

From: [Lee Zia](#)
To: [PlanComm](#); [Sam Shelby](#); lanning.blazer@alexandriava.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Concerns about the 635 Upland Place development proposal
Date: Tuesday, June 4, 2024 7:23:26 AM

To Members of the Planning Commission and other city officials:

I live at 712 Upland Place and write to express several issues of concern with a subdivision application and variance request for 635 Upland Place.

1) The area proposed for development has a significant wetlands area that would be at risk of major disruptive environmental impact due to the felling of trees and brush, which currently serve as an important (natural) control of erosion. The clearing process itself would lead to immediate erosive effects not to mention the long-term implications for erosion and general storm management that would be a consequence of a non-trivial elimination of natural barriers. Moreover, removal of this vegetation would affect the micro-climate of this localized ecosystem. Researchers have noted the importance of micro-ecosystems as part of larger regional ecosystems in providing cooling and pollution control in metropolitan areas such as the greater DMV.

2) The entire ~14 acre parcel of land on which the proposed development would take place is a natural habitat for a diversity of wildlife that co-exist with humans in a natural park-like setting. It is a wonderful laboratory for exploration of the environment for children and adults which would be reduced in area by the proposed development. Moreover, the spillover effects of that development (e.g., more erosion and the incursion of the resulting built infrastructure) would further reduce the footprint of this area; and potentially limit access. At least one pair of nesting barred owls lives in these woods and as near top-of-the-food chain predatory birds, they provide a natural control of smaller rodents.

3) In the builder's application mention is made of "substantial injustice" to conforming with existing frontage requirements that the existing wetland would place on the proposed development, an "unreasonable burden" it is termed. I find this line of reasoning disingenuous at best with cause and effect inverted. In fact, it is the proposed development that would cause a

substantial injustice on the existing wetland. I note that similar concerns have already been raised and explored at length in the past decade in response to earlier development proposals.

4) Finally, the neighborhood of Upland Place from the top of the hill westward down past Hilton and to all of Moncure Street is a historic one, dating to the 1940s when these homes were built to house workers at the Torpedo Factory in Old Town contributing to the war effort. The character and appeal of this neighborhood would be at grave risk, if the proposed development went forward to construct "two large homes" (down evidently from an original proposal to build four such homes!). No plans for such homes have been presented to my knowledge, only the claim that a frontage variance is needed. If the new homes were constructed in the style of the existing home (1.5 story brick bungalows with square footage no more than 1500), would such a variance be needed?

Thank you for considering my voice.

Sincerely,

Lee Zia
712 Upland Place

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