

September 30, 2011

Mayor Andrew Fellows and Members,  
College Park City Council  
4500 Knox Road  
College Park, MD 20740

Dear Mayor and Council,

On behalf of the Vestry and congregation of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, we are writing to express our serious concerns regarding the proposed development of the property now occupied by the Maryland Book Exchange. Our church is located adjacent to the Book Exchange property and is included in the Historic District of College Park.

St. Andrew's can trace its origins to 1890, when developers John O. Johnson and Samuel Curriden were beginning to lay out the streets for a subdivision they named College Park, adjacent to what was then known as the Maryland Agricultural College. The present stone, Gothic-style church on College Avenue was erected in 1930 with assistance from the Phillips Foundation, which helped fund the construction of churches to serve students, faculty and staff in college towns. Since its beginning, therefore, our parish has been dedicated to serving our residential neighborhood, the larger City of College Park, and the entire University of Maryland community.

St. Andrew's has always welcomed University of Maryland students, faculty and staff to its services and through the years has sponsored numerous programs designed to serve the university community. In 2006, St. Andrew's, using parishioners' contributions, renovated the former rectory on the church property and opened the Episcopal Student Center, an intentional, residential Christian community and the primary meeting place for the Episcopal/Anglican Campus Ministry at the University of Maryland.

Because of its history and its special mission to the university community, St. Andrew's does not oppose the concept of undergraduate and graduate student housing to be located on property adjacent to the church and Episcopal Student Center. However, the plans currently before the council must be changed in significant ways for this proposed project to be compliant with the Central US 1 Corridor Sector Plan and acceptable to St. Andrew's and other members of our residential neighborhood:

- Our chief concern is that the building height as proposed by the developer does not step down on the Yale Avenue side to be compatible with buildings in the adjacent residential neighborhood, as required by the sector plan. Residents of the

adjacent neighborhood include not only the students living in the Episcopal Student Center, located less than thirty feet from the Yale Avenue sidewalk, but also those living in the numerous fraternity and sorority houses and other properties surrounding the church grounds. Our neighborhood also includes the nearby Old Town district of single-family homes.

- The fortress-like design and siting of the building and the materials proposed to be used in the façade do not demonstrate any sensitivity to the materials, style and landscaping of the St. Andrew's property or other parts of the immediate neighborhood. The industrial character of the ground-floor design of the Yale Avenue façade facing our property is particularly objectionable.
- The proposal to locate the entrance and exit of the building garage on Yale Avenue, a very narrow thoroughfare, will increase traffic, noise and congestion and pose hazards for pedestrians and bicyclists. This design is not sensitive to the residential neighborhood. We are also concerned about the impact of overflow parking demand on the neighborhood. Presently attendees at larger services (holidays, weddings, funerals, etc.) use on-street parking, but the proposed building will make this much more difficult.
- In the past five years, our parish has made costly changes in our drainage system to improve rainwater management on our property. Specifically, the education wing of our parish hall, which is half a story below ground, has flooded repeatedly because of groundwater runoff from street flooding. Runoff from the Book Exchange project has the potential to add to our problem, and we need to be shown exactly how both the water and sewer system will be expanded to handle these additional demands without affecting St. Andrew's.

Despite these serious concerns, we intend to be constructive participants in the dialogue over this proposed development. We hope to contribute to a positive outcome for the residents of College Park and the future of our city.

Very truly yours,

The Rev. Dr. Carol J. Jablonski, Rector

S. Lawrence Paulson, Senior Warden