

February 21, 2016

To: BZA - Washington DC  
From: Ann and Marc Scoffier  
RE: : BZA Application No. 19450 - 2D Site for Ward 3 Homeless Shelter

My husband and I support building shelters and expanding programs to help the homeless back on their feet in every Ward of the City. We support income and racial diversity in neighborhoods. We have both worked in fields addressing development and poverty all of our lives. I have to say that we have deep reservations about this particular homeless policy roll-out. I have read Homeward DC, the (quite skeptical) analyses of Fiscal Policy Institute, and the relevant parts of the DC budget both for 2016 and 2017. For the DC General program in particular, I just don't see how the (obviously needed) relocation program is being coordinated with urgently needed housing, job training/placement, and family support programs.

I've been to almost every meeting on this subject - at 2D, in churches, and temples. I know that people supporting the site think that the doubts we're expressing mask other agendas. If we could only discuss the issue as a whole, I think we could find common ground and it would become clear that we can make this better. Thus far, Ward 3 neighborhood meetings have been largely designed to address only site, building design, school district, and security issues - separately. Questions about the homeless policy itself and support programs that the DC General residents will need to take their next steps have been pretty much off the table.

I think BZA is our last chance to try to make this roll out more effective and to truly serve the people from DC General who will live in these new shelters across the city, including in Ward 3. Here's why.

**Site (specific to Ward 3):** Captain Newsham, Commander Gresham, and Homeland Security Officer were at the last meeting and greatly allayed my personal concerns about impact on police operations and security city wide. They have clearly and rightly insisted on accommodations they need to effectively carry out their mission.

The City now says they will build a 3 tier garage to accommodate police private and official vehicles, replacing the ones lost in siting the shelter. And, to accommodate police vehicles during the construction, the City now proposes to build a temporary police parking lot essentially covering tennis courts and part of some DC and National Park service land, with a temporary road to access the parking.

As it turns out, this is extremely, even prohibitively, expensive. The tiered parking construction is estimated at \$9-10 million. (It is unclear whether the temporary parking lot and promised rehabilitation of the tennis courts and greens space is included in that amount.) The construction of the shelter itself is estimated at around \$14 million. This brings the cost of siting a bare bones dorm on the police station parking lot will be at least \$23-24 million. This building could never accommodate medium term homeless,, it can never be transitional. It will consist of

Board of Zoning Adjustment  
District of Columbia  
CASE NO.19450  
EXHIBIT NO.163

50 bedrooms, 25(?) shared bathrooms, no kitchens, a common gathering space on each floor, a 40 seat dining room for trucked in meals, and street level offices for 4 case workers and a total of 8-10 guardians on shifts. Don't know whether this includes the cost of the planned playground, but seems to include landscaping.

**Availability of permanent housing for eligible families:** A number of us are also concerned about the choice of building short term shelters to serve a population in DC General and beyond, that is generally longer term homeless. The inhabitants of DC General specifically are often there for a minimum of 6 months or more. They, as well as families stuck in motels, and camping with family and friends, are already in desperate need of and have been waiting for real housing to become available. How this will happen and how it will be funded is very unclear.

Concerned about this, we tried to see if permanent housing relief was imminent from the Mayor's low income housing program. It turns out that the majority of units built thus far are targetted at families earning 40-60% of average median income in DC. DC AMI is \$108,000 per year! There are a very few units for 30%AMI. The Mayor's plan laudably aims at keeping working class families in their homes . But, there is virtually nothing comparable as yet in the works for a growing population earning minimum wage, as is the case of the vast majority of homeless in DC when they can find work (even if the \$15 per hour is finally implemented).

**Accessibility and availability of support services for residents.** In the DC General relocation effort specifically, there are serious questions about access to job placement and job training services, appropriate schools, and especially child care in shelters with none of this planned to be actually on site. The City, speaking apparently on the assumption that the stay for most residents will be 90 days or under, says that children will stay in the schools they already attend. After much questioning, it is clear that as the program now stands, a population of mostly young mothers with young children in these seven shelters, will have access, not to on-site services, but to case workers who identify programs that can help them, most of which are located across the Anacostia River. These, mostly Moms, will have to take their young children on public transportation in all weather, drop them at school and/or day care (hopefully), then be on time for work, job training , adult ed, or other necessary support programs, pick everyone up, and head back across town to eat trucked- in food.

With all my heart, both the 2D site specifically in terms of high costs and quality of life for the families, and the relocation program itself, in terms of access to homeless services and shortage of permanent low incme housing deserve a second look. We can and must do better.

Ann Scoffier  
3111 Idaho Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20016