



## AURORA HIGHLANDS CIVIC ASSOCIATION

January 10, 2025

Re: Melwood Site Plan Parking Technical Questions

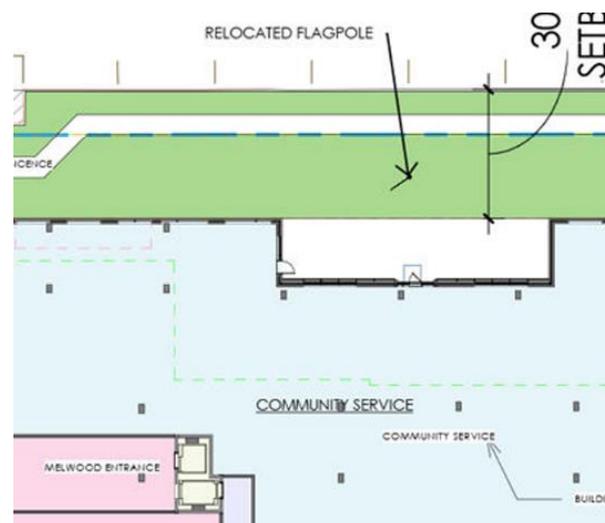
Dear Matt,

Melwood presented at the January AHCA meeting, and we had a conversation about parking, which led to some issues that need clarification. Who is the right person to discuss these issues with?

ISSUE 1: MELWOOD IS NOT A COMMUNITY CENTER, IT IS AN OFFICE

Per ACZO 12.4.B.2 Community Service Use can be a community center, OR a library OR a museum OR an art gallery, OR a swimming pool OR a philanthropic institution, etc. Melwood stated they meet the Community Service use definition as a **philanthropic institution**. Per 12.4.B.2 a philanthropic institution is **separate from and is not a community center, just as a library is not a swimming pool**.

Melwood is not claiming to be a community center. Melwood does not put the word Community Center on their plans, they put "Community Service" on their plans.



Melwood stated, however, that they propose using the community center parking ratios even though they are not a community center. When asked how they can do that, they stated, that since in the zoning code there is no parking ratio for a philanthropic institution, a community center is the "closest use" to a philanthropic institution.

We note ACZO 12.4.B.3 lists **the allowable Accessory Uses for the primary Community Service uses. A philanthropic institution can (and usually does) have offices**, and other uses, like food prep, child care, etc. in their build-out. Melwood stated they will have offices with training areas in the “Community Service” space. We agree Melwood is a philanthropic institution that falls under the Community Service Use. But they are also proposing, as an Accessory Use, **Office Use**.

The Staff Report calls the “Community Service” office space a “Training Center” and states only 20 spaces are required for 18,000 SF. However, the words “Training Center” are not even in the ACZO. There is no parking ratio for a “Training Center”, and none that is 1 per 3 seats as listed, because uses **such as being proposed with classrooms and offices are classified as Office Use**. Under the Community Service Use, what is labelled as the “Training Center” is an Accessory Use - Office.

This clarification is important because the parking ratio for Office Use is 1/250 SF. **For 18,000 SF that is 72 spaces. But Melwood is only providing 20 spaces.**

Melwood said we should talk to staff about this interpretation – that is, they can use Community Center parking ratios when they are not a community center. They are, as they stated, a philanthropic institution that is going to build out offices and training rooms. That is per 12.4.B.3 an Office Use. Has the county made such an interpretation and has staff engaged with this? If so, how can we get a copy of that interpretation? What exception or precedent is there for such an interpretation? What other zoning interpretations has the county made about the project, and when did they make them?

## ISSUE 2: EXISTING CHURCH PARKING

We also discussed the parking arrangements for the Latter-Day Saints (LDS) and Calvary Churches at the meeting. Melwood stated they have no obligation to provide parking to others. However, this is contrary to the promise made by Scott Gibson of Melwood to AHCA, in response to community concerns about parking in a letter March, 2022, where he advocated for AHCA support of the Melwood Special GLUP Study:

<https://aurorahighlands.org/wp-content/uploads/AHCA-Board-Tier-1-Letter-sent-3-14-SIGNED.pdf>

Because the land use has been Public, the LDS has parked there for over 10 years, and others have parked there including customers of the retail shops adjacent, the county must recognize **the public good they are giving away and get recompense the loss of the parking.**

The Latter-Day Saints and Calvary Church have had long standing parking arrangements that have worked well. But now the County is making this **highly unusual and unexpected change in the land use from Public, especially unexpected given the deed restriction on the property**, and inappropriately allowing this project to move forward. It is **the County that is removing 50+ spaces** available at the existing Melwood lot and removing the Sunday parking Calvary uses on Grant Street **creating a parking problem that previously did not exist**. **Both SPRC representatives from LDS and Calvary Church asked for help** from the county in rectifying this situation.

**The County is proposing no alternative.** Since Melwood could not provide an answer, can the County advise what is supposed to happen next for these churches? What is the plan? **Do they just lose their parking and their associated ability to operate and have Sunday services?** If so, the County needs to be transparent about that. Is the expectation they will **overflow onto residential side streets** which are already loaded with Sunday parkers, not to mention the future overflow from the residents and visitors to this building because of the extremely insufficiently parking. That is not per ACZO 14.3.1.A:

*“For every land use hereafter established, there shall be provided sufficient space for access by, and for the off-street standing and parking of, all motor vehicles that may be expected to come to the premises at any time under normal conditions for any purpose, whether as patrons, customers, purveyors, guests, employees or otherwise.”*

### ISSUE 3: OTHER PARKING USES NOT ACCOUNTED FOR

Melwood stated “Our Stomping Ground” will run programs out of the facility during the day, at night and on the weekend. However, there is no accounting for Our Stomping Ground parking. Likewise, there is no parking listed for guests, visitors, Wesley maintenance staff, car share, vans for disabled residents, etc. **How is parking for these other users supposed to be accounted for?**

None of this is addressed in the Staff Report. Why is the County actively avoiding the subject of those most impacted by this development? **Who is responsible** for the impact to the Churches and the residents, and **what are they doing about it?**

Thank you,

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stacy Meyer', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Stacy Meyer, RA, LEED AP  
AHCA, SPRC Rep  
VP & Zoning Committee Chair

Cc: Melwood SPRC Committee  
Planning Commission  
Arlington County Board