Agenda Item: Administrative Amendment – Matthews United Methodist Church - Columbarium

TO: Planning Board
FROM: Mary Jo Gollnitz, Senior Planner
DATE: May 27, 2020

Background/Issue:
Matthews United Methodist Church is requesting an Administrative Amendment to their approved site plan of 2001. At that time, the property was rezoned to R/I (CD) (Residential/Institutional Conditional District) showing future expansion areas.

Additional information about the changes:

- A “stair step” brick wall will serve as a boundary between the memorial garden and the church. The brick wall will be 5’ in height on either end and increase to 7’ in the center.
- A single niche will be against the wall as part of the initial phase of development and a double niche placed towards north side of the property.
- Future phases will have a second double niche directly across from initial double niche toward the south. The final expansion will include 2 more double niches across from the wall (see attached).
- A fountain in the center of the memorial will be installed, along with walkways from the northwest parking lot and within the garden area.
- A metal fence with column partitions will surround 3 sides of the memorial garden. Outside the fence will be a mix of boxwood shrubs and flowering camellias to soften the area.
- Additional landscaping will also be installed on the interior of the memorial garden.
- Columbarium are allowed by right in the R/I district under prescribed conditions of Section 155.506.15 of Matthews UDO (see attached). Location of proposed memorial garden and columbarium meet the requirements.

Matthews UDO provides three levels of approval for Administrative Amendments: staff review, Planning Board action and Board of Commissioners action.

If the Planning Board wishes to take action, the Statement of Consistency and Reasonableness is provided for your convenience.

Recommended Action
Staff recommends the Planning Board review the proposed site change request and approve the addition of a memorial garden with columbarium at the Matthews United Methodist Church campus.
SUGGESTED
STATEMENTS OF CONSISTENCY AND REASONABLENESS
Final Decisions on Zoning-Related Issues

ADMINISTRATIVE AMENDMENT Matthews United Methodist Church Columbarium & Memorial Garden

Matthews Planning Board makes the following 2 conclusions:

1) __X__ The requested zoning action, as most currently amended, **IS CONSISTENT** with the policies for development as outlined by the Matthews Land Use Plan and Town’s long-range Vision Statements (as specified below)

OR

_____ The requested zoning action, as most currently amended, **IS NOT CONSISTENT** with the Matthews Land Use Plan and/or other adopted land development policies and plans.

*(A requested zoning can be found “consistent” and not approved, or found to be “not consistent”, but approved.)*

2) __X__ The requested zoning action **IS REASONABLE** and in the public interest because:

(ex., may be appropriate with specific surrounding land uses; has been shown that it will not create significant new traffic beyond area roads’ capacities; creates/increases desirable use in Town.)

There is no significant traffic impact to the area and it provides an additional service that is common within religious campus facilities. It allows a use that is permitted by right within the Residential/Institutional zoning district.

OR

_____ The requested zoning action **IS NOT REASONABLE** and in the public interest because:

*(Reasons given for a zoning request being “reasonable” or “not reasonable” are not subject to judicial review.)*

Decision Date ___May 27, 2020

TnBd consist&reason 2016
155.506.13 **Cemeteries, Mausoleums, Columbarium, and Crematorium.**

A. Private or public cemeteries, as a stand-alone use or in association with a place of worship, may be permitted in or near residential neighborhoods, in the R-20, R-15, R-12, R-9, R/I, CrC, O, R-VS, SRN, and C-MF districts, when meeting the following criteria.

B. **STANDARDS.**
   1. Tombstones, monuments, and open wall columbarium must be located at least twenty five feet (25’) from any side or rear lot line which adjoins lots in a residential area and at least ten feet (10’) from any side or rear lot line which adjoins all other properties. In any case, they must be at least forty feet (40’) from any street right-of-way.
   2. Buildings for the maintenance, management, rent, or sale of cemetery lots, burial or remembrance sites, mausoleums, crypts, and columbarium within enclosed structures must be located at least one hundred feet (100’) from any lot lines which adjoin lots in a residential area. Otherwise any such buildings must conform to the requirements for principal uses in the district where they are located. [formerly known as § 153.189]

C. **CREMATORIUM.**
   1. Crematorium are allowed per NCGS 90-210.123 (a) and (b) on the same lot as a funeral home or cemetery, or on a parcel adjacent to a cemetery or funeral home use.
   2. When on the same lot as a cemetery in any of the districts listed above at 155.506.13.A., the crematorium shall be a minimum of four hundred feet (400’) from any adjacent residential dwelling unit.
   3. When a cemetery is on property zoned one of the districts listed in 155.402.13.A. above, a crematorium may be located on an adjacent parcel zoned as a commercial or industrial district of B-1, B-3, B-D, B-H, I-1, I-2, or B-1SCD.
   4. Crematorium may be allowed in association with a cemetery or funeral home or as a stand-alone use in other districts as listed in the Tables of Allowed Uses at 155.505. (Am. Ord. 2188, passed 11-14-16)
April 27, 2020

Dear Town of Matthews Planning Board,

Thank you for your valuable time in allowing me to present our dream ministry of a Memorial Garden/ Columbarium for Matthews United Methodist Church. Please let me introduce myself. I am Mary Ayers and a member of Matthews United Methodist Church. I am longingly waiting to place my deceased husband in his final resting place in the proposed memorial garden.

As you may know, there are many churches in the Matthews/Charlotte area who already have memorial gardens/ columbariums on their campuses for several years. Also, as stated by the National Funeral Directors Association, cremation accounts for 50% of services in 2016 and they estimate that in the year 2020 the figure will be 55%, and increase to 70% by 2030. Because of these reasons, we hope to have this ministry for our church members.

Our dream began about three years ago when David Bigham and I went to the Trustees of our church with our idea and dream. They were very excited and wishful for this to happen. A committee was formed and we have diligently worked and researched the very best location, the correct size, the most beautiful landscaping, the correct lighting and water source for this project. Thankfully we have had knowledgeable people willing to help and advise us along the way. All plans have been presented to, discussed with, and reviewed many times and unanimously voted on by the Matthews United Methodist Church’s Board of Trustees, the Administrative Council, and our Senior Pastor Charles Wilson. We have 51 families in the church who have signed letters of intent expressing a desire for niches and/ or memorials as well as financial support. At this time, we have enough commitments from these families to underwrite this ministry.

I have included several pictures and diagrams to share our plan and visions. I will, along with David Bigham, gladly answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration to our ministry,

Mary E Ayers

c. 704-661-3860
Full Layout (Future Expansion)

Reduced Layout (Initial Construction)

The initial construction will have one double niche unit (shown on the left in the picture above) and one single niche unit in the middle of the brick wall. A second double niche will be added on the right side as soon as funds permit.
Future Expansion Space
Future Expansion Space
The 64 ft. long brick wall will be on the west side of the garden closest to the rear wall of the Sanctuary building.
Brick Wall (64 ft. long; 7 ft. high in middle; 5 ft. high on ends)

Fence (54” tall brick columns with 48” metal fence panels)

For the reduced layout, the fence along the east side of the garden will not have brick columns. When the garden is expanded, the new fence will have the brick columns and metal fence panels.
Double Niche  100-1/4"L x 64-3/4"H x 39"D