

SP2023-00018 Kappa Sigma International Headquarters: Community Meeting Notes

5th and Avon CAC – 01/18/2024

- Concerns from community members regarding the blocking of views from the rear Avinity houses – landscaped areas or new structures/buildings could block views.
- Concern over the potential loss of property values.
- Original plan would place new building at same level as existing building.
- Concern over privacy from a building with staff/visitors that are not residential. Could bring visibility into homes due to a closer building that is also of a similar height of the residential units.
- CAC member offered a suggestion to fly balloons (to demonstrate building height/visibility) for a certain amount of time to allow the community to see if those balloons are visible.
- Potential impacts of additional traffic and noise. How would sound levels be kept at a minimum? Especially with additional visitors/parties proposed in the new building. E.g., 4th of July party with music and fireworks. Has disrupted neighbors in the past.
 - Applicant – have not considered noise impacts at this time.
- Questions about what the managed steep slopes layer is that is depicted on the plan.
- What will the space be used for?
 - Applicant – bathrooms, catering space, maintenance areas, storage
- Architecture will be consistent with what is there already, in a Jeffersonian manner similar to the Lawn
- Building phasing is the most intrusive portion of overall construction
- Concerns over the way the building is depicted on the conceptual plan. Although the applicant states that the building will be just one story, the building as shown on the plan is multiple stories, at the maximum height that could be built under the ordinance. Suggestion to revise the plan with a more accurate representation of the form, height, and massing of the actual proposed building.

Dear Syd,

I am unable to attend the public meeting tonight but want to register my deep concern about Kappa Sigma's request to amend their existing special use permit (what you identified in your email as SP200600021), to allow them to adjust the site of their new additional conference and convention building. The proposed adjusted site is next to my property line on 3653 Moffat St. My understanding is that you will be hearing from many of my Avinity neighbors; I join their concerns and write to add my own.

My home, purchased in late 2021, is directly on the other side of the Moffat Street privacy fence, on what the Plan outlines as the site of Kappa Sigma's new convention center building (Plan Submittal, 11/06/2003). According to the Plan, as outlined by the Special Use Permit Narrative, Kappa Sigma proposes to relocate their earlier proposed building from the spot approved in 2006, which is in the center of its property, to the corner of the parcel abutting the homes on Moffat and Montague Streets. According to the Permit Narrative, the proposed building will include "private lodging, meeting/conference room space, and support facilities" as well as room for archives, a theater, other displays, and be used for "hosting special events for its membership." (11/02/23 Plan Narrative, Page 1). The Plan estimates that on a typical day, the new facilities will draw around 152 vehicles per day, with up to 707 vehicles for annual special events. (11/02/23 Plan Narrative, Page 2). This suggests at least that many people – up to 707 people, and perhaps double if couples/spouses are involved in events – will utilize these facilities in a single day during the special events the fraternity plans to host for its membership, and just under that (678) for its summer "leadership schools." In other words, the new facility that Kappa Sigma plans to build feet from my home and those of my neighbors will be busy and at times full of 600-700 guests or more.

This new facility will undoubtedly create an immense amount of noise. Over the past two years, I have been able to hear music and crowd noises from Kappa Sigma events, even from inside my home with the doors shut. I have dealt with this, because it was not unbearable; however, that was across their large lot. Events in the new facility, with 150 to 700 people per day, so much closer to my home, will be a different matter. Having this amount of noise and foot traffic so nearby will fundamentally alter the character of my yard and home. It is one thing to have a neighbor who occasionally hosts a party; it is another to have a convention center next door.

Before purchasing, I made extensive inquiries about plans for adjoining properties, and there was no indication of Kappa Sigma's requested change, nor any reason to think they would attempt to move this proposed building from its original site to its most populated boundary. Had there been such an indication, I would have thought hard about purchasing this home; had I gone ahead with the purchase, the substantial detriment of having such a large commercial facility so nearby would have surely been figured significantly into the purchase price.

Furthermore, the fraternity articulates no clear reason for moving the site in a way that would maximize the damage to adjoining landowners. Their only offered rationale is that the change would make the grounds seem "more inline [sic] with a Jeffersonian style." (11/02/23 Plan Narrative, Page 1). As a Jefferson scholar and former UVA Lawn resident, I always appreciate admiration of Jefferson's grounds and attempts to create communal space. But it seems unfair – and contrary to county guidelines for such adjustments – to significantly change the character of two streets of adjoining parcels on nothing more than an aesthetic whim. Kappa Sigma has a large, beautiful lot, with many other sites on which it could build this planned center, including the original one. I ask that the permit adjustment be denied.

Jessica Lowe

Factors to present to the Commission and Board of Supervisors for consideration

Impacts of the Special Permit SP202300018 revised plan:

A total block of Carter Mountain views from 5 townhomes, partial block of views from 2 additional homes.

Loss of property value, combined with closing costs, moving expenses, and higher mortgage interest rates would make relocation of affected homeowners unaffordable.

Impacted homeowners would be left with views of a wall, possibly having windows, resulting in a loss of privacy along with permanent loss of beautiful mountain views.

Original 2007 approved permit would place new building at same ground level as original building and would have minimal impacts to any Avinity Homeowners.

It is hoped that Kappa Sigma International will reconsider using its originally approved plan, insuring that:

- There will be no substantial detriment to adjacent parcels
- The character of the nearby area is unchanged
- Harmony and equity for all property owners is maintained, hopefully consistent with Kappa Sigma International's own mission and values

Thank you for your consideration and review!

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