

**ROUND HILL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
SPECIAL EXCEPTION APPLICATION  
STATEMENT OF JUSTIFICATION  
11 West Loudoun Street  
December 29, 2008**

**DESCRIPTION OF THE APPLICATION**

**Special Permit Request:** To allow the expansion of an existing church/place of worship, to no more than 324 worship seats. The entire Round Hill United Methodist Church site (consisting of four parcels), including all existing buildings, is included in this application. This application, if approved, will supersede the two existing SPEX approvals and will make the existing historic church building a conforming use.

**Record Fee Owner/  
Applicant:** Trustees of Round Hill United Methodist Church

**Zoning:** R-2

**Size:** 2.28471 acres of land area; 25,195 GFA; 25.3% FAR

**Maximum Number  
of Worship Seats:** There shall be a maximum of 324 worshipers on site at one time. The historic Sanctuary holds a maximum of 180 seats, and the proposed Fellowship Hall will hold a maximum of 324 seats. Thus, there will never be services in both seating areas at the same time.

**Hours of Operation/  
Services and Activities/  
Number in Attendance:** Three worship services are currently held on Sunday. Specific times for normal Sunday service will continue to be coordinated with the surrounding Churches so that Sunday traffic can be mitigated. Currently the Church office hours are 8:00 to 5:00, Monday through Friday. In addition to worship services and Sunday School, the following ministry and other related activities will occur on the premises:

- Indoor recreation ministry (i.e. youth recreation, intra-church sports, vacation bible school) (recreation and sports-approximately 25 in attendance once per week)

- Vacation Bible School-approximately 150 children for one full week each summer
- Fellowship Dining ministry and prayer groups - dinner or breakfast once per month, up to 70 people
- Adult religious education (four evening classes per week-approximately 60 people each; 6-8 bible studies per week-approximately 15 people each
- Church music Programs (three to four times per year with no more than 250 people in attendance)
- Family, Senior and Youth ministry activities: family activities-6 times per year, up to 50 people; overnight activities-twice per year, up to 50 people; youth group-twice per month, up to 20 people; senior activities-twice per week, up to 50 people
- Community Uses
  - Weddings/Receptions (approximately 6 per year)
  - Funerals (approximately 6 per year)
  - Community groups lease/use space (capacity of 185 people seated at round tables in Fellowship Hall; Examples - Christian associations, recitals (up to 100 children), Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, groups-15 to 30 children; Homeowners Associations annual meetings
- Church offices
- Classrooms (Sunday School and Choir)
  - Pre-school age children's program- maximum 25 children on site at one time; hours of operation 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
  - Sunday School/Bible Study/Ministry meetings-20 to 40 people; various weeknights, or mornings
- The historic parsonage will continue to be used for Sunday school, Bible Study, youth meetings, scout meetings Church administration and storage.
- The Church property is currently, and will continue, to be an off-site relief facility for Round Hill Elementary School in the event of an emergency.

**Waivers and  
Modifications:**

The Applicant requests a modification of the buffer yard as allowed by Zoning Ordinance Section 14.4 (2), reducing the required buffer yard by 50%. The portion of the buffer yard surrounding the parking area which abuts residential parcels is screened by a solid 6 foot high fence, as well as a 12.5 foot landscape buffer, as shown on the Special Exception Plan dated May 1, 2008, revised December 8, 2008, by Robson Group Architects Inc. ("SPEX Plat").

The Applicant requests a modification of the public street improvements otherwise required in the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. The historic fabric and character of this portion of the Town would be severely compromised with the construction of these VDOT suburban road improvements.

The Parsonage Building is currently nonconforming as to its location within a front yard setback. No demolition, change or relocation of this building is proposed because of its residential character and its contributory value to the historic district.

## **LOCATION AND CHARACTER**

**Existing Site Description:** The site currently contains multiple buildings which house a place of worship sanctuary, office, Sunday school classrooms, two restrooms, and a fellowship hall with a kitchen, a Parsonage (being retained for its contributory factor the historic area) which is used for youth meetings, Sunday school, scout meetings, Bible Study, Church administrative activities and storage.

**Proposed Site Description:** The development of the site will be accomplished in phases. During Phase 1 an addition will be constructed containing the new Fellowship facility and classrooms. An enclosed building connection, shown on the SPEX Plat as "enclosed 10 foot hallway," will be constructed during Phase 1 to ensure that the existing Church sanctuary will be connected to the new Fellowship facility until such time as construction of Phase 2 is begun. This ensures compliance with the Town's principal building and accessory building restrictions. At the completion of Phase 1, the existing trailer and shed will be removed. During Phase 2 the existing cinderblock structure will be removed and the new expansion will be completed containing church offices, small meeting rooms and additional Sunday School classrooms. The total area above ground will be 25,195 square feet of gross floor area. The new structure will be substantially ADA compliant. The existing Parsonage Building and historic Church sanctuary building will remain. No changes to the exterior of these two historic structures are proposed. The new expansion building has residential design elements and is no more than 29 feet in height (35 feet is allowed in the R-2 District). This residential look is shown on the computer generated renderings attached as Exhibit 1.

## CONFORMANCE WITH SECTIONS 16.3-16.4 (SPECIAL EXCEPTION STANDARDS)

### 16.3. Action by Council

The Town Council shall hold a public hearing in conformance with Section 15.1-431 of the 1950 Code of Virginia, as amended, and shall approve the special exception within 60 days unless it concludes, based upon information submitted with the application or at the public hearing, that:

- a. **The requested use is not within its jurisdiction according to the permitted uses contained in the zoning district.** The requested use is within Town Council's jurisdiction because pursuant to Section 3.4 of the Town of Round Hill Zoning Ordinance a Church/place of worship is a use allowed by Special Exception in the R-2 district.
- b. **The development will not comply with one or more requirements of this Ordinance.** All non-waivable requirements of the Town of Round Hill Zoning Ordinance, including the contemplated revisions to Article 14 Landscaping and Screening, are met.
- c. **The development, if completed, more probably than not:**
  1. **will materially endanger the public health or safety; or**  
The redevelopment of the Church site will not have an adverse impact on traffic, public water or public sewer. To the contrary, the public health and safety is enhanced by the construction of off-site drainage outfall improvements pursuant to the Town's Stormwater Management Plan. Moreover, the site will better accommodate children and teachers from Round Hill Elementary School in emergency situations.
  2. **will substantially injure the value of adjoining or abutting property; or**  
The redevelopment of the Church site should actually increase the values of adjoining and abutting properties (i) by revitalizing the area, (ii) setting a new standard for architectural compatibility with historic structures and landscaping, and (iii) solving downstream storm drainage problems.
  3. **will not be in harmony with the area in which it is to be located; or**  
The redevelopment of the Church site will be in harmony with the surrounding area because the Church has been a mainstay in the community since 1889. Its facilities have not kept up with the community's ministry needs and creates a substantial burden upon the congregation's free exercise of religion.
  4. **will not be in general conformity with the Town of Round Hill Comprehensive Plan or other plans adopted by the Town Council.**  
The redevelopment of the Church site is in general conformity with the Comprehensive Plan because (i) it provides an excellent buffer between Loudoun Street traffic and adjacent residential development, (ii) implements

the proposed Historic Overlay District by preserving the historic Church sanctuary and Parsonage Building, (iii) implements the Streetscape Master Plan, and (iv) implements the Stormwater Management Plan.

## CONFORMANCE WITH SECTIONS 6-1310 (SPECIAL EXCEPTION STANDARDS)

### 6-1310 Issues for Consideration.

**In considering a special exception application, the following factors shall be given reasonable consideration. When a special exception or minor special exception application includes a request for approval of temporary special events, the following factors shall be reasonably considered taking into account the proposed special events as well as the principal special exception use. The applicant shall address all of the following in its statement of justification or special exception plat unless not applicable, in addition to any other standards imposed by this Ordinance:**

- (A) **Whether the proposed special exception is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.** The Church site is located within the proposed Historic Overlay District and is currently planned for Low Density Residential development. The Church itself fronts on Loudoun Street which is a main roadway through the Town. Although there are currently other residential structures fronting on Loudoun Street, with the current development pattern of the Town and with Loudoun Street gaining increasingly more traffic, it would be inappropriate to place additional single family residential structures on this site, which has been used for a Church since 1889. It acts as a buffer between busy Loudoun Street traffic and existing single family residential development, while maintaining its long standing community relationship and historic character of the Town.

Additionally, the redevelopment of the Church site proposes to preserve the existing historic Church sanctuary and Parsonage Building, which is in harmony with the proposed Historic Overlay District. The Church redevelopment utilizes a reduced building mass so that it does not overpower the adjacent residential development, through the use of residential style architectural features, residential building materials and keeping the height lower than the existing steeple (and 6 feet lower than the Zoning Ordinance allows).

The Application is consistent with the Town's Streetscape Master Plan and Stormwater Management Plan.

- (B) **Whether the proposed special exception will adequately provide for safety from fire hazards and have effective measures of fire control.** The Applicant will conform to all fire code requirements in its development plans.
- (C) **Whether the level and impact of any noise emanating from the site, including that generated by the proposed use, negatively impacts the uses in the immediate area.** Services and gatherings of all types will be contained within the

buildings. The Applicant proposes to limit the size and frequency of activities on the site by development condition. The Applicant proposes to limit construction times by development condition.

- (D) **Whether the glare or light that may be generated by the proposed use negatively impacts uses in the immediate area.** Lighting will be designed to minimize impact to the surrounding area, while providing safe illumination to the Church parking area only when it is needed. The Applicant proposes a development condition which limits the height and type of lighting, as well as, requires that exterior site lighting be turned off when the facilities are not in use.
- (E) **Whether the proposed use is compatible with other existing or proposed uses in the neighborhood, and adjacent parcels.** Loudoun Street is currently home to 3 Churches. A Church is a community use, appropriate for location within residential areas and the Applicant is a Church which has served the surrounding area for 176 years. The Round Hill United Methodist Church congregation has existed since 1832 and the actual historic Church structure has existed since 1889.
- (F) **Whether sufficient existing or proposed landscaping, screening and buffering on the site and in the neighborhood adequately screens surrounding uses.** The Applicant has designed the site in a way which screens the buildings from the view of the surrounding residential uses. The parking area which abuts the surrounding residential parcels is lined with a solid 6 foot high fence, as well as a 12.5 foot landscape buffer (the Zoning Ordinance allows reduction of the required 25 foot landscape buffer by 50% if the Applicant also provides a 6 foot high solid fence).
- (G) **Whether the proposed special exception will result in the preservation of any topographic or physical, natural, scenic, archaeological or historic feature of significant importance.** The Applicant proposes to retain and preserve the historic sanctuary, as well as the Parsonage Building as the focal points of the site. These are both contributing structures to the historic district.
- (H) **Whether the proposed special exception will damage existing animal habitat, vegetation, water quality (including groundwater) or air quality.** The site is presently developed without on-site detention and water pollution controlling measures. The Applicant proposes an extensive underground BMP Stormwater Management system. The Applicant also proposes to construct a significant portion of the Town's Stormwater Management Plan facilities, thereby helping solve current downstream storm drainage problems.
- (I) **Whether the proposed special exception at the specified location will contribute to or promote the welfare or convenience of the public.** The Church is a community institution which will continue to provide ministry to the Town of Round Hill residents, provide facilities for various types of community functions/meetings as well as continuing to serve as Round Hill Elementary School's off-site relief location in the event of an emergency. Additionally, the Church

proposes to construct, at its sole cost and expense, off-site stormwater management improvements consistent with the Town's overall stormwater management plan.

- (J) **Whether the traffic expected to be generated by the proposed use will be adequately and safely served by roads, pedestrian connections and other transportation services.** The Applicant has proposed pedestrian connections at each of its entrances. The site is currently restricted to one vehicular entrance located on Church Street with no access through Locust Street. This Application proposes an additional entrance to be located on Locust Street which will alleviate Church Street and Loudoun Street traffic congestion. The Church also proposes to widen the throat of Church Street on the side that abuts the Church Property.
- (K) **Whether, in the case of existing structures proposed to be converted to uses requiring a special exception, the structures meet all code requirements of Loudoun County.** All new construction on the property will meet all code requirements of Loudoun County.
- (L) **Whether the proposed special exception will be served adequately by essential public facilities and services.** The Round Hill Volunteer Fire Department is only one block distance from the Church site and the Loudoun County Sheriff Round Hill substation is only two blocks distance from the Church site. Response time for emergencies is well within acceptable standards. The existing water and sewer facilities are believed to be adequate; however, the correction of any inadequacies subsequently discovered will be the responsibility of the Applicant. The Applicant proposes to construct, at its sole cost and expense, extensive off-site stormwater management outfall improvements consistent with the Town's overall stormwater management plan. Upon completion of this offsite outfall, the church property will be one of the few properties in the Town which meet current State storm drainage outfall requirements.
- (M) **The effect of the proposed special exception on groundwater supply.** Public water is proposed to serve this site. However, the new on-site BMP facility will reduce the pollutants entering the groundwater and streams nearby.
- (N) **Whether the proposed use will affect the structural capacity of the soils.** The proposed use will not affect the structural capacity of the soils.
- (O) **Whether the proposed use will negatively impact orderly and safe road development and transportation.** The majority of the Church's traffic impact will be during the Sunday morning worship services, at a time when the Town is not experiencing peak traffic flows. This is a non-rush hour use.
- (P) **Whether the proposed special exception use will provide desirable employment and enlarge the tax base by encouraging economic development activities consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.**

Not applicable, however, the Application proposes the possibility of part-time employment associated with its ministry activities.

- (Q) **Whether the proposed special exception considers the needs of agriculture, industry and businesses in future growth.** The redevelopment of the Church site is in direct response to the growth in the demand for faith ministry from the community supporting the Town. The last time the Church sanctuary building was expanded was in 1959. Its facilities have not kept up with nor are they compatible with the drastic change in character and size of the surrounding area. The inadequate size of the facility is impeding the ongoing Church ministry, outreach, purpose and vision. Additionally, the site is already being used as a Church and is not designated in the Comprehensive Plan for agriculture, industrial or commercial uses.
- (R) **Whether adequate on and off-site infrastructure is available.** The existing water and sewer facilities are believed to be adequate; however, the correction of any inadequacies subsequently discovered will be the responsibility of the Applicant. The Applicant proposes to construct, at its sole cost and expense, off-site stormwater management improvements consistent with the Town's overall stormwater management plan.
- (S) **Any anticipated odors which may be generated by the uses on site, and which may negatively impact adjacent uses.** Not applicable. The Church use is not one which generates odors.
- (T) **Whether the proposed special exception use is sufficiently measured to mitigate the impact of construction traffic on existing neighborhoods and school areas.** The Applicant has proposed to limit outdoor construction activities on the property to between the hours of 6:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. weekdays and between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. on Saturdays, and holidays. No outdoor construction activities will occur on Sundays.

### Conclusion

The Church expansion will provide much needed modern and safe Sunday school classrooms, fellowship and ministry space for a congregation which has outgrown its minimal existing facilities. It will provide increased landscaping, ADA/ Handicap accessible facilities, community meeting space, and choir and theater space. Additionally, the Church expansion will remove the existing non-historic addition to the Church, as well as the shed and the trailer, while retaining the historic Parsonage Building and sanctuary. This Application includes proposed off-site stormwater management improvements consistent with the Town's overall Stormwater Management Plan to be constructed at the Church's expense. This project is one which will enhance the community's welcoming image and serve to promote the ongoing historic preservation efforts within the Town. Once completed, the Church expansion will set the

standard for attractive, responsible and compatible redevelopment within the Town of Round Hill.

V:\Company\Round Hill United Methodist Church\Written Narrative\Written Narrative Revised clean 12-29-08.doc