



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

KENYAN R. McDUFFIE
Councilmember, Ward 5
Chair Pro Tempore
Chair, Committee on Business and
Economic Development

Committee Member
Finance and Revenue
Labor and Workforce Development
Transportation and the Environment

March 1, 2017

Frederick L. Hill
Chairperson
D. C. Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street NW Suite 200S
Washington, DC 20001

Re: BZA Application No. 19452; 1700 Rhode Island Avenue NE

Dear Chairperson Hill:

I write to express my support for the proposed Short-Term Family Housing facility at 1700 Rhode Island Avenue NE (1700 Rhode Island site).

As you know, the 1700 Rhode Island site came about as a result of the long delayed plan to close D.C. General. The closing of D.C. General is a critical element for the District's goal to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief, and non-reoccurring. Quite simply, D.C. General is an improperly sized facility and, because of a myriad of factors relating to its environmental condition, is not suitable for sheltering anyone, let alone families. Replacing D.C. General with smaller facilities throughout several of the Wards is a strategy that is in the best interest of the families we are trying to assist.

Though the Court has sustained the selection process for the 1700 Rhode Island site, I understand and sympathize with the residents who have expressed that they felt they were not sufficiently engaged. However, the 1700 Rhode Island site is currently the best location for the facility in Ward 5. It will offer families access to public transportation, a nearby grocer, a nearby library, and a nearby park. Moreover, the use of a government owned property provides the District with long term cost savings and avoids any conflicts or other issues surrounding leasing a facility from a developer.

While I, as previously stated, support the 1700 Rhode Island site, I do want to highlight two issues that I have also raised with the Executive. 17th Street NE is a block of modest-sized single-family homes and many residents have expressed concern with the proposed height of this

facility. Though there are similarly sized buildings along Rhode Island Avenue, this facility's proposed height at 70' – will be taller than the immediately adjacent homes. I encourage the Board of Zoning Adjustment to use its expertise to explore ways in which the height of the building can be further mitigated.

Furthermore, I have requested that, along with this new facility, the surrounding community also receive a package of amenities and commitments from the District. Some of the items that I have asked the applicant to include are:

- Rhode Island Avenue Streetscape assistance. As you may be aware, Rhode Island Avenue NE is in the midst of a streetscape revitalization and this facility could contribute to that effort. For example providing enhanced light fixtures along Rhode Island Avenue will serve to improve the condition of the Rhode Island Avenue corridor. Additionally, new sidewalks, new paving and trees for the streets surrounding the shelter should be provided (I would like to see it developed as a low impact development with permeable pavers, rain gardens and water retaining tree boxes where possible).
- Additional programming and hours at the Langdon Park Community Center and/or the Woodridge Library, both located within three blocks of the proposed facility.
- Increased grant funding for small businesses along Rhode Island Avenue NE.
- Increased transit options along Rhode Island Avenue NE.
- A Dedicated clean team for the streets/community immediately surrounding the proposed location.

Residents in Ward 5 are compassionate and understanding, and I believe are willing to welcome this facility's residents with open arms and a warm heart. At the same time, residents want to feel that the District is a partner with them in this facility, not an adversary. I believe that we are on the precipice of having a fantastic temporary home for some of our most vulnerable residents and hope that the Board of Zoning Appeals will approve the facility in line with the considerations I have noted. I look forward to continuing to work with residents to ensure that the 1700 Rhode Island site is built and becomes yet another asset to our vibrant Ward 5 community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'K.R. McDuffie', written in a cursive style.

Kenyan R. McDuffie