

2953 Tilden Street NW
Washington, DC 20008

March 23, 2006

Carol J. Mitten, Chairman
DC Office of Zoning
One Judiciary Square
441 4th Street NW
Suite 210
Washington, DC 20001

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Dear Chairman Mitten,

I am writing with regards to Clark Realty's Planned Unit Development (PUD) proposal for 2950 Tilden Street NW (Case #05-26). My husband Tom and I live directly across the street from the proposed site at 2953 Tilden Street NW. We bought our home in July of 2003 and expect to stay in it for many years. We are invested in the neighborhood and concerned about the proposed project.

I am very disappointed in Clark's proposal. When we first bought our home, we had the impression that the vacant lot was zoned for a row of townhouses similar to those along our side of the street, which I believe would be a nice addition to the neighborhood. However, the current Clark proposal would greatly detract from the neighborhood by crowding the streetscape, creating a huge volume of traffic with an untenable traffic pattern, obliterating green space and sunlight, introducing an incompatible architectural style, and adding a significant source of artificial light, noise, and litter. While Clark claims to have made changes in response to input from the community, it does not appear to me that the recent (very minor) changes as described by Nicole Forrest, a Clark Representative, at the meeting on March 14th address the major concerns that we have. To add insult to injury, it does not appear that Clark plans to follow through on the specific "community amenities" it promised during neighborhood meetings last autumn.

My first concern with the proposed building is its sheer size. My understanding is that there will be no vacant greenspace remaining along the sides of the lot and that the total height of the building would rise to more than six stories. This would obviously be a much taller building

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case No. 05-26
EXHIBIT NO. 16

than the buildings on either side of the proposed site. It will dwarf the embassy of Kuwait to its east and stand significantly taller than the apartment building to its west. Its width would fill in all the available space leaving little sense of openness or room for sunlight. The proposed "pre-cast concrete" facade will only add to the monolithic impression. Perhaps the three lower projections proposed for the front of the building are an attempt to break up the space, but also leaving some actual space around the building would be a more effective way to do that.

On a more practical level, the size of this building is also an issue for traffic. The proposal is for 60 units and 130 parking spots. By adding that volume of traffic to the street, Clark will be making an already difficult traffic situation worse. I walk our dogs along Tilden every morning and evening just before and after peak traffic hours. I can tell you that there is already a significant back up along Tilden Street in both directions at those times. This is not an occasional traffic problem, but the routine condition along Tilden Street between Connecticut Avenue and 29th Street. In addition, traffic accidents are extremely common at the intersection of Tilden and Connecticut. Adding traffic will make this intersection more congested and hazardous, especially considering the fact that Tilden is a divided street, and thus in order to access Connecticut Avenue, anyone leaving the proposed building would need to first turn right on right on Tilden, make a U-turn into the line of backed-up traffic, and then turn onto Connecticut Avenue. This is not to say that there should be an additional turn-around lane in the median; the median is a wonderful traffic buffer and a great opportunity to incorporate green space into the neighborhood. What there should be is fewer additional units and thus fewer additional cars.

As well as being concerned about the size of the proposed building, I find the style of the proposed building to be questionable. A monolith of pre-cast concrete may be a cost-effective option, but it in no way enhances the neighborhood or streetscape, nor does it blend with the hundred-year-old townhouses across the street. The character of this building simply would not fit with the existing environment.

Ideally, this section of Tilden Street is an important transitional area where busy and commercial Connecticut Avenue blends into a quiet residential neighborhood and further down the hill into Rock Creek Park. The largest of the buildings in the area have been confined to Connecticut Avenue addresses, and that is how the zoning should remain. A building of the size

proposed will add litter, artificial light, noise, and traffic to the interior of the neighborhood. It even poses a possible security threat to the Embassy of Kuwait. It will bring with it impermeable surfaces, increasing runoff and possible water quality problems. The building would be occupied by a hundred or more people, all of whom will need garbage and recycling and mail and delivery service, all of which require large trucks making regular trips. Clark does not even plan to provide a loading dock for these essential services.

In an attempt to mitigate these obvious damages, Clark is offering a contribution to Friends of Pierce Mill. While this is a worthy cause, it has little direct tie to the effect of the proposed building on its immediate surroundings. I would like to see the median improved and planting or landscaping completed and maintained along the median and the south side of Tilden Street. These types of improvements were discussed at meetings with Clark last autumn, but apparently did not make it into the proposal. In fact, I hear from my neighbors that Clark promised similar improvements in conjunction with its last project, the building that now sits on the Connecticut Avenue side of the lot in question, but it never followed through.

Today the median is in poor condition and offers an excellent opportunity for Clark to improve the neighborhood. I spoke with Nicole Forrest by phone and email last September and asked that Clark help with an ongoing tree planting project or the maintenance of the new trees. During our phone call on September 27th, 2005 Nicole claimed Clark was interested in this idea and that she would email me a draft agreement as well as follow up with another phone call, but I never received her email, the draft document or another call. I have enclosed the original email, which I had sent to her before reaching her by phone. The median could be a beautiful green space for both existing neighbors and residents of any new building to enjoy, if Clark and the neighborhood could work together to improve it.

In sum, the vacant lot on Tilden Street offers a wonderful opportunity, but the construction proposed by Clark detracts rather than adds to the neighborhood. I appreciate that Clark's primary goal in this project is profit, not neighborhood enhancement, but it is also my understanding that a PUD generally proposes certain benefits to the neighborhood and the city in order to compensate for a requested zoning change. Here, the benefits run entirely to Clark and little consideration has been given to the immediate concerns of the neighbors around the building site or the contribution the building or builder might make to the city in terms of

aesthetic and environmental improvements to offset the impact of a large building. The Office of Zoning should insist that these improvements be part of the proposal and/or that the size of the project be significantly reduced in order to reduce its impact.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marna McDermott', with a stylized, flowing script.

Marna McDermott



Marna McDermott <marnamcd@gmail.com>

tree planting

Marna McDermott <marnamcd@gmail.com>

Tue, Sep 27, 2005 at 9:59 AM

Reply-To: Marna McDermott <marnamcd@gmail.com>

To: Nicole.Forrest@clarkrealty.com

Hi Nicole,

I just left you a voice mail, but thought this might be easier.

We are planning a neighborhood tree planting on October 29th through Casey Trees. We are planting ten new trees and two of them will be in the median near the new building site. We are concerned that the construction may damage the trees and would ideally like Clark's help doing some tree protection or even landscaping. I did not see any median rehab in the proposal as submitted, but I know you had expressed some interest in that as a possibility at a couple of the meetings. Please let me know if you see any opportunity for Clark to be helpful in this project.

thanks,

Marna

Marna McDermott

2953 Tilden St. NW

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Work - 202 564 2890
