

Item 7 - Correspondence

From: [Roger Cochetti](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Gatling, Tsaiquan](#)
Subject: COMMENT ON: 5500 WISCONSIN CR-3.0 C-2.0 R-2.75 H-90T Amendment No. 32022001A Site Plan No 820230040
Date: Sunday, April 9, 2023 6:34:02 PM

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

Since the Planning Board has recently been reconstituted, my comments address the broader proposal to redevelop 5500 Wisconsin Avenue by replacing a building approximately 20 feet tall with an apartment house effectively 200 feet tall.

I have lived within about a mile of this location for the past 30 years and currently live within Friendship Heights Village. I should emphasize that, as someone who has been both a career business executive and a small-scale real estate investor (Reits, condos, etc.), I have nothing but respect for the real estate developer and the various firms they have hired to advance their proposal. I view myself as pro-development, although I believe that the Board's approval of a building of this height is a serious mistake and should be reconsidered.

The genuine maximum height of any structure in this location should be limited to something closer to 50 feet for the following reasons:

- To the extent that the Board is attempting to pursue the Thrive concept of increasing population density near Metro stations, it is important to keep in mind that ***according to the US Census Bureau, FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS IS CURRENTLY THE MOST DENSELY POPULATED PLACE IN THE UNITED STATES! With a population density of around 80,000 people per square mile, it is more densely populated than Manhattan, or any other Place in the United States.*** If three adjacent highrise condominiums/apartment houses were included, Friendship Heights could already be the most densely populated place on the planet. And this does not include four or five highrise apartment/condominiums currently planned for nearby Friendship Heights, DC.
- As a result, Friendship Heights needs many things, but another high rise multiple dwelling is not one of them. Friendship Heights probably needs a library, a movie theater, a playhouse, a soccer field, tennis courts, a soundproof pickleball court, an art museum and much more. But a 200+ foot tall building that adds 400+ residents and 300+ cars to its already-crowded streets could not possibly be high on anyone's priority list if they were guided by the interests of the roughly 9,000 people who live in the Friendship Heights neighborhood.
- Throughout human history, we have found watching the sky at night and during the day a principal source of inspiration, entertainment, and education (For about 49,995 generations, watching the sky at night was a principal evening activity. TV and movies have been around for 5 generations and smartphones for one.) It has been fashionable during recent years to emphasize the importance of preserving green space. ***It is equally -perhaps more- important to preserve blue space.*** Preserving blue space, particularly in neighborhoods where it is threatened, should be a priority for the Board. ***Anyone who lives in Friendship Heights knows that, although it already has many high rise buildings, in fact the neighborhood and the Village are both covered with tiny parks,***

low-rise buildings and parking lots. The result of all of these low-rise structures is that currently, from almost any street or park in Friendship Heights one can get a good view of the moon, the stars, the clouds and the sky. This proposed building would replace an existing low-rise building with a high-rise thereby eliminating important access to the sky.

- Humphrey Park, a small, very pretty park in the center of Friendship Heights is currently surrounded on three sides by high rise buildings, substantially blocking access to the sky on three sides. The proposed building would replace a low-rise building currently on the Park's east side with a highrise, effectively preventing anyone in the Park from being able to watch the moon, the stars or the clouds.

In conclusion, in pursuing increased population density in locations near Metro stations, the Board should recognize that **in locations where population density is already extremely high, no net good public purpose is served by further adding to extreme population density;** and that **--since there are many locations where new high rise structures might be built- saving the blue (the ability to watch the stars, the moon, the clouds and the sky) must be a priority concern** for all Montgomery County residents and for the Planning Board.

Thanks for your consideration,

Roger Cochetti
5500 Friendship Boulevard
Friendship Heights, MD 20815

From: [Marlene Snyder](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Bartley, Shawn](#); [Hedrick, James](#); [Pedoeem, Mitra](#); [Piñero, Roberto](#); Grace.Bogdan@montgomery.planning.org; Elza.Hisel-Mccoy@montgomery.planning.org; stephanie.dickel@montgomery.planning.org; TsaiquanGatling@montgomery.planning.org; TanyaStern@montgomery.planning.org
Subject: Subject: 5500 Wisconsin Development
Date: Tuesday, April 11, 2023 5:06:19 PM

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Dear Chairman Zyontz -

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 amenities 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 in our Village which appear to be going in the wrong direction. I feel that development of 5500 Wisconsin would be beneficial to our area.

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

I hope that you will join me in supporting the Sketch Plan Amendment and Site Plan Application for 5500 Wisconsin.

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

301.986.8583

From: [Hazel Keimowitz](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Bartley, Shawn](#); [Hedrick, James](#); [Pedoeem, Mitra](#); [Piñero, Roberto](#); [Bogdan, Grace](#); [Hisel-McCoy, Elza](#); [Dickel, Stephanie](#); [Gatling, Tsaiquan](#); [Stern, Tanya](#)
Subject: Plan Application to Redevelop 5500 Wisconsin Avenue
Date: Tuesday, April 11, 2023 7:32:04 PM

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To the Montgomery County Planning Board:

I am writing this letter in support of the Sketch Plan Amendment and Site Plan application to redevelop 5500 Wisconsin Avenue. I have lived in the neighborhood for more than 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 a presentation made to 4620 North Park earlier in the redevelopment process. 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.

Donohoe Development worked with the Village Council after the Planning Board approved the Sketch Plan, leading to additional new changes to the building and traffic flow and resulting in the Council now supporting the proposal. Among those changes are moving the apartment entrance to the shared street and changing the shared street from two-way to one-way.

This redevelopment will bring the lift that is badly needed to Friendship Heights so I respectfully encourage the Planning Board to approve these plans.

Thank you for your consideration.

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

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

From: [Cameron Moody](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Bartley, Shawn](#); [Hedrick, James](#); [Pedoeem, Mitra](#); [Piñero, Roberto](#); [Bogdan, Grace](#); [Hisel-McCoy, Elza](#); [Dickel, Stephanie](#); [Gatling, Tsaiquan](#); [Stern, Tanya](#)
Subject: Support for 5500 Wisconsin Ave in the Village of Friendship Heights
Date: Tuesday, April 11, 2023 10:03:06 PM

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

Dear Chair Zyontz,

I am a Friendship Heights resident that doesn't necessarily fit the mold of what you may picture as someone who lives in the Village. I'm a millennial that has lived in the Elizabeth Condominiums for more than 10 years and am engaged in our Village's affairs.

I'm writing to express my strong support for the Sketch Plan Amendment and Site Plan applications for 5500 Wisconsin. I have attended several briefings about this proposal and see that it has much to offer our community.

• 5500 Wisconsin will be the first new building in the Village for at least two decades. With the up-to-date architecture and amenities being offered, the new building will attract new residents that will most certainly help to attract more retail to the neighborhood.

• 5500 Wisconsin will enhance the diversity of our community. Friendship Heights is a type of NORC (naturally occurring retirement community), which is of great benefit to our senior population, but not enough to sustain our vitality going forward. This new apartment community will feature a variety of apartment sizes, with 15% of the apartments priced as MPDUs. We will see a mix of incomes, ages and professions move to our Village, giving it the renewed energy, it needs and enriching all of our lives.

• The plans include retail on the ground floor, focused on serving the neighborhood. Past attempts at exclusive designer retail failed because those stores did not serve our own residents. I'm looking forward to patronizing these new establishments.

A testament to the quality of this proposal is the broad support it has received in the Village, including the Village Council. However, I learned recently that the condominium community in Somerset is challenging the application because they want the applicant to pay for improvements and maintenance of their private road, Somerset Terrace. Whatever their concerns may be, they always have the option of requesting that the County take over ownership of the road, which will include the cost of maintenance and address their needs.

Thank you for considering my statement of support and my request that the Planning Board approve the

Sketch Plan Amendment and Site Plan applications.

Sincerely,

Cameron Moody

4601 North Park Ave.Apt 910

Chevy Chase, MD. 20815

301-535-2264

From: [Constance Row](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: 5500 Wisconsin Application
Date: Wednesday, April 12, 2023 10:59:20 AM
Attachments: [Planning Board letter.docx](#)

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

Dear Mr. Zyontz,

As a Friendship Heights resident, I support the development of 5500 Wisconsin Avenue and hope it will be approved despite what I understand is opposition from an adjacent neighborhood whose issues can be addressed.

Attached is my letter of support.

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

Dear Chairman Zyontz,

As a Friendship Heights resident, I am concerned about the serious decline in retail along Wisconsin Avenue and its effect 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, 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. I have heard that some Somerset condominium residents are concerned about the impact on their privately owned road, Somerset Terrace and have asked the applicant to pay for improvements. However, I understand that they can apply to convert Somerset Terrace to a County-owned road. That sounds like a reasonable alternative to address their concerns and is one they should consider pursuing.

Since the Planning Board unanimously approved the Sketch Plan in 2021, the applicant has worked closely with the Friendship Heights Village Council to make adjustments to the original plans. The developers' compromises have gained the support of the Village Council.

Please 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.

I hope you will approve the Sketch Plan Amendment and Site Plan application for 5500 Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

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

From: [Michele Rosenfeld](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Testimony: Item No. 7 - 5500 Wisconsin Avenue
Date: Wednesday, April 12, 2023 11:19:28 AM
Attachments: [Outlook-gzxlq4rj.png](#)
[2023.04.12 testimony.signature copy.pdf](#)

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Chairman Zyontz: Please accept the attached written testimony into the record of this case for the Board's consideration, and we will attend tomorrow's hearing to testify further in connection with the concerns raised in the letter.

Regards,

Michele Rosenfeld
The Law Office of Michele Rosenfeld LLC
1 Research Court, Suite 450
Rockville MD 20850
michele@marylandpropertylaw.com
301-204-0913





April 12, 2023

Mr. Jeff Zyontz, Chairman
Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reddie Drive
Wheaton MD 20902

RE: 5500 Wisconsin Avenue (Item 7)
Sketch Plan Amendment No. 32022001A And Site Plan No. 820230040

Dear Chairman Zyontz and Commissioners:

On behalf of my clients Condominium House Condominium Association, Inc. (5600 Wisconsin Avenue), Somerset Condominium House II, Inc. (5610 Wisconsin Avenue) and Parc Somerset Condominium Association, Inc. (5630 Wisconsin Avenue) (collectively "Somerset Condominiums") and their collective 409 condominium owners, please accept this testimony for your consideration.

Introduction

Somerset Condominiums supports this project, urges that the Board approve the pending applications, and look forward to this step forward in the revitalization of Friendship Heights that this project offers.

We do have specific concerns about pedestrian safety at the intersections of Hills Plaza/Somerset Terrace, and on Somerset Terrace itself, resulting from traffic circulation patterns that are not fully reflected in the application materials. Based on these concerns we ask that the Board add the following three conditions of approval:

1. The installation of two pedestrian crosswalks within Somerset Terrace to include the following design features: (a) a speed table or bump or hump; (b) surface striping or other visual delineation of the crosswalk; and (c) roadside signage with pedestrian-controlled flashing lights to alert vehicular drivers of pedestrian usage;
2. At the intersection of Hills Plaza and Somerset Terrace, install bump-out or bulb-out curbs adjacent to the existing pedestrian crossing across the Hills Plaza, east to west; and
3. No construction vehicular usage of Somerset Terrace.

My clients are happy to work with the applicant on final design of these features. See representative examples, Attachment 1.

Justification

According to Joe Mehra, P.E., PTOE, an expert traffic engineer retained by Somerset Condominiums, the traffic analysis provided by the applicant is inaccurate, and in fact a full LATR study is required. Attachment 2. We submit that such an analysis would demonstrate that traffic circulation patterns will, in fact, have significant impacts on Somerset Terrace that merit safety mitigation measures. While Somerset Terrace is a private road, owned and maintained by the Somerset Condominiums, the road serves the general public and Somerset Condominium residents alike, and operational impacts within and around Somerset Terrace impact the surrounding public street network.



Figure 1.

Internal garage circulation, which allows vehicular access between the Future Development and the Existing Hotel, also allows access to Somerset Terrace via The Hills Plaza by occupants of both buildings. This access to The Hills Plaza via the existing hotel exit to the The Hills Plaza materially impacts the traffic circulation pattern reflected in the Staff Report.

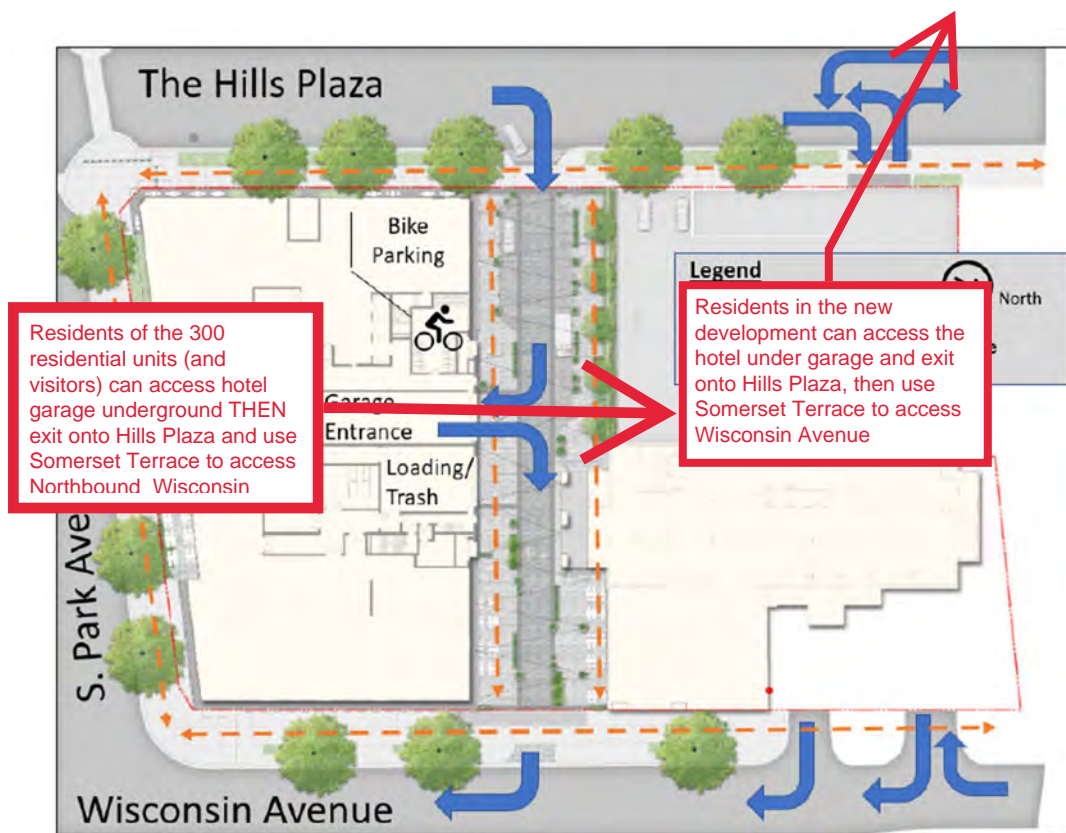


Figure 12 – Site Access and Circulation

Figure 2

Figure 3, below, shows a more robust reflection of how traffic circulation will work.

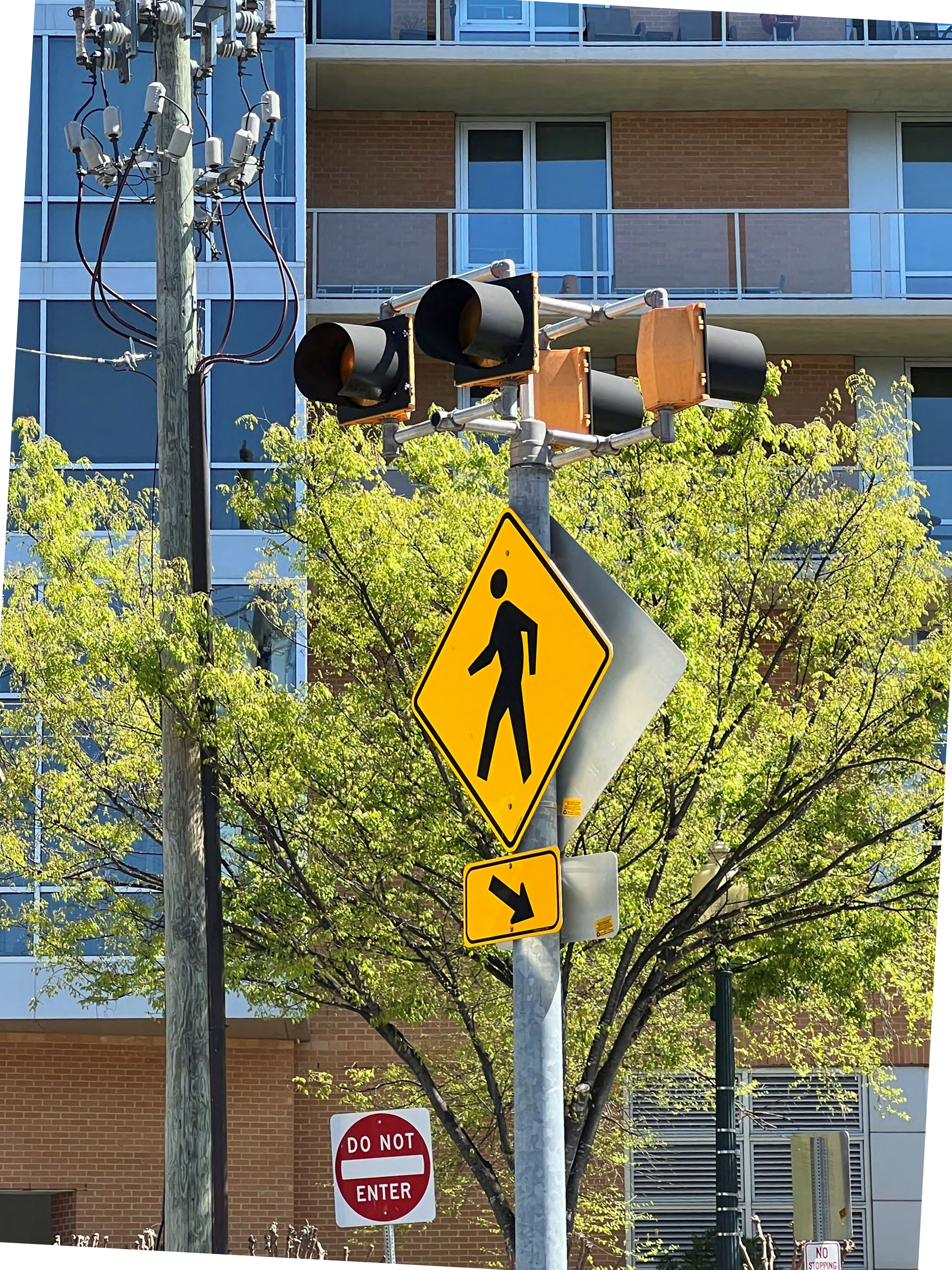


Conclusion

For these reasons, we ask that the Board either adopt the requested conditions, or find that a LATR traffic study analysis is required so that circulation impacts can be fully evaluated.

Respectfully Submitted,
Michele McDaniel Rosenfeld
Michele McDaniel Rosenfeld

Attachment One







NO
TURN
ON
RED



PROVIDE A CLEAR SPACE FOR PEDESTRIANS TO CROSS THE STREET SAFELY. DO NOT PARK OR STOP IN THE CROSSWALK OR IN THE PATH OF PEDESTRIANS. VIOLATORS WILL BE FINED.



EXIT





S Park AVE

S Park Ave

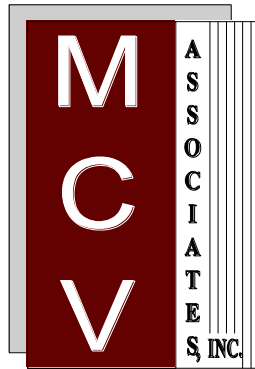
NO TURN ON RED

No right turn on red sign

Right turn arrow sign

OFFICE SPACE FOR LEASE
877-3000

HIGHLAND CHEVY CHASE



4605-C Pinecrest Office Park Drive
Alexandria, Virginia 22312-1442
(703) 914-4850
FAX (703) 914-4865
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www.mcvainc.com

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Lisa Mezzetti, Scott Schreiber, Kenneth Krupsky, Arnold Berke

FROM: Joe Mehra, P.E. PTOE

SUBJECT: Traffic Exemption Letter for 5500 Wisconsin Avenue
Friendship Heights – Montgomery County, Maryland

DATE: April 6, 2023

JOB: J-1029

Wells + Associates (Wells) prepared a Traffic Exemption Letter for 5500 Wisconsin Avenue dated July 15, 2021 that included trip generation data for the existing uses and the proposed uses. The letter concluded that the proposed development will result in 36 fewer person trips during the AM peak hour and 44 fewer person trips during the PM peak hour. M-NCPPC staff accepted the letter and the Planning Board approved the exemption from LATR since the trip generation table showed less than 50 person trips generated by the proposed development during the AM and PM peak hours.

My review of the trip generation data showed that the AM peak hour computations were in error. Wells acknowledged to me that the Table in July 15, 2021 Letter was in error. I also submit that the developers' July 15, 2021 "less than 50 person trips" analysis and conclusion are clearly incorrect. The use of correct trip generation rates results in the AM peak hour exceeding 50 person trips, requiring a LATR study.

Wells prepared an updated/revised Exemption Letter dated December 13, 2022. This letter is based on 300 residential units (reduced from 380 units) and 11,015

square feet retail (reduced from 15,000 square feet) and parking provided for both uses. Further, Wells utilized the latest ITE Trip Generation Report (11th Edition) to compute the vehicle trips (Trip Generation Data shown in Exhibit 1). I have added the ITE Trip Generation Formulas that were probably used by Wells to estimate the AM and PM peak hour vehicle trips as footnotes. The new report shows that the proposed development will result in an increase of 48 person trips during the AM peak hour and a reduction of 95 person trips in the PM peak hour when compared to the existing uses. Wells concludes that based on Trip Generation Table 1 the site plan application continues to be exempt from LATR requirements.

Wells does not provide the details on the trip generation computations using the ITE Trip Generation Report. Working backwards, I have determined the formulas that were used to estimate the vehicle trips. As seen in the footnotes on Exhibit 1, Wells used weighted average rates for the existing and proposed retail, whereas Wells used regression equation for the residential development. ITE recommends a process for determining the use of regression equation or weighted average rates. ITE does not have regression equation for the existing retail use, however, ITE does provide regression equations for the proposed retail and the residential developments. Therefore, according to ITE Guidelines, a regression equation should be used for the proposed retail PM peak hour and the residential developments. Wells did not use the regression equation for the proposed retail PM peak hour and used weighted average rate. The selection of the trip rate for the retail use during the AM peak hour (weighted average or regression equation) is questionable. The ITE guidelines (Trip Generation Handbook, Third Edition) in section 4.4.3 – Step 3 state that if the number of data points is three, four or five, the analyst is encouraged to collect local data and establish a local or consolidated rate. There are five data points for the AM peak hour data base. Hence the analyst is encouraged to collect local data.

I have computed the vehicle trips for the proposed retail using regression equation for the AM and PM peak hours. The results of the trip generation analysis is shown in Exhibit 2. The trip generation for the proposed retail is computed to be 31 vehicle trips versus Wells 26 during the AM peak hour and 84 vehicle trips versus Wells 73 trips during the PM peak hour. The vehicle trips were then converted to person trips using the mode split assumptions from Friendship Heights Policy Area. As shown in Exhibit 2, the corrected increase in person trips during the AM peak hour is 54 and not 48 as computed by Wells. Further, since there is a small difference between the trip estimates using average rates or regression equations, a conservative trip rate (using regression equation) should be selected to protect the neighborhood from adverse traffic impacts. Alternatively, as ITE suggests, local rates should be developed using locally collected data. Using the conservative trip rates, the AM peak hour person trip

generation is more than 50 trips. Therefore, a LATR should be required as per LATR Guidelines. This is critical because some traffic to and from the proposed development may use Somerset Terrace to enter or exit from the site. The extent of the use of Somerset Terrace and its impact on the traffic conditions can only be determined if a LATR study is conducted for the proposed development.