pages 35-36 show all parcels in the Village continue to be zoned CBD-1. (I also served on the Advisory Committee for this Plan)

2. The 1998 plan notes(p.14): " The 1974 Sector Plan recommended **medium** density commercial and office use of the parcels nearest the Metro station and **lower density** primarily residential uses for the undeveloped properties further from the station." (emphasis added)

3. In confirming the down zoning the current plan notes (p. xxviii): In a densely built-up area like Friendship Heights, open space is critical to the quality of life.This plan seeks to retain visual openness by proposing guidelines for height and orientation of new buildings".*

4. A main principle of the plan (p.31) is to " Preserve and enhance the environment for residents of high rise buildingsThis principle can be achieved **...by limiting the height of new buildings close to high rise apartments to preserve views**".

5 Village concerned about precedent, height and density of this bldg; a few developable parcels remain in Village, e.g. 5500 Friendship Blvd. and developer will demand same.

[*5. A 1990 amendment to the 1974 Sector Plan rezoned the NE corner of Willard Ave and Hills Plaza (parcel 9 B) to CBD 2 to permit the realignment of Hills Plaza and to preserve open space on parcels 8 and 14 as development on those sites would have blocked views from the Willoughby and Highland West. See P 78, 1998 Sector Plan]

[**6. The Sector Plan makes no specific recommendation for the 5500 Wisc. Ave site . The existing development uses most of the 2.0 FAR permitted under the CBD-1 zoning and thus was considered unlikely to redevelop. See p. 40 of 1974 Sector Plan, existing development 1.63 FAR]

III. ZONING UNDER NEW ZONING CODE

A. Density

The new zoning code adopted after the 1998 Plan was represented as creating new named replacement zones, which would make no substantive change to the replaced existing. However, all parcels in the Village which had been zoned CBD-1 with FAR of 2.0 were designated with a new zone

having FAR of 3.0. We believe this error occurred because the CBD-1 zone, under specified and very limited circumstances, not applicable to Village parcels, allowed 3.0 FAR and this was assigned to all Village parcels.

The applicant claims its project is 3.0 FAR (plus permissible additional FAR for MPDUs). However, the real FAR, as actually seen and experienced at and near the site, is over 5.0 FAR. The size of the parcel on which the development occurs is 79,012 sq.ft. The proposed sq. ft of development is 406,563 sq. ft yielding 5.14 FAR. A lower 3.42 FAR is claimed by applying 39,763 sq. ft. of land said to have been previously dedicated for roads for a total of 118,775 sq. . Assuming the amount of dedicated land is correct and can be counted for FAR purposes (an assumption challenged below), the fact that the code provides a maximum density or height, does not mean the developer is entitled to that maximum. Other zoning requirements must be considered such as compliance with sector plan, compatibility with existing development. A visual FAR of 5.0 is a return to the pre-1974 densities which the 1974 and 1998 sector plans expressly rejected by adopting a maximum 2.0 FAR.

B. Height

As noted, the sector plans rejected a continuation of the scale of development which permitted the tall and dense buildings shown in the photos. Down zoning, it imposed the 90 ft maximum height limit of the CBD-1 zone. The propose building is 180-185 ft high (18 stories) plus 20 feet of roof structures, located on the Village high point. It will be 213ft above ground. This more than twice the height limit allowed by the sector plan. We understand that under the new zoning code, height may be averaged so the average does not exceed 90 ft. Even assuming (which we question, see below) the developers' claim of an average height 90 ft, an 18 story plus building results in all the adversities the Sector Plans and good planning sought to avoid- further " walling" of the Village, blocking light, air open space to the sky, blocking views from existing residential units, street " canyonization", e.g. S. Park.

IV. SKETCH PLAN IS INCOMPLETE- MISSING ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

The application must not be approved as it is missing information necessary for the staff, the Board, the public and DPS to evaluate the correctness of the developers' conclusions.

A. Height

The developers concluded that the average height of satisfies the height limit of 90 ft. We are provided merely with the conclusion but not the actual calculations or information from which verifying calculations can be made. This is especially important here where visually viewing the site and its existing development suggests that the average height is higher. The developers obviously have made the calculations in support of their conclusions. The refusal to provide that information, although repeatedly asked, does not instill confidence in the correctness of the conclusions. The Clarksburg scandal changed Planning Board procedure to require verification of the developers plans- trust but verify. Unverifiable conclusions are not sufficient. Waiting until some later stage , e.g. site plan or building permit to get the information permitting verification is not acceptable. Why spend time and effort to determine whether the sketch plan should be approved as now proposed only to find out subsequently that its actual height, density, etc violates the zoning code.

The developer wrongly contends that sufficient information is provided permitting one to calculate height. No specific dimensions of height of the floors of each building and no dimensions of each roof area for each portion of the buildings mass are provided.

While the plans reflect a graphic scale, because they are pdfs, they cannot be used to produce accurate calculations. For example, in computer scaling of the height averaging drawing for the existing hotel (developers' Ex. A), there is a significant difference floor to floor height for each of the floors above the lobby. However, field verifications by the Village's architect indicate that floor to floor heights are almost identical and there is no over- all height for the hotel.

B. DENSITY/FAR

Similarly, information necessary to accurately determine total sq. ft. of the new building and the existing building is missing so it is not possible to verify the developers' conclusion re FAR. For example, the dimensions of the buildings, each of its parts, floors, etc are not provided. Again the developers must have made these calculations in arriving at it overall FAR conclusion and refusal to provide this information to staff and the public renders the sketch plan incomplete so as to preclude its consideration no less approval.

In addition, even from the limited information provided, we believe there are errors in determining the number of sq. ft. of the parcel on which the FAR is based.

1. SDAT tax records- existing lot is 79,012 sq. ft. Developers supporting statement confirms.. However, the sketch plan transposed he numbers to create more than 500 additional sq ft when the more than 5.0 FAR is considered.

2. In determining the FAR , the plan counts as part of sq. ft of the parcel 12,044 sq. ft of land conveyed for a road in 1791. The deed reflects what appears to be substantial consideration paid for the " bargained premises". Sec. 59 4.1.7.A provides that in determining the area of a property, " A tract does not include land conveyed to a government for more than nominal consideration". Thus the 12,044 sq ft may not be counted for FAR purposes, reducing the sq. ft. maximum allowed by more than 60,000 sq. ft (since the FAR is somewhat than more than 5.0).

3. Similarly, the plan counts 9,236 sq. ft conveyed for roads in 1968 for which ten dollars and other consideration were paid. In listing consideration paid, it is the well settled practice to not state the actual amount of consideration but merely \$10 or some other nominal amount. Information is needed as to the actual amount paid. If it is not nominal, the building's sq. ft must be reduced by this square footage (9,236 x 5.0) or about 31.200 sq ft. .

V. SKETCH PLAN MUST " ACHIEVE COMPATIBLE INTERNAL AND EXERNAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN EXISTING ...NEARBY DEVELOPMENT "(. Sec. 59-7.3.3E.5)

The proposed 18 story building, plus 20 ft high roof top stories, is on the highest elevation in the Village, protruding- 213 ft in the air. This is not compatible with existing nearby development.

INCOMPATIBILITY

1. Incompatible with adjacent development- hotel, north,12 stories; Highland House, south 15 stories.
2. Is the tallest building along Wisc. Ave, not only in the Village, but south of the Village all the way to Georgetown in the District, protruding like a sore thumb (or some other finger) .
3. Completes " walling" effect, filling in the last opening between high rise buildings lining Wisc. Ave.
4. Blocks the view of open space/sky facing east on N. Park Ave., literally looming over community.
5. Blocks views, light and air for apartments in Highland House, facing S. Park Ave.
6. " Canyonization" of S. Park, 213ft tall bldg on one side, 15 story Highland House on the other.
7. Block sun and light on Village Park next to Village Center ,opposite side of The Hills Plaza from new bldg. Developers claim their shadow studies show no shadows but refused to give us the building dimensions and other information necessary to run the shadow studies to independently verify..

VI. SKETCH PLAN MUST " PROVIDE SATISFACTORY GENERAL VEHICULAR, PEDESTRIAN, AND BICYCLE ACCESS, CIRCULATION, PARKING AND LOADING." (. Sec. 59-7.3.3E.6)

The sketch plan fails to take into account existing conditions on Village streets and the needs of a large residential buildings in today's world. Therefore it will exacerbate existing adverse traffic congestion, circulation and parking conditions on these streets which the Village owns and maintains. The plan fails to satisfy this legal requirement.

1. Residential buildings in the Village today require large areas to accommodate not only pick -up and drop-off of resident, but innumerable delivery and service vehicles:

e.g delivery vehicles many times a day from each-Fed. Ex., UPS, Giant, Costco, Amazon, restaurants, etc as well as a Post Office truck parked for many hours while the mail is placed in internal mailboxes; e.g. service vehicles moving trucks, garbage trucks, electricians, plumbers, internet, air-condition etc. installers/repair persons, window washers floor cleaners, etc, servicing the building or an individual unit.

The existing buildings in the Village have insufficient to no areas inside the building or on the street to accommodate these vehicles, resulting in vehicles double parking, parking in "No Parking" areas, and circulating on the streets waiting for a street parking space to be available. Street parking is very limited and almost always full by cars of persons visiting the nearby medical buildings (Barlow ,Ch. Ch. Bldg).

2. The sketch plan fails to provide adequate space for these vehicles and thus will exacerbate the existing adverse conditions.

a. The building entrance area on the corner of S. Park and Hills Plaza is too small to even accommodate pick-up and drop-offs for 380 units, (which is not instantaneous as frequently involves waiting cars) .

b. There is no room at the entrance to accommodate the many and constant delivery vehicles noted above. They will double park on S. Park or Hills Plaza near the entrance, worsening the existing street congestion.

c. The developers' assert the new road will provide parking for *delivery* vehicles. However, there is no pedestrian access from the road directly to the lobby requiring the delivery person to carry what is to be delivered a distance to reach the entrance on S. Park and Hills Plaza. Even if direct access were provided from the new road, the shortest distance to the lobby entrance is from the entrance on the corner which is what will be utilized, resulting in vehicles double parked in that vicinity.

d. The new street does not provide sufficient parking spaces for *service* vehicles and there appears to be insufficient or no space reserved for such vehicles in the garage. The new road can accommodate few parked vehicles as it is not long, and much curb space is taken for garage ingress and egress. There is a loading area for moving trucks, perhaps one or two bays, which is woefully insufficient for a 380 unit rental building.

e. The relatively short length and narrowness of the new road appear to render it incapable of adequately providing all of the services assigned to it: two way through traffic, bicycle and pedestrian paths; access to and from the 380 unit building's garage for residents and retail visitors, moving vans, garbage trucks etc.; and parking on the new street for residents' visitors, service vehicles, etc. In addition, the street is to have areas reserved for outdoor dining.

f. The village is concerned the new street will become a traffic choked fume filled alley with vehicles backed up onto Hills Plaza, worsening the existing traffic congestion. We also note some of the bldg will overhang the street. There is little incentive for the Village to grant the curb cut required for this new road.

g. Traffic of the residential bldg and its retail uses will exacerbate existing congested traffic conditions on S. Park Ave. at Wisc. Ave; intersection of S Park Ave and The Hills Plaza; the intersection of Somerset Terr. and Wisc. Ave. The developers' contention there will be less traffic than currently is absurd as discussed in previously submitted Village email to G. Bogdan, Sept. 10, and memo of Julie Davis, Esq. to G. Bogdan, Sept. 12, incorporated by reference.

VII. AMENITIES ARE DEFICIENT

Code requires a public amenity of 10% onsite public use space. The proposed amenity is only 7,900 sq feet, based on the 79,000 sq. ft lot. However, the development itself is based 118,77 sq .ft. utilizing the prior dedicated sq. ft. Actual percentage of public amenity 6.6% and the full 10% is clearly needed.

Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights

October 31, 2021

TO: Casey Anderson, Chair and Members of the Planning Board
Elza Hisel- McCoy, Chief Down County Planning, Grace Bogdan, Planning
Coordinator

FROM: Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights, Inc.

DATE: October 31, 2021

RE: OPPOSITION TO 5500 WISCONSIN AVE. SKETCH PLAN

The Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights, Inc. ("CCCFH") is a civic association comprised of organizations representing 21 communities in and around the Friendship Heights area. The developers of 5500 Wisc. Ave. made a presentation to CCCFH at CCCFH's request. Thereafter, at its October 20, 2021 meeting, the sketch plan was discussed and CCCFH VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO OPPOSE THE SKETCH PLAN AS CURRENTLY PROPOSED. THE OPPOSITION IS BASED ON THREE REASONS:

- I. The plan does not substantially conform with the recommendations of the sector plan, required by Sec. 59.7.3.3 E.2;**
- II. The plan does not achieve compatible relationships with existing nearby development, required by Sec. 59.7.3.3 E. 5;**
- III. The plan does not provide satisfactory vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle circulation, parking and loading, required by Sec. 59.7.3.3 E.6;**

I. Non-conformity with Sector Plan

CCCFH has played a major role in the writing and adoption the Friendship Heights Sector Plans. CCCFH was founded in the early 1970's in response to the County's announcement that it would prepare a Sector Plan for Friendship Heights and apply new zones that were being drafted (CBD zones). CCCFH representatives comprised 7 of the 11 Advisory Committee Members working with Planning Board staff to formulate the plan, adopted in 1974. Similarly, when the 1974 plan was updated and adopted in 1998, the current plan, CCCFH representatives constituted 10 of the 16 members of the Advisory Committee. This extensive involvement of CCCFH in formulating the plans, as well as the benefits CCCFH communities receive from the plans, helps explain the concern of CCCFH and its member communities at the possibility of approval of a sketch plan which is inconsistent with the provisions and purpose of the Sector Plans.

A. Prior to the adoption of the 1974 Sector Plan, the Village of Friendship Heights had been extensively developed with very tall and dense buildings permitted under the then code, e.g. the (former) Irene (16 stories, FAR 6.6), Willoughby (20 stories, FAR 8.29), Barlow Bldg. (14 stories, FAR 5.10), and Chevy Chase Bldg, (14 stories, FAR 5.12). These buildings created a "barricade" along the Willard Ave. and Wisconsin Ave. boundaries of the Village. Such large buildings resulted in the "canyonization" of interior streets. For example, N. Park Ave. has the 16 story Irene at the west end of the street, with the 16 story 4620 condo building lining the south side of N. Park Ave and across the street on the north side, 16 story N. Park apartments and 17 story Elizabeth. These tall

buildings lining the street provide limited open space, light and air, and block views from dwelling units, or afford views only into neighboring dwelling unit windows.

The 1974 Sector Plan found this level of development too great. The plan down zoned all parcels in the Village to a maximum height of 90ft and a maximum FAR of 2.0, applying the newly adopted CBD-1 (optional) zone. This down zoning was adopted by the County at the request of the Planning Board and its staff as well as residents.

B. The current 1998 Sector Plan reconfirms the CBD down zoning the of 90 ft height limit and 2.0 FAR. Pages 35-36 show all parcels in the Village continue to be zoned CBD-1. The 1998 plan notes (p-140):

"The 1974 Sector Plan recommended medium density commercial and office use of the parcels nearest to the Metro station and lower density primarily residential uses for the undeveloped properties further from the station ".
(emphasis added).

In confirming the down zoning, the current plan notes (p. xxviii):

" In a densely built-up area like Friendship Heights, open space is critical to the quality of life."

A main principle of the current plan is to (p.31):

"[p]reserve and enhance the environment for residents of high-rise buildings...
This principle can be achieved ...by limiting the height of new buildings close to high rise apartments to preserve views."

C. The proposed new buildings, located at the highest point of elevation of Friendship Heights, is 18 stories, plus two 10 ft roof top stories for mechanical equipment. It will protrude 213 ft above ground. Clearly this is not in conformity with the 90 ft height limit of the Sector Plan. Similarly, the FAR is effectively 5.14, and thus not in conformity with the Sector Plan's 2.0 limit. The 5.14 FAR is based upon the fact that the entire site is 79,012 sq. ft according to the SDAT records and the total development proposed is 406,563 sq.ft. The developer claims FAR is 3.42 by including in the size of the site about 40,400 sq ft of land previously dedicated for public roads. However, the actual visual effect of the development will be an FAR of 5.14.

The sketch plan not only fails to be in conformity with the Sector Plan's height and FAR limits, but its approval eviscerates the Sector Plan's very purpose - to down zone so as not to permit the continuation of the scale of development in height and FAR that occurred prior to the Sector Plan, which created a wall along the Village's boundary and resulted in "canyonization" of interior streets. The new building completes the barricading wall effect along Wisconsin Ave by filling in the one remaining relatively open space and "canyonizing" the first block of S. Park Ave. by placing effectively a 21-story building across the street from the 15 story Highland House, blocking, light, air, and views from dwelling units.

D. CCCFH is aware that since the adoption of the Sector Plan, a new zoning code was enacted. The new code zone, for this site and all other sites in the Village, retains the 90 ft height limit but allows greater height as long as the average height for the entire development does not exceed 90 ft. Of course, this does not, nor could it, override the Sector Plan recommendations and its purpose—to prevent buildings in excess of the 90 ft in height. Nor does the existence of averaging mean that a developer is entitled to average as a matter of right and ignore other considerations such as the Sector Plan limitations, compatibility, etc. We are also aware of zoning code provisions which permit

increased height over Sector Plan recommendations for a greater percentage of MPDU's. The developers have advised that for their plan they are allowed an increase of 12 ft. Thus the maximum height permitted is 90 ft plus 12 ft or a total of 102 ft- not 231ft. [We note with great concern that the developers have refused to provide sufficient specifications of their plan which would permit the community as well as the Planning Board and its staff- to verify the developers' conclusions re height averaging.]

In adopting the new zoning code in 2014, it was represented that the names of the zones were being changed but not their substance. Nevertheless, the new zone replacing the CBD-1 zone provided for an FAR of 3.0 although the CBD-1 zone replaced had an FAR of 2.0. We believe this was error which occurred due to the fact that the CBD-1 zone could have a 3.0 FAR under specified and extraordinary conditions but those conditions were not present in the Village. In any event, even assuming the correctness of a 3.0 FAR, rather than FAR of 2.0, does not eliminate the Sector Plan requirement of a 2.0 FAR, nor eliminate the requirement of compatibility with existing development, nor confer upon a developer a greater FAR as a matter of right. A zoning code provision which does override the Sector Plan FAR limit is the allowance of greater FAR for an increased percentage of MPDU's. The developer has taken advantage of this by providing more MPDU's which it asserts entitles the project to an additional 0.42 FAR. Thus, the permitted FAR is 3.42. However, as noted above, the actual effective FAR is 5.14 when one considers the existing square footage of the site rather than the land previously dedicated for, and now part of adjacent roads.

II. Not compatible with existing nearby development

A. The building is 213ft tall, the equivalent of 21 stories, on the highest elevation in Friendship Heights. It will stick out above the line of buildings along the west side of Wisconsin Ave. like a sore thumb. It will be the tallest building on Wisconsin Ave south to the Potomac River. Adjacent to the north and downhill is the 12-story hotel, and then the 14 story Chevy Chase Medical Building. Adjacent to the south is the 15 story Highland House, then downhill the 14 story Barlow Building, etc.

B. The building fills in the one remaining open space between high rise buildings along Wisconsin Ave., completing the walling effect sought to be avoided by the Sector Plan. This site currently provides open space, a view of the sky facing east as one walks along N. Park Ave, sits in the adjacent Village Humphrey Park, etc. A building of such great height will loom over the community. The shadows cast by the building are considerable but the exact locations are uncertain as the developers have refused to give to Friendship Heights Village the specifications used to conduct their shadow studies so that the studies can be verified.

C. The 18-21 story building on one side of S. Park facing the 15 story Highland House on the other side will "canyonize" the street, blocking light, air and block views. The blocking of views will not only occur with these two buildings but other nearby buildings, e.g., the Willoughby units fronting on Friendship Blvd facing east and Highland House West, situated on S. Park west of the Highland House.

III. Failure to provide satisfactory vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle circulation, parking and loading

Friendship Heights Village, a member of CCCFH, has informed CCCFH that the current residential high-rise buildings in the Village have insufficient pick-up/drop-off areas for residents of the buildings, minimal to no parking spaces for visitors and guests, minimal to no parking for delivery and service vehicles, and insufficient, or no, bays for unloading moving trucks and no garbage truck pick-up areas. As a result, vehicles double park on the streets, park in "No Parking" areas, creating

unsafe conditions for vehicles and pedestrians. Further, the intersections of S. Park-Hills Plaza, S. Park -Wisconsin Ave, and Somerset-Wisconsin Ave, also currently experience congestion. with vehicles backed up to enter the intersections, frequently having to wait more than one traffic signal cycle to exit.

The developers represented that their proposed plan would not exacerbate these problems but would improve all conditions by the creation of a new street between the hotel and the apartment building. In addition, this street would provide a pleasant amenity with cafe/restaurant outdoor seating along the side of the new road. However, substantial portions of the street will necessarily be devoted to the entrance/exit areas for the apartment house garage, garbage truck pick-up, and moving truck unloading areas, and traffic lanes to accommodate two-way traffic. There appears to be little to no room for delivery/service vehicles, visitor/guest parking, adequate pick-up and drop-off, bicycle and pedestrian paths, etc. as well as any place for outdoor eating. Comments by various agencies to the DRC noted the inability of the proposed narrow new road to achieve all the purposes claimed. Even the developers responding comments indicate that revisions to the road concept are needed. The zoning code requires a finding for approval of a sketch plan that it provides satisfactory vehicular, bicycle, pedestrian circulation and parking and loading. Such a finding cannot be made. The developers argue that these problems can be worked out at the subsequent stage of site plan. But resolving these problems may NOT be able to be worked out, or at a minimum require a substantial change to the plan, such as a widening the proposed road by locating the apartment building further back from the new road, or reducing the massing of the building. The code, and good planning, require these issues to be addressed and resolved before sketch plan approval.

Conclusion

CCCFH favors redevelopment of 5500 Wisc. Ave. However, any redevelopment must more closely adhere to the legal requirements of (i) substantial conformity to the Sector Plan; (ii) compatibility with existing development; and, (iii) satisfactory vehicular, bicycle, pedestrian circulation, parking and loading. Suggestions for changes have been made to the developers which could lead to CCCFH and its member communities to consider dropping their opposition. Changes have not been made. We urge the Planning Board staff and the Board to DENY approval of the sketch plan as presently drafted and require submittal of a revised plan.

Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights
David S. Forman, Chair

Representing the Communities of Brookdale, Chevy Chase Village, Chevy Chase West, Drummond, Glen Echo Heights, Green Acres, Kenwood, Kenwood Condominium, Kenwood Forest II, Kenwood House Cooperative, Kenwood Place Condominium, Somerset, Somerset House Condominiums, Springfield, Sumner Village, Village of Friendship Heights, Westbard Mews, Westmoreland, Westwood Mews, and Wood Acres

From: [richard.gross](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Bogdan, Grace](#); [Hisel-McCoy, Elza](#); [Dickel, Stephanie](#)
Subject: 5500 Wisconsin Ave. Chevy Chase Md
Date: Tuesday, October 26, 2021 2:34:19 PM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Chair Anderson,

Please support the proposal to redevelop 5500 Wisconsin Avenue in Friendship Heights.

I am a relatively new resident of Friendship Heights, having purchased my condo at 4620 North Park about four years ago. I'm also a real estate agent so I have the perspective of a newcomer, as well as someone who understands what drives the real estate market.

I moved to Friendship Heights in the hopes that this would be a vibrant, energetic place to live with plenty of retail, restaurants and amenities within walking distance. Unfortunately, our community has become quite stagnant, with multifamily buildings showing their age and little to no new housing in our future. This unfortunate lack of vibrancy brings with it shuttered stores, restaurants and block after block of empty store windows.

That's why we need to move forward with the new apartment building at 5500 Wisconsin Avenue. It's vital that we create an environment that draws new people to our community. A new building featuring up-to-date amenities and including 15% Moderately Priced Dwelling Units will attract new (and hopefully younger) residents to the neighborhood. The building design will add an air of sophistication to Friendship Heights that has been lacking. The end result will hopefully be an increase in consumers and an environment that will be attractive to neighborhood-serving stores and restaurants.

The streetscape surrounding this proposed new building, particularly on the Hills Plaza is in dire need of improvement, as it looks more like an unattractive service road than something enjoyable to walk on. I was very happy to see the applicant's plans for improvements there, as well as on South Park and Wisconsin Avenues.

These are just a sampling of the reasons that the Planning Board should approve the 5500 Wisconsin redevelopment application. Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

Richard Gross
4620 North Park Ave. Apt. 1002W

Chevy Chase, MD 20815

Richard Gross
Cell: 410-913-7757

4620 North Park Ave. 1002W
Chevy Chase Md 20815

From: [Peter Dougherty](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Bogdan, Grace](#); [Hisel-McCoy, Elza](#); [Dickel, Stephanie](#)
Subject: Sketch Plan review for 5500 Wisconsin Avenue, Chevy Chase / Letter of support from neighborhood resident
Date: Wednesday, October 27, 2021 11:46:46 AM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chairman Anderson,

I am a resident of the Village of Friendship Heights, the parent of two young children in the MCPS system, and an architect with extensive urban design, commercial building, and regional sustainability experience. I am not a member of the 5500 Wisconsin project team, and comment on it only as an interested neighbor and professional. I recognize that my comments may not be unique or novel, but submit them all the same for your team's consideration.

The written record on this project is already extensive, and the approval process covers many specific and technical points addressed elsewhere, so my recommendations below focus on the two aspects of the 5500 proposal which I believe have most relevance to the residents of our community and to the health of the broader region:

1. Density. To increase residential capacity in Friendship Heights is a matter of clear opportunity, practical efficiency, social justice, and climate change harm reduction, and as such it should be strongly encouraged. This development should provide as much quality housing as it possibly can.
2. Design. Village neighbors and others have the collective right to expect that all new development will be safe and attractive, i.e., that it will create no significant dangers, and that it will raise rather than lower the overall level of urban, architectural/visual, and landscape quality in the neighborhood. Neighbors do not have the individual right to expect or demand that their specific or unique concerns will or even can be met.

These two issues are broadly but not rigidly related. In other words, moderate and high-density projects and neighborhoods can be wonderful, low-density projects can be awful, and a dense, attractive project is certainly possible to achieve on the site in question. In my view, the Village and all relevant review authorities should be permissive, even aggressive, on density, and set accordingly high expectations for design.

In case it may help to expand on these two points:

1. Density.
 - Everyone living in Friendship Heights can live here because someone else once built here. We should not assume or expect the right to stop this historical process of

development and change, which would prevent potential future residents from enjoying benefits that current residents enjoy.

- Cities in general, and the DC area in particular, are suffering from an acute housing cost crisis. This pernicious problem especially affects our most economically vulnerable neighbors, and it can only be addressed by increasing housing density across the region, wherever we reasonably can.
- There is also a major, worsening, and much more deeply dangerous climate crisis underway. Building new housing near existing, high-capacity transit is a productive way to address that threat, by reducing the significant carbon emissions from both housing and transit.
- Those currently living in medium to high-density areas proximal to transit can be justly proud of (if not fully satisfied with) our collective contribution to the climate battle. However, it is clearly counterproductive to limit our own effectiveness by fighting for reduced density.
- FAR (floor area ratio) is a routine measure of density useful in evaluating individual projects and in comparing different projects built over time. However, it is clearly defined and should be easily presented and measured. The FAR of a project should not in itself cause debate.
- The development review process must obviously follow existing law, but any discretionary consideration should question the relevance of development guidelines developed in or prior to 1998. As noted above and elsewhere in the record, climate, affordability, retail, and other concerns have changed since then.

2. Design.

- People like and dislike different things, and so it is not easy to establish a universal definition of good design. Still, weird metaphors and glib conceits, like “wall,” “canyon,” etc., often obscure more than they reveal. As much as possible, evaluations and expectations for design quality should reference specific, observable qualities and effects. Coherence, order, space, light, texture, durability, and comfort are some of the many useful aesthetic concepts available.
- Of course, design concerns go well beyond the aesthetic. Traffic, safety, and parking are all design concerns with design solutions. Speaking purely anecdotally: in four years of living in Friendship Heights, I have never needed more than a couple of minutes to drive safely home through the neighborhood, whether from Wisconsin, Western, River, or anywhere else. But every single time I send my kids out on their bikes, I worry.
- If the neighborhood has real traffic, parking, or safety problems, then the neighborhood should study those problems and work to improve them. That general responsibility is collective, and it should not be the burden of any individual property.
- Likewise, no individual property is responsible for the topography of the overall neighborhood. Height standards have defined protocols for measurement which typically use the existing site grade as a measurement “base.” That one site is higher than another is also completely typical, and not a reasonable argument for stricter height limits on higher sites.

Other things being equal, of course, taller, bigger, and more prominent buildings should be more beautifully designed, a source of joy and pride, rather than disappointment and annoyance. However, I find this an argument for design as such, rather than for some peripheral or wholly unrelated mitigation.

- Finally, to the extent that design is considered, its effects and impacts should be weighted to account for their relative importance to the entire community. One person's distant and slightly obscured view may be some other family's home.

Please feel welcome to contact me with questions, or for further respectful discussion.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Peter Dougherty
4620 N Park #808W
Chevy Chase MD 20815

Peter William Dougherty
AIA / LEED AP
Founder / Principal
peter@pwilliam.com
o. +1.202.525.7590
c. +1 202 679 7906
www.pwilliam.com

Peter William