

Opposition of case number (04-36) -- Dorchester Expansion

From: Peter Petropoulos, Dorchester tenant, Apartment 108

3/29/06

Dear Chairperson Carol J. Mitten and members of the zoning commission:

I am in opposition to the expansion because of the following:

- 1: The Dorchester ownership and management has not given the tenants enough information about this expansion and how it will affect our lives.
- 2: The planned construction will cause serious hardship to me and my family.
3. The planned construction and exceptions that are requested will reduce the quality of life in our neighborhood and cause serious congestion problems.

I am unable to attend because of family commitments and hope to be able to address the zoning commission at another time to elaborate on my opposition.

Best regards

Peter H Petropoulos Apt 108

Peter Petropoulos

2480-16th St NW
202 641-4141

ZONING COMMISSION

CASE No. 04-36
EXHIBIT No. 93

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 04-36
EXHIBIT NO. 93

March 30, 2006

2480 16th Street NW
Apartment 617
Washington, DC
20009

RE: Dorchester House Expansion, Case No. 04-36

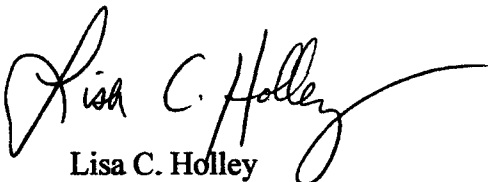
To Whom It May Concern:

I love my apartment and the building in which I reside, the Dorchester. With the proposed expansion, I have grave concerns about the integrity of the neighborhood and the living conditions within the existing property. The main reason I chose to live in Washington rather than New York City was the simple fact that there was space within the city. Giant buildings weren't built one on top of the other. There was and still is breathing room. This breathing room, however, is slowly being chipped away in the neighborhood with the increase in development. Adams Morgan needs time to adjust to these changes and their ramifications. The new Harris Teeter on Kalorama Street, next to the Dorchester, is well under way and the impact of additional cars, parking and noise cannot be evaluated at this time. With the loss of the Dorchester's parking lot, the parking and traffic situation will only be exacerbated. A number of individuals in the neighborhood don't work 9 to 5 and with all of the construction, haven't had a decent night's sleep in over a year. I wholeheartedly support development and improving the quality of the neighborhood, but we must do it in a way that respects those of us that live in its trenches. It is also imperative that the owners be forth coming to tenants regarding plans for the existing building. The existing building could also use improvements and upgrades (like the elevators and fire alarm systems). The expansion will also impact us on environmental and financial levels. Why, after all it's time in existence, is anyone proposing an addition to the Dorchester?

After reading the PUD and Zoning Map Amendment Application for Case No.04-36, I see that both my husband and myself are the types of tenants that the Applicant seeks, schoolteachers who contribute to the fabric of the neighborhood. We're already here. Don't lose us.

It is with regret that I'm unable to attend this evening's hearing in person, as I'm preparing for upcoming surgery.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa C. Holley", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Lisa C. Holley

March 30, 2006

District of Columbia Zoning Commission
441 4th Street N.W.
Suite 220 South
Washington, D.C. 20001

re: 04-36 Dorchester House Expansion

Dear Zoning Commissioners:

I am strongly opposed to the needless and irrelevant Dorchester House Expansion. Certainly, approving it would financially benefit both the owners and the District of Columbia tax revenue, but only at the great personal, social, and financial cost and hardship of the tenants of Dorchester House. To justify the construction of a new building and underground parking garage in an already-dense city block where a supermarket is opening, the Zoning Board would have to put aside the tenants' needs and right to comfortable living. Human costs in the form of construction noise, dust, congestion, loss of environmental niceties such as light, air, and mature trees, and decreased quality of life would have to be disregarded.

Recently forced to move from my apartment in Northern Virginia because of a similar project which created so much dust that my mild allergy turned into full-blown, life-threatening asthma, I know firsthand the havoc that the proposed construction would cause to Dorchester House tenants, including myself. The noise from the excavation so close to Dorchester House would be horrendous; dust and dirt will be, for some residents, unhealthy and, at the least, a troublesome nuisance during the construction period estimated at 15-16 months. This decreased quality of life is a great deal to ask of the many retired and aging persons living in the existing building, who are in their homes during the construction hours. It will be burdensome enough to the younger people, whose home lives will be disrupted, but who can at least escape the predicament of the seniors by going to their workplaces during the heaviest construction hours. Plans for temporary parking for those of us now parking on the Dorchester House parking lot are extremely inadequate.

Tenants whose apartments overlook the current courtyard and parking lot would lose their view if an 8-story building were permitted to be put on the space occupied current parking lot and much of the current courtyard. The wonderful sun and light are outstanding and attractive features of the existing building; the view to the west would be gone forever to residents whose new vista would be a building wall. The loss of mature trees and a pleasant grassy area would be gone, replaced by meager spaces of grass that could in no way make up for them.

The tenants of Dorchester House have been ignored while Dorchester Associates rounded up support for its project by explaining it to community residents. I learned about the proposed construction from a stranger, while I was in line at the Safeway, shortly after I moved into the Dorchester. A tenant of one of the Jubilee Housing buildings, she told me she had seen photos of architectural models at a meeting at which the builder explained that some one-bedroom apartments in the new building would be affordable, costing only \$1,500 a month, an astounding amount for affordable housing to her and me.

I stopped in the Dorchester House management office on my return from the Safeway, and was told that management knew nothing about a proposed building, although one person in the office had heard that a presentation had been made at an ANC meeting. Apparently, Modern Property Management (now Dorchester Associates, I believe) had not even informed their staff of the proposed plans. According to its pre-hearing submission to the Zoning Commission, Dorchester House Associates "has had multiple discussions with various neighborhood groups and organizations . . . regarding this project and looks forward to continued dialogue with the community as this project moves forward." What about discussions and dialogue with those individuals who have paid rent to this organization (under its various names) over many years, some for more than 30 years? Tenants whose monthly rent has contributed to the aggrandizement of those who now propose to increase both the number of tenants and the cost of rentals?

Jubilee Housing is an extremely worthy endeavor, and benefits our community in many ways, but I believe that offering them \$100,000, as Dorchester House Associates have done, is nothing more than a way of preventing their objection to the construction. Further, if the desire were truly to benefit the community, affordable housing for low-income people now being forced out of the neighborhood by development projects would be much more appropriate. I think the intention of Dorchester House Associates to provide affordable housing, to median-income-level parties only, is a facade, and a ploy to gain PUD approval.

Dorchester House Associates suggest that its proposed project would add “enhancements and refinements to the 17th Street facade of the project that create a more attractive and inviting visual and pedestrian experience along 17th Street.” Achieving a more attractive experience does not require the construction of a new building; simple improvements to the fencing and greenery bordering the current parking lot along 17th Street could achieve that goal.

I cannot dispute the facts that the proposed development will generate tax revenues and add residents, having a positive impact on tax revenues of the District. But I am more concerned about two other factors:

- 1) The goal of the District’s Comprehensive Plan: “Encourage housing on suitably located public or private properties that are vacant, surplus, underutilized, or unused.” (10 DCMR 302.2.(e))
- 2) Dorchester House Associates’ statement that “The proposed project is an infill project that provides new housing . . . and . . . dramatically enlivens a property that is clearly underutilized.”

How, in heaven’s name can it be argued that this one low-density space within a highly populated city block is underutilized? Assessment and Taxation Lots 815 and 816, where the new building is proposed, are neither vacant, surplus, underutilized, nor unused. A need for “dramatic enlivenment” cannot be rationalized or proved. Parking is provided on these two lots for Dorchester House tenants in a nicely hidden area, allowing a vista over Adams-Morgan for tenants in the building. The already crowded block bordered by 17th, Euclid, Kalorama, and 16th Streets, in which crowding and congestion will be greatly increased by the supermarket’s bringing much human and automotive traffic into the block, simply does not need a new, eight-story apartment building at all.

One only has to look at the congestion on Glebe and Randolph Roads in Arlington, Virginia around the Harris-Teeter Supermarket to get an idea of what will occur at 16th and 17th Streets at Kalorama. The site in Virginia is at the intersection of a 4-lane and a 6-lane thoroughfare, and still the back-up waiting for parking spaces adversely affects traffic. Imagine what Harris-Teeter will bring to narrow streets in the District! Irrespective of findings of those who studied the traffic situation around the Citadel Harris Teeter, I know what congestion we will be living with. To justify adding to this congestion seems almost frivolous.

Beyond all those considerations, construction of an infill building will cause undue hardship to residents who have financially supported Dorchester House Associates, in various ownership formulations, since the building opened to tenancy in the 1940s. As a new tenant, hopeful of having a quiet place to spend my retirement years and unable to afford the cost of another move, I beg the District of Columbia Zoning Commission to focus on the human impact related to the proposed, but unneeded, construction. Surely, Adams-Morgan and Columbia Heights residents in the District have had enough of living with the personal hardships entailed in increasing D.C. taxes and private profit. Please leave Lots 815 and 816 remain as they are, in a sensible, rational, and practical configuration.

Having lived through such an experience prior to moving into Dorchester House, I can personally attest to the personal cost of that zoning decision and its impact on my life. I am 70 years old, have been a good tenant all my life, and don't want to spend the next 2 years of my life burdened by this proposed project and the hardships it will bring to tenants of 394 apartments. I will have to find someone to help me move.

I hope that, especially in view of all the hardships that have been placed on individuals lives by the spate of construction in Adams-Morgan and Columbia Heights—which of course has benefits to the city—the Zoning Commission in this case might be favorably disposed to consider the needs of the tenants of Dorchester House. Here is a golden opportunity for the Commission to establish a record of concern for people in the District of Columbia.

Thank you for allowing me to present this statement of protest.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carolyn Davis".

Carolyn Davis
Apartment 916
Dorchester House