

TILDEN STREET COALITION

May 26, 2006

Carol Mitten, Chairman
DC Zoning Commission
One Judiciary Square
441 4th Street NW, Suite 210S
Washington, DC 20001

Case: 05-26

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Dear Chairman Mitten,

On behalf of the Tilden Street Coalition, I would like to submit for the record the attached seven articles from the Northwest Current:

September 29, 2004	Tilden Street Project Brings Early Concern
October 6, 2004	Clark Plans Draw Swift Opposition
November 24, 2004	Neighbors, Builder Clash Over Tilden Condo
January 11, 2006	Tilden St. Condo Plan Prompts Zoning Fight
April 19, 2006	Tilden Street Residents Mark Centennial of Block's Homes
May 10, 2006	Revisions Don't Quell Tilden Ire
May 24, 2006	VIEWPOINT by Dorn McGrath Tilden Project's Shortfalls Need In-Depth Look

These articles chronicle the long-standing opposition of the Tilden Street neighbors to the Clark Realty PUD project for 2950 Tilden Street. We urge the Zoning Commissioners to retain the R-2 zoning, and allow the construction of eight townhouses to go forward.

Sincerely,



Susan Gillespie
Tilden Street Coalition
c/o 2931 Tilden Street NW
Washington, DC 20008

**ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia**

CASE NO.

05-26

EXHIBIT NO.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 05-26
EXHIBIT NO. 72

THE NORTHWEST CURRENT

ANC votes to support Babe's plan

By ARI NATTER
Current Staff Writer

The American University Park, Friendship Heights and Tenleytown advisory neighborhood commission voted unanimously last night to support scaled-back construction plans for a proposed 42-unit condominium building on the site of Babe's Billiards on Wisconsin Avenue.

Commissioner Chapman Todd noted the approval came only after extensive meetings and negotiations between the developer and neighbors of the site who had initially opposed the building's size and scope.

"We felt that given the amount of work that had gone into the working with the community on this, it's as

CHIPPING AWAY



Tilden Street project brings early concern

By ELIZABETH WIENER
Current Staff Writer

Clark Realty Capital's plan to develop a shallow lot on Tilden Street just east of Connecticut Avenue is causing some jitters among neighbors who remember their losing battle against a nine-story apartment building Clark built four years ago on an adjacent lot, just to the south and overlooking Rock Creek Park.

Clark officials say they are still "exploring development options" for the Tilden Street site. Current plans include "a kind of boutique-

type" residential development, in three modules at ground level and an undetermined number of floors above, said project manager Nicole Forrest.

"We're very open to discussion," Forrest said. "We obviously don't want to build something the community doesn't want. If the community is set against anything that's economically feasible," Clark might put the lot up for sale, she said.

Advisory neighborhood commissioner Stephen Dennis will host a meeting at 7:30 p.m.

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Aqueduct hears earful

Monday at Howard University Law School to discuss the tentative proposal.

"I look forward to an evening of discussion as we explore the possibilities for the future of this site," Forrest said in an e-mail.

Architect Suman Sorg is working on designs for what would be a planned-unit development on the 35,000-square-foot lot and — if the community is supportive — Clark hopes to submit its application to the city in early November, Forrest said. Zoning attorney Phil Feola will represent the company, she said.

"We want something that's appropriate in scale, with lots of articulation and green space," Forrest said. Noting there are town houses across Tilden Street and a nine-story building looming behind, she said, "we're trying to find a way to bridge that, to come up with something very tailored to this site."

The now-vacant lot on the south side of Tilden is currently zoned for low-density residential development and would accommodate roughly eight semidetached town houses, Dennis said. One preliminary sketch shared by Clark showed a new building containing 40 to 60 units and topping out at nine stories, Dennis said.

The city's Comprehensive Plan indicates the lot is suitable for high-density housing, and that has sent shivers through some in the community.

The D.C. Office of Planning has not yet weighed in officially, but it is generally encouraging development near Metrorail stations as part of the mayor's goal to attract new residents. Clark's parcel is within walking distance of both the Cleveland Park and Van Ness Metro stations.

Ellen McCarthy, deputy planning director, said she has not seen the version of the project shown to Dennis and "can't really comment on the plan."

But McCarthy noted that "although zoning on the site is R-2-B, or low-density residential, that is not consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, which calls for high-density residential."

That high-density designation has been in every version of the plan since 1984, McCarthy said.

Clark officials are treading gingerly, clearly hoping to avoid the bitter controversy that shadowed construction of the nine-story building at 3883 Connecticut Ave.

Forrest has met with advisory commissioner Dennis twice already, and he calls her "a bright, ideal spokesperson for something that will be controversial." Still, he worries that the proposed building will block more views from his landmarked building at 3901 Connecticut Ave., where many residents lost spectacular views of the park when Clark constructed the building at 3883.

But his primary concern, Dennis said, is that allowing development of large apartment buildings on the side streets off Connecticut Avenue will set "a very damaging precedent."

"Connecticut Avenue was designed as a great boulevard, with apartment houses fronting it. But the

side streets are [low-density] residential," he said.

Dennis has begun speaking to neighbors about the new Clark plan. "They want something compatible to be built on the site. But I haven't spoken to anybody who thinks this is a good idea," the advisory neighborhood commissioner said.

Susan Gillespie, who lives directly across Tilden Street from Clark's lot, said she had been "looking forward to construction of town houses" there, "to block the view of 3883," which now looms over the site. "But we never expected a high-rise apartment," which she fears could set a precedent for high-rise buildings on the side streets off Connecticut Avenue, Gillespie said.

More development will only worsen traffic and parking problems on Tilden and neighboring streets,

"Connecticut Avenue was designed as a great boulevard, with apartment houses fronting it. But the side streets are [low-density] residential."

— Neighborhood commissioner Stephen Dennis

she said, even though Clark intends to include underground parking as part of the new package.

Development of the Tilden Street site raises issues that are different from those raised by 3883 Connecticut, which sits behind the older buildings on Connecticut Avenue and required no zoning change. Starting in 2000, when Clark first got building permits, that building caused a storm of controversy largely for environmental reasons.

The 3883 site abuts the Melvin Hazen branch of Rock Creek Park and includes a small "seep" or seasonal stream that feeds into Rock Creek.

Three D.C. Council members, the National Park Service and several environmental groups insisted a full environmental impact study should have been required, and they protested throughout the project's construction.

But the city ultimately refused to intervene, as did the Army Corps of Engineers. A court challenge was thrown out after the D.C. Court of Appeals ruled that the group of neighbors who brought the suit did not have proper "standing." But some of the hard feelings and rancor remain.

A few weeks ago, Monument Realty bought into the building at 3883. Monument recently erected a huge beige and yellow sign in front advertising the sale of luxury condominiums at what the company has renamed "The Connecticut."

Michael Darby of Monument said marketing of the vacant units has already begun, and all potential buyers will be told of "the possibility that the lot [to the north] will be developed."

But Darby said very few windows at 3883 face north, limiting the impact of any new development by Clark. He predicted that residents in the area will fight against proposals for high or dense development. "Remember the last time?" he asked a reporter. "Weren't the people chained to trees?"

THE NORTHWEST CURRENT

Clark plans draw swift opposition

By **CHRIS KAIN**
Current Staff Writer

Clark Realty Capital's plan for a 40- to 60-unit luxury apartment building on a vacant Tilden Street parcel just east of Connecticut Avenue met strong resistance from neighbors on Monday.

At a meeting organized by Clark officials and advisory neighborhood commissioner Stephen Dennis to provide residents with an initial look at the project, neighbors generally dismissed Clark's suggestion that the building is appropriate based on city policies encouraging transit-oriented development.

Project manager Nicole Forrest and architect Suman Sorg said the building — carved into three modules at ground level — would provide an important transition from single-family residences across Tilden Street to the multistory apartment buildings along Connecticut Avenue.

They noted that the initial design calls for a 20-foot height at the Tilden Street property line, climbing to 40 feet, then 60 feet and ultimate-

PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST



Zoning board agrees to Sidwell expansion

By **ELIZABETH WIENER**
Current Staff Writer

The D.C. Board of Zoning Adjustment Tuesday voted unanimous approval for a major expansion of facilities, and perhaps enrollment, at the Sidwell Friends middle and upper school campus on Wisconsin Avenue.

School officials now hope to break ground for a two-level underground parking garage facing the avenue this winter and for expansion of the Kogod Middle School on 37th Street by late spring.

Once those two projects are com-

plete, under the board's order Sidwell must begin a second phase of expansion within five years. The phase includes a new gymnasium renovations to arts and other athletic facilities and, finally, the school first Quaker meetinghouse.

Under the board's ruling, Sidwell can expand enrollment from 800 to 850 one year after the garage is completed. Assistant head of school Michael Saxenian said the school could theoretically increase enrollment to 850 starting September 2006 if construction goes as planned.

See **Sidwell**/Page 1

Modern look for library inspires mixed reviews

By **CHRIS KAIN**
Current Staff Writer

Library officials presented a strikingly modern design for a new Tenleytown-Friendship Neighborhood Library at a neighborhood meeting last week, eliciting a range of reactions

for expansive views up and down Wisconsin Avenue, as well as to the west. It also provides more park spaces than the current design.

Though some residents said they would prefer a more traditional design, a show of hands turned majority support for the contemporary look that Hennigan presented

90 feet on the southern edge. Sorg said the building — to be "luminous" at night — would use "warm" materials and have a simple, modern aesthetic with extensive terraces along Tilden Street.

"We think it could fit in quite nicely in the neighborhood," said Sorg, who described the work of Frank Lloyd Wright as her inspiration. "A traditional apartment building on this site really would not work."

But residents quickly spoke out against the building's height and density.

"Beauty is in the eye of the beholder," said Jaynie Simmons, a resident of a nearby apartment building. "I look at this and it is ugly. It is a big, glass box dressed up as a Christmas tree that you are going to foist on the neighborhood like it was a gift."

Clark proposes to seek approval from the D.C. Zoning Commission for a planned-unit development with related zoning change from R-2 to R-5-D. Under the city's zoning rules, the flexibility such planned-unit developments obtain must be balanced against amenities for the city and neighborhood.

"What I see is a huge economic hit for Clark," objected residents. "It is not a benefit for the neighborhood. ... I think the feeling loud and clear is this is a complete overblown, overbuilt project."

Several residents suggested that Clark instead construct the eight 40-foot-high town houses permitted under the present zoning and envisioned when Clark developed the adjoining nine-story apartment building just to the south.

"We like the eight town houses," said Tilden Street resident Riki Alexander. "We would not like the height and density of this project. ... We don't want this project for a million reasons we could list."

10-6-04
Said Simmons: "What is appropriate for that location is eight town houses."

Forrest said that Clark officials considered town houses but concluded that such a project would be a poor utilization of a site near Connecticut Avenue and just two-and-a-half blocks from the Van Ness Metro station. She also cited design concerns and the mayor's call for the District to attract 100,000 new residents over the next decade.

"It seemed inappropriate for the space," she said of the town houses.

Tilden Street resident Zigurs Liepins said that the change in heart reflects poorly on Clark. He said the company is going back on commitments made when it built the adjoining 3883 Connecticut Ave. on land it acquired at the same time as the Tilden Street site.

"Nothing else would be built there — this is what we got from Clark and everyone else," Liepins said. "Apparently you can't be trusted because now you want to build this apartment house. ... If it's zoned for town houses, that's what I would like to see there."

Although the proposed project requires a zoning change, Clark officials said that it conforms to the designation in the Comprehensive Plan's generalized land-use map, which classifies the site as appropriate for high-density residential development. Under the District's home rule charter, zoning cannot be inconsistent with the D.C. Comprehensive Plan.

For their part, residents said they believe the land-use map is inconsistent with the text of the Comprehensive Plan, which discourages high-density apartment buildings on side streets.

Some residents contended the plan's text must be considered paramount, but Clark attorney Phil Feola said the Zoning Commission will have to balance any competing elements of the Comprehensive Plan. "They're supposed to be read in conjunction," he said.

D.C. Office of Planning staffer Arthur Jackson said planners had offered initial feedback that the project's scale seemed reasonable, though the office will undertake a

more thorough review for compliance with zoning regulations and the Comprehensive Plan once Clark has filed detailed plans.

In response to questions from residents worried that the case could set a precedent for further encroachment on the residential neighborhood, Jackson said that other projects would not have the land-use

"It's a very interesting building — for a site in Bethesda. This is the wrong location for it."

— Commissioner Stephen Dennis

map on their side.

"The Comprehensive Plan seems to limit extension of high-density development to the east or west," Jackson said.

Neighborhood concerns included fears that the project would exacerbate traffic conditions on Tilden Street, one of the few corridors that leads through Rock Creek Park.

"Rush hour on Tilden is backed up from Connecticut Avenue to the park every morning and evening," Alexander said.

They also worried about increased demand for parking, from residents as well as visitors. The current design would provide two underground parking spaces per

unit, but residents said that the size of the largest units — up to 3,000 square feet — would draw residents with more than two cars.

Forrest's early suggestion for a project amenity — beautification of the Tilden Street median strip — inspired some grumbling. Residents said that Clark's construction workers were the ones to cause the median's deterioration in the first place.

"I don't consider it a neighborhood amenity for Clark Construction to beautify the median strip they destroyed," said advisory neighborhood commission chair Karen Perry.

The history of ill feelings — accentuated by an unsuccessful court battle to stop construction of 3883 Connecticut Ave., which was deemed a matter-of-right project — leads to continued distrust, according to several neighbors.

"Construction crews would leave all their litter, all their trash up and down Tilden Street," said Amy Goldson of 28th Place. "The median strip has still been decimated. ... How do we know that we can trust and believe Clark? Up to now, they haven't proven themselves."

Forrest said she could not address some of the concerns because she was not with the company during the prior construction. But she said she recognizes the need to build a sense of trust, which she hopes to accomplish through continuing consultations.

"I can meet with you every week if you want," she said.

Forrest said she would share neighborhood concerns with the development team, adding that she hoped the next iteration would mitigate some of the concerns raised. She said that the company had wanted to submit plans to the Zoning Commission within a month.

Dennis, the area's advisory neighborhood commissioner, said he had warned Forrest of the objections likely to come up at Monday's session. He said he expects the project to remain controversial.

"Nothing that anybody said tonight should have come as any surprise," he said after the meeting. "It's a very interesting building — for a site in Bethesda. This is the wrong location for it."

Neighbors, builder clash over Tilden St. condo

By ELIZABETH WIENER
Current Staff Writer

Clark Construction officials said they are willing to lop one floor off a proposed nine-story condo complex on Tilden Street. But the concession won no praise from Forest Hills residents who say the site should be reserved, as zoned, for eight semidetached homes.

At a crowded meeting at Howard University Law School last week, the two sides seemed further apart than ever — with Clark's project manager saying the firm is not interested in "matter-of-right" development, and neighbors adamantly opposing

the planned-unit development that would require a zoning change.

"What's wrong with by right?" asked a woman in the audience.

"It's not the highest and best use for this land," Clark's project manager, Nicole Forrest, replied.

The gap between developer and neighborhood is clear: Clark Realty Capital is proposing a modern tripartite condo building of 40 to 60 units in the 2900 block of Tilden Street, across the street from a row of older row houses with ample front porches. Neighbors say the company could make a tidy profit by building the single-family homes for which the

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35,000-square-foot lot is zoned.

When the roughly 90 neighborhood residents in attendance were asked if they supported Clark's current proposal, not one person raised a hand.

"We obviously don't want to build something the community doesn't want," project manager Forrest had said in an earlier interview. But faced with unanimous opposition at the meeting last Tuesday, Forrest was less conciliatory.

"Eight semidetached — that's not what Clark is going to look at, or do," Forrest told the crowd. "We're committed to development. We obviously think this is the best thing for the site."

Forrest did say her team had made "significant changes" since a raucous community meeting a month earlier. Her team now plans to seek a less dense zoning change, from R-5-D, which allows 90-foot-tall buildings, to R-5-C, which would accommodate the eight-story structure with approval as a planned-unit development. Landscaping and access plans have also been fleshed out.

But that did not seem to impress neighbors at the meeting. "It's the

same building, one story less," one resident said.

The debate over the Tilden Street lot is overshadowed — almost literally — by a nine-story building at 3883 Connecticut Ave. that Clark built several years ago amid fierce controversy.

Architect Suman Sorg said shadow studies show the new structure would not cut off light to nearby homes, since its profile would not extend beyond the shadow already cast by the building at 3883, which is adjacent to parkland and looms directly to the south.

That high-rise, on what had been a forested parcel next to Melvin Hazen Park, infuriated neighbors who said it jeopardized streambeds as well as parkland. They are still fuming at the construction process, which one neighbor said left the median strip of Tilden "in shambles."

"They poisoned the community with 3883, and they're continuing the process," said one resident last week.

Forrest and other members of her team said they weren't involved with the earlier project. The new structure, said architect Sorg, will be "a very exciting building, a very desirable address." The exterior will feature precast stone, glass bridges between the three wings, "water features" near the entry and

gradually stepped-back upper floors to reduce the mass. "We scaled it back, so it will be less intrusive in the neighborhood," Sorg said.

Neighbors in attendance were more concerned about traffic, especially the fact that all cars exiting the new complex would have to turn east on already congested Tilden and then do a U-turn to get back to Connecticut Avenue.

Clark's traffic consultant "didn't see any significant impact," Forrest said. She said the complex would have 120 parking spaces in a two-level underground garage, more than enough to accommodate two cars per unit.

The neighbors said they were also concerned about the precedent of a high-rise on a residential side street.

"I've lived here 25 years," said one Tilden Street resident. "All of a sudden, there's two enormous buildings on Tilden. Aren't you taking a step that will turn the whole thing into an apartment block?"

Another resident said nearby blocks feature row houses built in the early 1900s. "Your building is basically gutting a historic neighborhood," he said.

Forrest and Clark's zoning attorney, Phil Feola, said the city's Comprehensive Plan shows that the lot, while zoned for eight semi-

detached homes, could be suitable for denser development. But the proposed R-5-D category shown on the Comprehensive Plan map reaches only to the east edge of the Clark property, not further down Tilden, they said.

"The reason for even contemplating this building is because of the discrepancy between zoning and the Comprehensive Plan — but just at this site, not down the street," Sorg said.

She also confirmed that the new building as currently planned would have no setback from the property of the Kuwaiti Embassy immediately to the east. An embassy staffer in attendance said he would be reporting back to the ambassador.

Advisory neighborhood commissioner Stephen Dennis, who convened the meeting, asked Forrest "the hard question: What does this project do for this neighborhood?"

"We are committed to infill development, transit-oriented development ... adding new residents to the city," the Clark official replied. Dennis pressed her again, with the same question. "Aesthetically, it adds a fantastic building and continuous streetscape," Forrest said.

"There's a lot of space downtown. Why don't you build there.

instead of hurting ...," said Maria Ariza, a longtime resident of 3901 Connecticut Ave. "This is a side street."

"I'm not interested in swimming pools" or other "amenities" that may be offered as part of a planned-unit development, said another resident. "I'm not interested in anything except keeping this thing as small as possible. There's no benefit to us."

Emily DeCicco, a veteran of the ongoing development battles on Wisconsin Avenue, offered the residents some encouragement and advice. "It's clear that developers can make a tidy profit by building [to current zoning]," DeCicco said.

She advised the Tilden Street neighbors to "conserve your energy for the real battle, with the Zoning Commission. Demonstrate that another developer would offer Clark a tidy sum to build town houses."

Clark will submit its planned-unit development application in December, Forrest said. According to Feola, if the Zoning Commission decides there is merit to "set it down" for a public hearing, that hearing would probably occur in June.

Clark has already set up a Web site to describe the project and take comments. It is located at www.tildenstreethomes.com.

THE NORTHWEST CURRENT

Tilden St. condo plan prompts zoning fight

By **CHRIS KAIN**
Current Staff Writer

The D.C. Zoning Commission voted unanimously Monday to schedule a public hearing on Clark Realty Capital's plan for a 49-unit luxury condominium building on a vacant Tilden Street parcel just east of Connecticut Avenue.

The D.C. Office of Planning backed Clark Realty Capital's request for a hearing on the requested planned-unit development, which includes a zoning change, to a category that allows larger residential developments.

The building — described as a hybrid of traditional and modern architecture, with masonry walls and coated aluminum with clear glass — would vary from two to six stories, with a 67-foot-height near the rear property line. The project would have a gross floor area of 98,000 square feet and include a two-level, 130-space underground parking garage.

Nearby residents have already organized to fight the project and preserve the site's current R-2 zoning, which allows up to eight town houses with a maximum height of

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40 feet. Developers are seeking a change to the R-5-C zoning category.

Zoning Commission member Gregory Jeffries even mentioned having seen the brightly colored signs posted throughout the immediate neighborhood that say "No Clark Hi-Rise on Tilden Street — Yes Townhouses."

When architects presented the project at a preliminary neighborhood meeting in fall 2004, neighbors balked. At the time, the height climbed to 90 feet.

The changes since then have done little to soften the opposition, which has organized as the Coalition To Preserve R-2 Zoning on Tilden Street. Members said the Zoning Commission should not consider zoning changes for the site — located about 233 feet east of Connecticut Avenue — while planners draft a new Comprehensive Plan for the city.

"Everyone assumed there would be town houses there one day," said Jack Gillespie, one of the coalition's

organizers.

In his report, Office of Planning staffer Arthur Jackson said that the Clark proposal is consistent with the site's designation on the current Comprehensive Plan maps for high-density residential use. It is the existing R-2 zoning that is inconsistent with the D.C. Council-approved land-use map, he said, though opponents say the land-use designation stems from a mistake in drafting the Comprehensive Plan's maps.

Jackson said that the project would further Comprehensive Plan objectives by adding 50 new "ownership opportunities" on one of the few remaining lots near Connecticut Avenue and within a short walk of two Metro stations — the Cleveland Park and Van Ness stops.

The project, Jackson added, provides a unique architectural solution to the problems posed by the site's steep terrain, as well as its transitional nature given its proximity to both a 10-story apartment building and town houses.

Commission chair Carol Mitten focused squarely on the inconsistency between the Comprehensive Plan and the current zoning maps.

Office of Planning director Ellen

McCarthy attributed the discrepancy to the site's subdivision from an adjoining Connecticut Avenue parcel. When the Comprehensive Plan maps were drawn, the high-density designation "was placed on the entire parcel because it was under single ownership."

Other commissioners expressed various concerns about the project's scale and architecture.

"We need much more refinement of the architecture," said member John Parsons. "Right now to me it looks like a foreign object."

He also expressed concern about the height. "I'm a little troubled by the sixth floor on this," he said, noting the site's importance as a transition into the low-scale residential neighborhood. "It seems to me like that is tipping the balance."

Colleague Gregory Jeffries echoed concerns about the design, but he said he believes further work can mitigate worries about the scale by better integrating the building's appearance with its surroundings.

After the meeting, Clark Realty Capital attorney Phil Feola said that he expects further changes to the building in response to continuing discussions with neighbors.

THE NORTHWEST CURRENT

Tilden Street residents mark centennial of block's homes

By JESSICA GOULD
Current Staff Writer

One by one, elegant guests filed up the stairs to 2951 Tilden St. They stepped gingerly — careful not to trip over their lace skirts — and carried umbrellas to shield their peacock plumes from the March drizzle.

Collet Guerard, homeowner and

"downright Edwardian" costumes. Her husband, Bill Brewer, tipped his top hat to friends as he poured glasses of wine and hot apple cider. There was cake and a cheerful round of "Happy Birthday."

But when it was time to blow out the candles, no birthday boy or girl stepped forward. In fact, the costume party was not for anybody at all. It was for the houses on the 2900 block of Tilden Street, which are 100 years old this spring.

According to resident Susan Gillespie, William H. German received a permit to build the 12 houses in February 1906 at a total cost of \$60,000. At the time, most of the land in the area was owned by the Chevy Chase Land Co., founded by Sen. Francis G. Newlands in 1890.

Back then, Tilden Street was called Quincy Street, and the area was known as Fernwood Heights. A recently opened streetcar route ran up and down Connecticut Avenue, shuttling residents downtown.

Four years earlier, the Chevy Chase Land Co.'s vice president, Edward J. Stellwagen, had laid out Fernwood Heights, the first subdivision in Forest Hills, according to Gillespie's research. Soon after, the



Jean Di Pietro donned an outfit from the turn of the century for the celebration.

established at Upton Street and Connecticut Avenue, and construction began on the Carnegie Institution of Washington's geophysical laboratory and the National Bureau of Standards complex.

The Carnegie Institution building now houses the Levine School of Music, while embassies and Intelsat occupy the Bureau of Standards land.

The prospect of further change helped spur the Tilden Street residents' interest in the history of their block.

Gillespie discovered the houses' age when she was reviewing old records "in preparation for doing battle with Clark," she said, referring to Clark

Realty Capital, which is seeking city permission to build a six-story planned-unit development on a vacant lot on Tilden, across the street from the 100-year-old homes.

In 1999, Clark purchased an empty lot that faces Tilden Street.

To the chagrin of some of the neighbors, the

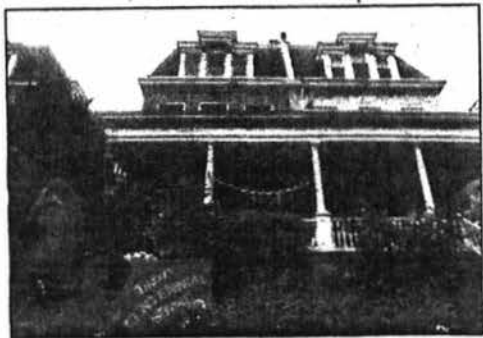
company — as a matter of right — constructed a nine-story building where trees once stood.

Now Clark has plans to build another six-story building. Though the company's architects say they have designed the building to fit in with the neighborhood and echo its architecture while providing new transit-convenient housing, many of the Tilden Street neighbors are not happy about the plans.

"It used to be very quiet. We had a forest across the street. Now dastardly Clark is planning to build a building," said Louise Belcher, who has lived on Tilden Street since 1960 and attended the birthday party.

"The neighbors would like to see something built but would like to see town houses instead," said Gillespie, who has worked with neighbors to oppose Clark's plans. She said the zoning in the area is currently for eight semidetached town houses and she does not want to see that changed. "It sets a dangerous precedent for any developer to build on a residential side street," she said.

While Tilden Street is not designed for a nine-story building, See Tilden/Page R26



Bill Petros/The Current
Tilden Street residents recently celebrated their block's 100th birthday.

host, complimented her guests on their

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nated as historic, it does have a rich history, Gillespie said, and Clark's designs are not compatible with the neighborhood's historic character. "The Comprehensive Plan said historic properties should be protected, even if they're not designated."

According to Gillespie, discussions between the neighbors and Clark have been ongoing since the fall of 2004.

Tilden Street residents also met with Clark representatives on March 14 at Howard University Law School, one of "a dozen meetings" the company has held with the community, said Nicole Forrest, a development executive at Clark.

According to Forrest, the planned-unit development would contain 49 units on a site near Connecticut Avenue. The building stories appear staggered, with the

highest density of the building in the back. It would have terraces and gardens.

Forrest said the architect for the project, Suman Sorg, has worked hard to keep the building compatible with the neighborhood's history, weaving together its "heritage" with more "modern sensibilities. ... We're proud of that," she said.

According to Forrest, Sorg has been mindful of the community's concerns.

"It's been a long project working with them, but I think we have a better building for it," she said. For example, the neighbors expressed concern about truck traffic on Tilden, which she said "is already overburdened." So Clark added a loading dock. The building was also going to include glass passageways, but because neighbors worried about refracted light, Sorg designed brick or precast passageways with windows, Forrest said.

In addition to working with the

community on the design for the building, Forrest said the project will mean donations to neighborhood causes, in conjunction with zoning regulations governing planned-unit developments. She said the company expects to donate to the renovation of Peirce Mill and help with the renovation of a playground at Hearst Recreation Center.

But according to Jake Gillespie, Clark has not done nearly enough to accommodate the residents. "We want a neighborhood that continues to build on 100 years of community and neighborly spirit," he said.

Susan Gillespie said the neighbors are "unanimous in their opposition" to the proposed building. "We are putting together a strategy for fighting the Clark plan."

The area's advisory neighborhood commission has scheduled a special meeting for May 8 to discuss Clark's proposal. A Zoning Commission hearing is scheduled for June 5.

THE NORTHWEST CURRENT

Revisions don't quell Tilden ire

By JESSICA GOULD
Current Staff Writer

Representatives from Clark Realty Capital presented revised plans for a six-story condominium building at 2950 Tilden St. at a special meeting of the North Cleveland Park, Forest Hills and Tenleytown advisory neighborhood commission Monday.

The company, which hopes to build a planned-unit development for 49 units, is requesting a change in zoning. The Zoning Commission will hear the case at a June 5 hearing.

The area is currently zoned R-2 for semidetached homes. Clark is requesting a change to R-5-C, which permits higher density development.

At Monday's meeting, architect Suman Sorg and project manager Nicole Forrest described revisions to the company's plans in response to community concerns. They said the overall square footage of the building had been reduced by approximately 10,000 square feet to 87,500. Sorg created a courtyard in the back of the lot, which would extend 56 feet from 3883 Connecticut Ave. to the north side of

the proposed new building. The front of the building has been set back 10 feet from the original proposal.

The new designs also address truck loading and drop-off. Loading would occur on the west side of the site while a drop-off lane has been proposed for deliveries. Instead of storing mechanical equipment in a penthouse, the equipment would be stored in the garage. "We will not have a penthouse on top of any of the floors," Sorg said.

Meanwhile, Forrest said, landscaping has been proposed along Tilden Street, and all windows facing the Kuwaiti Embassy have been removed from the building.

Commissioners used Monday's special meeting to get additional clarification about the project prior to voting on the matter at its monthly meeting next week. They asked how many affordable units would be provided in the complex and how Clark plans to benefit the community as part of the planned-unit development project.

Forrest said the company intends to donate \$135,000 to support renovation of Peirce Mill and the playground at Hearst Recreation Center. Commissioner Karen Perry called the sum "a drop in the bucket." Forrest said that the company was open to additional suggestions.

Phil Feola, a partner at Pillsbury, Winthrop, Shaw, Pittman — the law

firm retained by Clark — said the new building would provide three affordable housing units, entailing 5 percent of the apartments.

One by one, residents of Tilden Street and Connecticut Avenue outlined the reasons they oppose the new structure. Jake Gillespie, a Tilden Street resident, said the proposed building would "dominate the street and dwarf the surrounding neighborhood." Meanwhile, he said, "traffic problems are going to multiply." He said he supports "matter-of-right construction" on Tilden Street, and asked, "If zoning is meaningless, why have it at all?"

Dorn McGrath, a retired professor of urban and regional planning, said the project is a poor fit for the neighborhood, adding that he is worried about the shadows cast by the building and inadequate access for emergency vehicles.

Connecticut Avenue resident Stephen Dennis lamented, "Clark intends to create a concrete Sahara, decorated with some silly bits of landscaping." He said the design would be appropriate for downtown Bethesda or Ballston, but not for a Connecticut Avenue side street.

Another resident said he did not oppose "smart-growth." In fact, he said he saw plenty of it in his native California. "But I have to say, smart growth does not mean, and should not mean, smart enough to get the plan through." He said he was

drawn to the neighborhood because of its character and sense of history. Speaking of the Clark project, he said, "It really reminds me a lot of where I came from, and that's why I moved away."

Nabeel Al Dakheel, of the Kuwaiti Embassy, thanked Clark for making changes and called the design "a step forward." But he said he worried about the terraces overlooking the embassy. "What I want

to make clear: It's not only the embassy, but it's also the ambassador's residence."

Commissioner Perry encouraged residents to testify at the Zoning Commission hearing on June 5.

THE NORTHWEST CURRENT

Tilden project's shortfalls need in-depth look

VIEWPOINT

DORN MCGRATH

This time, you have shortchanged your readers. The story published on May 10 in The Northwest Current had the right headline, "Revisions don't quell Tilden ire," but the story left out most of the excellent questions raised by advisory neighborhood commissioners and by several of the 30-odd citizens at the meeting on May 8.

This project is a textbook case of "cramming the site" with a building that doesn't fit. Several times the developer and architect have defied the articulate citizens of the neighborhood by continuing to insist on shoehorning an apartment building ill-suited for the site. The May 8 presentation was only the latest in a series of defiant failures by the developer and architect to meet citizen objections.

This case is far more significant than the superficial article suggests. Not only is the developer cramming the site, but the architects have focused on the building and not on the neighborhood as well. Because of this architectural focus, the drawings presented at the meeting can only be considered as eyewash.

The landscape architect showed "large trees" where none would fit. Such trees, presented in artful juxtaposition with presumably smaller "ornamental trees," were to be placed in a narrow easement still to be negotiated with Tilden Gardens, the corner apartment house, along the 16-foot driveway/alley feeding the proposed apartment house from Tilden Street. Alas, there would be insufficient room for the root balls for any trees large enough for a 15-foot high moving van to pass under without damaging branches.

It should be noted that all moving vans are expected to back into the driveway/alley, because there is no turn-around provided in the alley's end. The same

would apply to the slightly smaller, but equally unwieldy, 8- to 12-ton trash compactors expected to serve the site on an almost-daily basis.

Responding to a neighborhood commissioner's question, the architect noted halfheartedly that a shadow study had been prepared over a year ago but was not currently available. One does not know how plantings, unspecified as to type, would survive in the all-shadow environment shown as a "green room" on the spinached-up drawings.

The architect and landscape architect also responded weakly to the complaint of the first secretary of the Kuwaiti Embassy. He pointed out that five terraces on the proposed building would give any sniper an easy view of the Kuwaiti ambassador at work in his office. The response to his complaint was that vines would be planted along the railings of the terraces! Really!

Much was made of the fact that large vans backing into the driveway/alley serving the apartment building would have to go east, execute a U-turn at 29th Street, and then go west in order to join Connecticut Avenue's already-congested traffic. The architect and developer evidently failed to take into account the very limited turning radius of the 29th Street break in the Tilden Street median and the very large running radius of any big moving van. This is another formula for disastrous congestion on an already overparked street.

Tilden Street residents are an intelligent group of citizens, and they deserve more substantive reporting of their longstanding complaint about the exploitation of the open space at 2750 Tilden St. As a prominent architect, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, said, "God is in the details." The current proposal for a planned-unit development on Tilden Street is ungodly, at best.

Dorn C. McGrath Jr., a Forest Hills resident, is professor emeritus of urban and regional planning at George Washington University.