



June 2, 2025

Mr. Eric Holcomb
Executive Director
Committee on Architectural and Historic Preservation
417 East Fayette Street, 8th Floor
Baltimore, MD 21202

Re: 5601 South Bend Road

Dear Mr. Holcomb:

I am writing in reference to the proposed development at 5601 South Bend Road. Let me start by saying that the developer has met with the Mt. Washington community twice (once with the immediately impacted neighbors and again, via Zoom, with the greater Mt. Washington community). We are encouraged by what we have seen so far and note that the developer has made positive strides in its proposal as compared to what the community saw in 2023 and early 2024. The size (2,500 sq. ft. +/-) and design of the homes appears more appropriate adjacent to the homes in the surrounding neighborhood. Additionally, the examples of materials presented (Hardie, windows, doors, etc.) seem to fit with precedent. The presentation we were given seems to take into account the topographical challenges to the site. Finally, the developer has, thankfully, eliminated two houses and eliminated a new internal street behind the existing historic house. Again, all of these are very good steps in the right direction.

That said, 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. Based on their preliminary design we were shown, the things we hope the developer considers as it delves into the details are:

1. **Garages and curb cuts**—We strongly ask that the developer look at changing the site plan to make the garages either side- or rear-loaded. While the developer's consultant proffered that there are many homes with curb cuts and garages in the neighborhood, we'd submit that that is an exaggeration. Curb cuts and garages are less prevalent *in the historic district*. While it is true that the house at 5607 South Bend (immediately next door) has a front-loaded garage, that house was built before current CHAP guidelines were adopted. Moreover, that house itself is

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set far back from the road (approximately 120'). The developer proposes new homes that are closer to the street (which creates a friendly street presence and is something we like) but the garages, as designed, adversely impact the siting of the homes. Avoiding front-loaded garages is clearly suggested in Chapter 4.2.3 of the guidelines.

2. **Sidewalks**—We'd like to see sidewalks incorporated along Carterdale Road all the way from West Rogers to South Bend. The developer stated that it would be willing to do some sidewalk but not all the way across. We think that to create the walking fabric suggested in Section 4.2.5 of the guidelines and to connect to the existing Jones Falls Trail, the sidewalk should completely connect.
3. **Grade and fill**—We 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. To date we have not been given site and grading plans with contours so we can assess what's happening. The previous plan 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**—We'd like to see 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. 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. What is the current proposal? We recommend that the developer hire a landscape architect (as opposed to a civil engineer) who can look at the site in a thoughtful manner that takes into account the proposed site plan as well as the existing forest. Significant plantings might also help mitigate 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 and that it significantly reduces the amount of impervious area. However, we strongly recommend that instead of the forest conservation easement areas being owned by individual homeowners, a separate single lot be created (including the area behind the homes on Carterdale Road) and that that lot be controlled either by an HOA (if one is to be created) or granted to the Mt. Washington Preservation Trust, a nonprofit organization working to preserve greenspace in the community.

Our concern is that individual homeowners may not know the intimate details of their deeds, thereby making enforcing forest conservation easements harder.


6. **Home design**—The elevations presented do not afford enough detail for us to determine whether they do or don't meet CHAP guidelines so we cannot comment on them. Again, they are a marked improvement from what was shared previously but we need more complete design information to comment intelligently.
7. **Wildlife**—The site has always been woods and as a result 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 various city agencies to mitigate the impact on the existing wildlife, most notably the deer herd that frequently uses the site.
8. **Existing home**—While the developer does not control the existing home, the two properties are connected. 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 but we implore the Commission to make sure that the CHAP violations to the existing house are corrected *before* CHAP approves the new development.

Let me reiterate, the MWIA is not opposed to the plan. Overall, we think it's a sound plan that, with some of 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, appearing to read "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)