

# NEIGHBORHOOD UPDATE

A NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED JOINTLY BY THE  
SPRING VALLEY-WESLEY HEIGHTS CITIZENS ASSOCIATION AND  
NEIGHBORS FOR A LIVABLE COMMUNITY

SUMMER 2020

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## News And Analysis:

# ARE 65-FOOT TALL APARTMENT BUILDINGS THE FUTURE OF SPRING VALLEY?

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

**Should DC Council  
Allow 65-Foot Tall  
Apartment Buildings  
In Spring Valley?**

**Take The Poll At This Link:**  
[www.surveymonkey.com/r/  
/SVWHCA-Survey](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SVWHCA-Survey)

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## **OTHER NEWS IN THIS ISSUE**

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OPENS THE DOOR TO  
UNPRECEDENTED GROWTH**  
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Large Construction Projects  
Proposed for Nebraska/Rockwood,  
East Campus*

**Wesley Theological Seminary  
Plans New Construction**

**Neighborhood Groups File For  
Court Review Of Zoning  
Commission Decision For New  
PUD At SuperFresh Site**

**DC Councilmember, Local ANC  
Commissioner Lead Ongoing  
COVID-19 Food Drive**

**Stay Safe -- Wear A Mask**

## ***DC Council To Consider Changes To Land Use Map For Spring Valley Commercial Corridor; Fall Vote Likely***

The DC City Council will consider legislation this Fall that would change the city's land use maps to allow 65-foot tall residential apartment buildings in the commercial corridor of Spring Valley. The plan would affect the sites where the two Spring Valley shopping centers are located on both sides of Massachusetts Avenue as well as the land that now houses the office buildings and parking lots adjacent to Spring Valley West Homes.

**These changes before the DC Council were proposed by the DC Office of Planning (OP) and are intended to advance a plan by Mayor Muriel Bowser to add 36,000 new residential units in the city by 2025.**

The Spring Valley commercial sites' zoning was altered in Fall 2016 as part of a comprehensive rewrite of regulations to allow for moderate density residential housing in the Spring Valley commercial zone. The city's land use maps were not revised at that time so only low density commercial is still permitted under the city's Comprehensive Plan. That would change if the new OP plan is approved by the DC Council.

## **AU Campus Plan Proposal Opens Door To Unprecedented Growth; Undergraduate Population Could Grow By 60 Percent**

### ***New Athletic Center and Dorms Proposed Along University Avenue; Major New Construction Proposed For Nebraska/Rockwood And East Campus***

American University (AU) has released a Framework for its next Campus Plan that, if adopted, would usher in a period of unprecedented growth for the University, including increases in undergraduate enrollment and construction of significantly large new structures adjacent to Spring Valley, Wesley Heights, and Westover residents' homes. AU indicated it plans to release a draft Campus Plan in September consistent with the Framework published on June 1, 2020. ANC 3D has indicated it plans to vote on the new plan even before the Campus Plan documents are formally submitted by AU to the DC Zoning Commission, prior to formal notification of nearby residents required under the city's zoning rules.

**DC zoning regulations require AU to get approval from the Zoning Commission every ten years for a Campus Plan that covers enrollment, new construction, and assesses transportation impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods. AU's last Campus Plan was approved in March 2012, so its current plan does not expire until March 2022. However, AU plans to submit its next plan to the Zoning Commission by this December.**

AU released a preliminary Framework for its Campus Plan in March and convened some community meetings to discuss the plan during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. AU finalized the Framework on June 1.

Based on the Framework released by AU, the University proposes to increase its enrollment cap in a way that could increase its undergraduate enrollment capacity by as much as 60 percent over a ten year period. AU is formally proposing to increase its current enrollment cap capacity by about 6 percent to 14,380. However, AU indicated in its Framework document issued in early June that it wants more flexibility to increase its undergraduate enrollment. Unlike previous plans, AU will not include projections for undergraduate enrollment capacity as part of its new campus plan. Such projections would be used as a benchmark to determine whether AU was complying with its overall Campus Plan requirements.

**This means – taking into account the law school capacity and the number of graduate students – the plan, as proposed by AU, would enable the university to increase its undergraduate population by about 4,600 students or roughly 60 percent.**

The current campus plan projected that AU undergraduate enrollment would not exceed 6,400 students through 2021, but, undergraduate enrollment has exceeded 7,500 during the current campus plan cycle.

**In addition to the proposed increase in enrollment capacity, AU is proposing to build a new 120,000 square foot Center for Athletic Performance (CAP) at a site adjacent to University Avenue where the tennis courts are now located. Two additional dorms would also be built adjacent to the Center to house 365 students.**

**Locating these new structures along University Avenue is a “transformational campus opportunity,” according to AU, and would “transform what is now ‘back of house’ and service areas of campus into a vibrant campus destination.”**

Two adjacent buildings are planned for the corner of Nebraska Avenue and Rockwood Parkway. One would be a 96,500 square foot administrative/academic building with about 360 parking spaces and the other would be another dorm that would house an additional 350 students. In all, nearly 195,000 square feet of new construction will be built at the corner of Rockwood Parkway and Nebraska Avenue.

Other major construction projects will include a new 135,000 square foot “signature” building, the largest building proposed in the campus plan, on the East Campus adjacent to Westover Place. This building would include academic and campus life facilities where students can socialize and could include an additional 400 parking spaces in two floors of underground parking.

**AU indicated that it will seek flexibility to add additional new facilities throughout the life of the campus plan.**

AU also is planning to reduce its parking capacity on the main campus by about 400 parking spaces. However, AU has not made public any transportation assessment of the changes proposed in the campus plan.

AU’s Law School at the Tenley Campus is attracting fewer students than anticipated when the new facility was built less than 10 years ago. Consequently, AU is now proposing to use the Law School building also for other academic programs, including undergraduate classes.

## **Wesley Theological Seminary Plans New Construction**

Wesley Theological Seminary is proposing new construction as part of its new campus plan. Like AU, Wesley is required to submit a campus plan every ten years for approval by the DC Zoning Commission. Its current campus plan expires at the end of this year.

Wesley has delayed submitting its campus plan to the Zoning Commission in part due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Wesley sought an extension of the plan to allow for more time to engage with neighbors on its proposal. Meanwhile, the DC Zoning Commission automatically extended by six months all existing Orders, including campus plans, which were set to expire through the end of the year because of the coronavirus health emergency.

**Given the challenges that many residents faced in the early months of the pandemic, Wesley cancelled meetings with neighbors scheduled for earlier this year. The Seminary is now planning to convene a meeting sometime in August, but a specific date was not available at the time of publication.**

Wesley is proposing to raze existing dorms on its campus to build a new dorm on the existing surface parking lot of the campus. The new dorm would include underground parking. The new building would be built and managed by an outside contractor who would enable Wesley to use the dorm for its students along with students from other universities in the area.

**Wesley also is proposing to raze the former President's house on University Avenue and build a new residential-looking facility that would be used for administrative and faculty offices.**

The Seminary has not yet set a date for submitting its plan to the Zoning Commission for approval.

## **Neighborhood Groups File For Court Review Of Zoning Commission Decision For New PUD At SuperFresh Site**

Citizens for Responsible Development (CRD), Neighbors for a Livable Community (NLC), the Spring Valley-Wesley Heights Citizens Association, and Marilyn Richert, an AU Park resident, have filed a petition with the District of Columbia Court of Appeals challenging a decision by the DC Zoning Commission that approved construction of a new Planned Unit Development (PUD) that included a high-rise apartment building at the site of

the former SuperFresh store. The proposed apartment building will be approximately 90 feet in height along Massachusetts Avenue.

The site currently includes Wagshal-owned Spring Valley Catering and DeCarlo's Restaurant.

**The neighborhood groups had party status in the Zoning Commission proceedings.**

In late June, the DC Court of Appeals overturned a Zoning Commission decision in a similar case on the basis that the proposed PUD was inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Several PUD decisions by the Zoning Commission have been overturned in recent years. Neighborhood groups had argued before the Zoning Commission in the SuperFresh case that the proposed PUD was inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

**DC Councilmember, Local ANC Commissioner  
Lead Ongoing COVID-19 Food Drive**

Spring Valley and Wesley Heights residents have engaged in many volunteer efforts across the city since March to support the work of health care providers, first responders, and front line workers.

**COVID-19 is having a disproportionate impact on families in need across our city. One of the latest efforts to address this need is being led by DC Councilmember Anita Bonds and ANC 3D Commissioner Christine Warnke, whose ANC district includes portions of Wesley Heights. Working with other volunteer organizations in the city, Councilmember Bonds and Dr. Warnke coordinate the distribution of more than 1,600 fruit and vegetable food parcels every two weeks to families in need.**

This ongoing food drive is coordinated through the Up 2 Us Foundation, a non-profit organization that specializes in providing families in need with healthy food alternatives; the Vida Senior Center that works with low income seniors; and the TIS Foundation which is working to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the city's underserved communities. This is an ongoing project that targets families every two weeks, including seniors, with the greatest need in our city. If

you want to volunteer to help, contact ANC 3D Commissioner Christine Warnke at [drchristinewarnke@gmail.com](mailto:drchristinewarnke@gmail.com) .

### **Protect Your Property From Thieves**

Thieves are continuing to target cars and other property in the Spring Valley and Wesley Heights neighborhoods. Please remember to lock your car doors when you park your car outside your homes or in your driveways. **Do not leave anything of value in your car that would tempt somebody to break in – not even a gym bag or spare change, and especially not a garage door opener.** Take sensible steps to protect against crime in the neighborhoods. If you see something suspicious, call 911 immediately.

If you are doing home repairs, keep ladders out of sight of those who might use them to break into an unlocked upper story window. If strangers come to your door to sell magazines or other products, ask if they have a license or better yet, call 911 and let the police determine if they have the appropriate license. Few legitimate vendors go door-to-door anymore, especially at night.

### **Reminder: Wear A Mask, But Say Hello**

More and more neighbors, including children, are out every day walking, running, and biking on neighborhood streets. If you are driving in the neighborhoods, please slow down. **Masks are required when outside unless you are engaged in vigorous exercise. Social distancing also helps to protect each other. Thank you for wearing a mask – even if it means popping it on only when you notice somebody in sight.** If you can, say hello to a neighbor you might see on your walk, run, or bike ride. A hello, wave, or even a nod, albeit brief, is a nice way to keep connected.

*Neighborhood Update* is a newsletter established by the **Spring Valley-Wesley Heights Citizens Association (SVWHCA)** ([www.svwhca.org](http://www.svwhca.org)) and **Neighbors for a Livable Community (NLC)** to report news and information on issues of importance to residents of Spring Valley and Wesley Heights. You may send information appropriate for publication to Tom Smith at [tmfsmith@rcn.com](mailto:tmfsmith@rcn.com) No portion of this newsletter may be duplicated without written permission from the Spring Valley-Wesley Heights Citizens Association. This newsletter is distributed electronically. If you want to be on the distribution list, send your email to [tmfsmith@rcn.com](mailto:tmfsmith@rcn.com) . Please share this with your own personal e-mail networks.

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