

McLean Citizens Association Resolution
Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance Amendment
Single Family Detached Dwelling Grade
July 21, 2009

Whereas, the subject Zoning Ordinance Amendment (ZOA) proposes to change the definition of ‘Grade’ for single family detached (SFD) dwellings in all zoning districts permitting SFD dwellings; and,

Whereas, the definition of grade in the Zoning Ordinance (ZO) serves to establish a reference plane from which building height is measured; and,

Whereas, the ZO currently defines grade as “...*the average of finished ground level adjoining a building at all exterior walls*; and,

Whereas, the proposed ZOA language, applicable only to SFD dwellings, redefines grade to be the lower of:

- 1) the average of finished ground level adjoining a building at all exterior walls, or
- 2) the average of pre-existing ground level adjoining a building at all exterior walls,

where pre-existing means either the original, natural grade or the as-built grade of the existing building; and,

Whereas, the intent of the ZOA is to end the practice of artificially elevating the ground level of a SFD dwelling by adding fill dirt around the building which results in a larger disparity between tall new homes and smaller existing homes in residential neighborhoods; and,

Whereas, the ZOA specifically exempts SFD dwellings located in a flood plain that must be artificially elevated in order to be higher than the 100-year flood plain; and,

Whereas, elevating a house effectively increases its apparent mass, and the side yard setback requirements do little to mitigate this effect, even in the R-A through R-1 residential districts; and,

Whereas, the problem of tall, looming homes can have a disproportionately greater impact in zoning districts with narrower lot widths and on properties adjacent to lots whose widths or setbacks have been reduced by special exception or variance; and,

Whereas, the McLean Citizens Association has long advocated for the mitigation of taller homes looming over smaller existing homes that often occurs with infill development and results in reduced privacy and infringement of light and air;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the McLean Citizens Association supports the Single Family Detached Dwelling Grade ZOA.

cc: John Foust, Dranesville Supervisor
Jay Donahue, Dranesville Planning Commissioner
Joseph Gibson, Staff
Fairfax County Planning Commission
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors