

Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

From: Joe Barrios <jbarrios9396@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 28, 2017 10:14 PM
To: DCOZ - BZA Submissions (DCOZ)
Subject: Case # 19452, 1700 Rhode Island Ave NE

To whom it may concern:

I am a Ward 5 resident within walking distance of the proposed shelter at 1700 Rhode Island Avenue NE. I'm also a former ANC commissioner for 5B04, a district that adjoins the one with the proposed shelter.

I am writing to SUPPORT the construction of the shelter.

First, some opponents of the shelter have based their opposition on the so-called concentration of affordable housing on Rhode Island Avenue. Yet they offer no proof that such a concentration of units actually exists, when compared to any other part of the city. In fact, some of the nearby locations they cite benefit the public at large, not just those with affordable housing needs. For example, the Brookland Manor redevelopment calls for 20% affordable housing, and 80% will be market rate.

Second, I reject the notion that the proposed shelter is "out of character" with the rest of the neighborhood. The notion of what is considered "in character" is highly subjective. If the concern is truly one of concern over architectural continuity with the neighborhood, the BZA should approve the proposal while at the same time mandating architectural changes to be more in keeping with the character of the nearby buildings.

Third, the development is unlikely to greatly add to the burden of transportation networks. The location is about a mile from the RIA metro stop, with easy access by bus or by walking. I doubt that most users of a homeless shelter would be zooming around in an automobile and worsening the already serious traffic problems on the Avenue. While concern for the traffic to be generated by nearby developments is a valid cause for concern, I just don't see it as being relevant for this project.

Fourth, Ward 5 is experiencing a real estate boom, with housing prices skyrocketing. Consider the large number of projects in the pipeline: Brookland Manor re-development, Old Soldiers' Home, Howard University Divinity School, the Josephites at 12th and Allison NE, the Brookland Metro stop, the McMillan re-development. The vast majority of these units will be sold to wealthy people who can spend a large amount of money purchasing a home or condo--while the Ward's most vulnerable residents continue to be left behind (or outright expelled by the cost of living increases). Ward 5 should do its part to be responsible for our neediest citizens.

Fifth, this is the second site proposed for the Ward 5 shelter, after residents raised health concerns about the previous location at 2622 25th Place NE due to nearby industrial property. Rejecting a second location will continue to delay the construction of urgently needed emergency housing.

Ward 5 has a duty--shared equally with the rest of the city's wards--to do its share for housing the city's most vulnerable populations, in fair exchange for the wealth being created for many residents of the ward. It must do its part in helping to address the affordable housing crisis in our city.

For these reasons, I urge the Board of Zoning Adjustment to APPROVE the project at 1700 Rhode Island Avenue NE.

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.19452
EXHIBIT NO.166

Regards,

Jose "Joe" L. Barrios
Former ANC 5B04
Ward 5 resident and activist
1236 Hamlin St NE