

Original

Testimony of Ron McBee, Commissioner for ANC 6D 03, whose SMD area fronts the Randall School Property on 1<sup>st</sup> Street (includes the SW Health Clinic) and I Streets SW. The latter on I Street includes Landsburg Park; Best Western Hotel; Bethel Church as well as the adjacent intersections on I Street with Delaware Avenue, 1<sup>st</sup> Street, and Half Street respectively.

Good evening Commissioners and staff. I am Ron McBee, Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner for ANC6D03. My single-member district is directly adjacent to the Randall School site on First Street SW (includes SW Health Clinic) and in front of the Randall School site on I Street SW. I participated as one of the three ANC Commissioners on the Community Benefits Task Force negotiating committee. I am also the Co-chair of the SW Neighborhood Assembly History Task Force.

### Impact:

I am not here to contradict the testimony given by David Sobelsohn for ANC6D. I am here to talk about issues that have not been resolved and I feel need further dialogue, consideration, and refinement. As noted in the 6D ANC testimony, this project will have a great impact in SW but also for those thousands of motorists who travel the 395 freeway but also from our nation's Capitol. This is not a single use building. It will include a very well known and respected college of art and design, whom has stated that they want to be a partner in our SW/ Near SE Community. This building will also include apartments numbering approximately 485 units – none currently designated for the Corcoran. In addition we have the historic preservation of the Randall School site. Surrounding the school site is the adjacent historic Landmarked property of Old Friendship Baptist Church on First Street and H Streets SW as well as the SW Health Clinic on First Street. Also adjacent to the site is the Randall Recreational field to the North, the SW Public Pool joining the property on the East, which will be impacted by the shadow from the building and probably more so with the penthouse build out to join the new residential structure walls. Special note for traffic consideration is and a half block away on Half Street is the DMV and Inspection Station that has over 900 visitors per day in our community, even blocking at times the traffic on I Street for egress.

### Design

At the moment one of the more troubling aspects of this project is the massing of the penthouse and especially the North façade. This building is not an office building or an apartment building on Connecticut that has a rear façade hidden by other similar height buildings. This North façade is clearly exposed and open to the maximum view of almost any other building in the District of Columbia. It clearly, in my humble opinion, needs to be addressed in a concerted manner that allows its massing, scale, and size to be addressed and articulated in an aesthetic manner. This side is the most prominent. It needs the attention and design that I believe it cries for. It is treated as a rear of a building, when it is anything but. It needs scale and landscaping to fit appropriately into the community and its setting. This attention will also bring into play the existence of the historic Old Friendship Baptist church which is an important landmark to our African American community and our SW history. This African American monument should not

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be made to be looked like it sits at the rear of a sheer 10 story building when this can be remedied at this stage of design and development.

### **Historic Preservation**

At the recent October HPRB meeting, the Board had much discussion about this project. Specifically about elevations/ renderings presented; design concerns between the preservation of the Randall School and the new project with the apartments; Corcoran's entrance and pedestrian ambiance as well the entrance for the residential component; dialogue was also had on the use of the brick/contrast for the new structure; pedestrian egress in and around the property including landscaping; and the North façade of the structure which will face the Old Friendship Baptist Church but also will be the most dominant façade seen by thousands every day from the freeway and flyovers to South Capitol Street. This discussion was had after the HPRB staff member for the project also submitted concern for the project and compatibility of the new structure with the historic elements of the Randall School. The Board, I believe, reluctantly approved the project and to allow issues of concern and compatibility to be addressed by the architect and the HPO staff member. This architect of record does have an outstanding history with preservation efforts. I also admire and think well of the fine work he has done in the past. At the moment from what has been shared with ANC6D, the HPRB, and now the Zoning Commission, I think the project needs further refinements of these elements addressed by the HPRB and staff done first before the Zoning Commission moves forward with approval.

### **Traffic**

Traffic and egress is a major concern. The traffic studies I have seen have, I believe, to be elementally flawed from both drawings as well as assumptions used by the PUD applicant's traffic engineering study. Safety, truck and vehicular egress, as well as pedestrian access and easements are critical for such a large project that includes 485 units and a college of 1000 students that sits adjacent to a public health clinic, across from Landsburgh Park, next to the Randall pool, fields, and recreation center - needs special attention to this traffic/ pedestrian issue. At one point in our negotiation, the project Director for Monument Realty proposed the use of First Street as a site for the loading docks to ease traffic issues off the circle and H Street. I myself can not and I am not prepared to speak with authority on this traffic and pedestrian issues. I believe and ask the Commission to look at this issue with more than the allotted time we have here this evening for a circumspection of these concerns and study of possible solutions. The residents of this future building, the students, and children of this residential neighborhood deserve this consideration.

I appreciate your consideration to my testimony.