



August 4, 2025

Ms. Lauren Schiszik
Acting Executive Director
Committee on Architectural and Historic Preservation
417 East Fayette Street, 8th Floor
Baltimore, MD 21202

Re: 5601 South Bend Road

Dear Ms. Schiszik:

I am writing in reference to the proposed development at 5601 South Bend Road. As I noted in my June 2nd letter and my oral testimony when this project came before CHAP in June, the developer met with the Mt. Washington community in advance of its CHAP presentations. In May and June, we met with him twice and last week another member of the MWIA Zoning and Land Use Committee and I met to see the revisions made since the June 10th CHAP meeting. We remain encouraged by what we have seen so far.

We believe that it is premature for the MWIA to take a position—for or against the proposed development—until we see more detailed plans than the conceptual presentation we've been given so far. The comments below track the same points I made in my June 2nd letter to Director Holcomb. Where the developer has addressed the concerns raised in that letter, I have noted it.

Based on the design that we were shown, the things we hope the developer considers as it delves into the details are:

1. **Garages and curb cuts**—The developer has made strides at our suggestion, as well as CHAP's, by eliminating the front-loaded garages either by creating stand-alone garages or by making them side-loaded. That change is a vast improvement and shows a lot of thought and care. We also appreciate that the developer is working with the Department of Transportation to see how the curb cuts and other site changes will impact traffic, particularly at the intersection of South Bend and Carterdale Roads.

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2. **Sidewalks**—We are very happy that the developer has extended the sidewalk along Carterdale Road.
3. **Grade and fill**—While the developer has presented a concept grading plan, we still need to better understand how much soil is being moved and whether it alters the topography in a significant way that might violate the CHAP guidelines or have a consequential impact on surrounding properties. To date, we still have not been given site and grading plans with contours so we can assess what's happening. The plan from the previous developer showed up to 16' of fill which would have many adverse impacts from a stormwater management perspective as well as from a CHAP perspective by materially changing the site. We'd like to see a better developed grading plan to better understand this current proposal.
4. **Landscape and Plantings**—The elevations give, in shadow, a general sense of the landscaping around each home. For the concept level, this is promising. Obviously, we'd still like to see a full set of landscape drawings to completely understand what the developer proposes for landscaping. For example: what plantings will there be to screen the foundation walls? Given grade changes and the probable need for large stamped concrete walls, it is imperative that something be done to screen them. Again, the developer has shown, in shadow, a good attempt to provide screening. We just need to see the detailed plans. What trees, shrubs, and other plantings will be made that takes into consideration the experience on the ground? The previous developer proposed a lot of oak trees that were closely spaced and provided a lot of shade but little or no screening. The experience from the ground is critical. We recommend that the developer hire a landscape architect (as opposed to a civil engineer) who can develop a planting plan that takes into account the proposed site plan, existing forest cover and includes significant plantings to provide needed screening and mitigate any potential stormwater management issues.
5. **Forest Conservation**—We are thrilled that the new plan appears to put approximately 50% of the site into a forest conservation easement that will be recorded against the land records to prevent any future development on this lot. We are also happy that the plan significantly reduces the amount of impervious area across the site. While the developer has not put the forest conservation area into a single subdivided lot, it has created one contiguous conservation area that is incorporated into lot 1, the one with the historic house. This seems a better approach than having each individual homeowner manage its own conservation easement. We do request that the owner of the lot with the conservation easement engage in discussions with the Mt. Washington Preservation Trust, a nonprofit organization working to preserve greenspace in the community, to see if they would be willing to help manage the wooded portion of the lot.

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6. **Home design**—The elevations presented are greatly improved from what was presented in June. The developer seems to have addressed CHAP concerns by adding wrap-around porches, trim details, additional windows on secondary facades, and other architectural design changes. That said, to fully understand the plans, we ask that the developer produce perspective color renderings so that we can understand in three dimensions what the elevations can't depict. Before we can endorse the project, we need to understand how these houses will look and feel on the street, how they will relate to the changing topography, and how they will relate to neighboring houses on Carterdale Road and South Bend Road.
7. **Wildlife**—As stated in my earlier letter, the site has always been woods and supports a diverse community of plants and animals. While we recognize that this is not a CHAP issue per se, we do hope that the developer will work with relevant city agencies to mitigate the impact on the existing wildlife, most notably the deer herd that frequents site.
8. **Existing home**—While the developer does not control the existing home, the two properties are connected. I went over these comments in my previous letter, but they remain a pressing concern. The current owner of that home made many improvements that are in violation of CHAP guidelines:
 - a. Replaced Spanish tile roof with black asphalt shingles;
 - b. Replaced wood windows with seemingly vinyl windows with snap-in mullions on the interior;
 - c. Boarded up original windows in order to make a closet;
 - d. Removed decorative brackets along the cornice line;
 - e. Apparent modification of the soffit;
 - f. Removed shutters that helped define the front of the house;
 - g. Removed dentil trim around soffit and dormer;
 - h. Replaced window trim with thinner non-dimensionally appropriate trim; and
 - i. Replaced front door with a door that isn't appropriate for an historic district.

Some of these violations were cited in a housing inspector's report but some were not. I suspect some were missed simply because the housing inspector did not have the before pictures so had no idea that certain historic aspects of the house had been removed. I do want to call particular attention to the roof as it was perhaps the biggest defining character feature of the home which has been cited as a violation. The loss of the historic roof completely emasculates the grandeur of the home.

Again, we recognize that these are two separate projects, however, the Owner of lot 1 is selling the rest of the property to the developer. So, while they aren't technically connected, they are absolutely linked to each other. Therefore, we implore the Commission to make sure that the all of the CHAP violations to the existing house are corrected *before* CHAP approves the new development. Once CHAP approves the development, the owner of Lot 1 will have no incentive to make the corrections.

One item that was not raised in my original letter but was raised at the June CHAP hearing is density. The developer has not reduced the density. However, they have changed the siting of lots 2 and 3 to make them less dominant on the street.

Let me reiterate, as I stated in June, the MWIA is not opposed to the plan. Overall, we think it's a sound plan that, with the suggested changes, the MWIA could likely support. We look forward to seeing future iterations of the project and working together with the developer so that we can have new neighbors who, we hope, will love Mt. Washington as much as we do.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Joshua E. Neiman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Joshua" being more prominent than the last name "Neiman".

Joshua E. Neiman
Chair, Mt. Washington Improvement Association Zoning and Land Use Committee

Cc: Scooter Monroe, Workhorse Residential (via email)
Ann Powell, Plan-Build (via email)
Kari Nye, Baltimore City Department of Planning, NW area planner (via email)
Eddie Leon, Baltimore City Department of Planning, CHAP (via email)
Ellen Spokes, President, Mt. Washington Improvement Association (via email)

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