

**Sandy Spring Ashton
Rural Preservation Consortium
(SSARPC)**

Box 518
Ashton, MD 20861

October 8, 2007

Royce Hanson, Chairman
MNCPPC Planning Board
ATTN: Resurrection Church Site
8787 Georgia Ave.
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Chairman Hanson:

As you know, the Sandy Spring Ashton Rural Preservation Consortium (SSARPC) has devoted substantial time and energy to ensure that the Sandy Spring/Ashton Master Plan is upheld in new development projects in the Sandy Spring and Ashton communities. The Board's recent decision on the Ashton Meeting Place project gives us further cause to believe that the Planning Board also wishes to uphold the Master Plan.

Currently, the Resurrection Baptist Church is being built at the intersection of New Hampshire Avenue and Ednor Road. The church obtained permission from the State Highway Administration to remove all of the trees and shrubs that lined New Hampshire Avenue, which was done in early May. Attached are pictures, taken August 13, of the site with the trees removed. Since the pictures were taken, some of the few remaining trees have been removed. Prior to the tree removal, the lot looked very similar to the lot across the street (picture also included).

The SSARPC understands that the Planning Staff has found this action to be in violation of the church's Landscaping Plan (see attached), which was required by the Planning Board during the Preliminary Plan process and approved by the Planning Staff. We agree with the Staff's assessment.

The SSARPC believes that the removal of trees along New Hampshire Avenue violates both the spirit and language of the Sandy Spring/Ashton Master Plan (1998). A primary objective of the Master Plan is to "ensure that the rural character of the New Hampshire Avenue area will be enhanced and maintained" (Page 43). Additionally, the chart on page 44 states "Maintain existing Rural Character" in that area. Page 45 includes two bulleted points that directly address the issue:

- "...Maintain heavily vegetated edges as close to the road pavement as possible. Preserve woodland and hedgerows..."
- "...implement the concept for New Hampshire Avenue's rural character. This is one of the crossroads [with Ednor Road] that defines the character of the area because it serves as an entry...."

We have attached the relevant pages from the Sandy Spring/Ashton Master Plan for your convenience.

We are aware that the Planning Staff has already received numerous complaints from citizens since the church began to clear the trees from the corner of Ednor Road and New Hampshire Avenue. As a result, the SSARPC requests that the following actions be taken:

- Stop all construction at the Resurrection Church site until there is a complete Landscaping Plan that complies with the Master Plan and until there is a commitment from the church to implement the plan.
- Assure that the Landscaping Plan restores the vegetation along New Hampshire Avenue to its previous size and density. This means that **large** trees and shrubs (preferably native to the area) must be planted and maintained, so as to return the rural view and feel to the site.
- Allow representatives of the SSARPC to review the new Landscaping Plan to help ensure that there is conformance to the Master Plan.

Only when the Planning Staff, working with SSARPC and perhaps other community representatives, has approved a new Landscaping Plan, should renewed construction at the Resurrection Church site be approved.

We have attempted through various avenues to contact representatives of the church and have received no response.

So much work has already been done to assure that new development in the Ashton village center adheres to the Sandy Spring/Ashton Master Plan. We expect that efforts to preserve the rural entryway into Ashton, as voiced by the Master Plan, will also be successful. Our thanks go to the Planning Staff for their forthrightness and dedication to resolving this problem.

Please contact us by sending mail to ssarpc@preserveashton.org or calling Michelle Layton at 301-570-0521 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Michelle Layton, Co-Chair
SSARPC Steering Committee

Gary Letcher, Member
SSARPC Steering Committee

cc: Ike Leggett, County Executive
Marilyn Praisner, President, County Council
Robert Kronenberg, Acting Team Site Leader, Park and Planning Staff
Bill Barron, Team Leader, Eastern County
Pastor Maxwell, Resurrection Baptist Church

Attachments: Sandy Spring/Ashton Master Plan, pages 43-45
Pictures of New Hampshire Avenue and Ednor Road Intersection
Approved Landscaping Plan (1/2006)