

Government of the District of Columbia
Foggy Bottom and West End
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A



c/o West End Library

1101 24th St., N.W.

Washington DC 20037

**ANC 2A Testimony of October 27, 2011 before the
Zoning Commission in the ZC Order/Case No. 07-
21 for PerStar Partners LLC, 2201 M Street, NW**

Good Evening Chairman Hood and Members of the Commission, I am Rebecca Coder, current chair of ANC 2A which represents the Foggy Bottom and West End, and also the commissioner who represents the single member district that includes the proposed hotel at the corner of 22nd and M Streets. Thank you for the opportunity to present the ANC's position.

As outlined in our report submitted September 22, 2011, we were surprised and disappointed in the substantial changes of this PUD.

There's been general concern about the sheer number of hotels in the West End, and we thought the eco-boutique concept that was the 1 Hotel was at least unique in what it could offer and palatable for the neighborhood.

The ANC voted to provide a non-objection conditioned upon mitigating specific issues and concerns outlined by the community which were raised at both our June and September meetings related to the current plan for a Hilton Garden Inn.

These concerns relate to the transportation plan, overall design,

specific points related to the community amenities and the incorporation of a construction management plan as part of the final Zoning Order.

The applicant has addressed these partially, and the ANC believes that with some final adjustments the overall project will be enhanced and far more palatable to the community, and we can firmly support it with no-objection in this case.

Transportation Management

As you are aware the Comprehensive Plan Policy LU-2.4.11: Hotel Impacts identifies this as a potential issue to be managed. It states “manage the impacts of hotels on surrounding areas, particularly in the Near Northwest neighborhoods (which is the West End) where large hotels adjoin residential neighborhoods. Provisions to manage truck movement and deliveries, overflow parking, tour bus parking, and other impacts associated with hotel activities should be developed and enforced.”

In our discussions with the applicant, there were questions raised about the lack of a charter bus plan, concerns about the loading dock configuration and how that may translate to deliveries occurring on M Street, general taxi queueing especially as it related to the current design of the lay-by, the location of the taxi stand, and traffic flow overall.

In addition, in reviewing the reports of Office of Planning and the applicant it is unclear how the hotel’s greater use of M Street may relate to the West End Fire Station Engine Company 1 next door, and the future bicycle tracks planned for the north side of M Street given as it appears that M could be used for restaurant valet, potential loading, as well as now charter bus activities.

We ask that the applicant not rely on a rather dated 2007 transportation assessment, and deliver a more robust transportation management plan that better supports this type of chain hotel, the 26 percent increase in room count, the increase in meeting room space, and the contemplated site requirements that a greater than 200 room hotel requires pursuant to DCMR 2201.1.

We also had a very specific request related to mitigating the impact as it relates to quality of life for residents, which is something the ANC currently grapples with as it relates to other hotels, specifically clearly defining the delivery hours.

Overall Design

The ANC would like to ensure the design is of the caliber originally approved as part of the PUD and that it incorporates more of the environmental, green gestures as originally contemplated.

The initial design was described by this Commission as “stunning,” “very progressive,” and a “fascinating green building.” This new design is not that, and therefore offers less as it relates to achieving the Comprehensive Plan’s architectural and environmental components.

The ANC would like the Zoning Commission to consider increasing the greenness factor. Specifically the ANC would like to address the blank, graffiti-attracting viewpoints, mainly visible from M Street through the construction of green walls. A good comparison is the Washington Suites Hotel at the corner of 25th and M which has similar large blank side walls viewable from the street which now contain large brown spots on the brown brick

where graffiti has been removed.

We think this is especially important given the proposed redevelopment of the fire station site and its positioning in relation to that development.

The applicant has indicated that in order to maintain a green wall that access to the adjacent property would be required, but the ANC's understanding is that this can be done in a similar fashion to window washing (with individuals using ropes).

We also ask that the Commission closely study the pedestrian clear-ways to ensure the width, especially along M Street, is appropriate for such a major pedestrian thoroughfare and that it will also be able to support outdoor seating at the site as contemplated. Our understanding is that clear-ways on streets such as M Street are typically wider than the 6 feet proposed by the applicant.

And, the ANC requests that the applicant deepen the proposed 3 foot lay-by. We recognize that it took a lot for the applicant to get DDOT to agree to the 3 feet, but the ANC, and we hope the Zoning Commission, will support something greater. Our rationale for this is actually based on recent experience given the issues that occurred on 23rd Street for the Ritz Carlton Residences. In that case, the Ritz lay-by's were not deep enough and they resulted in further exacerbating traffic back-up's and actual side-swiping of stopped cars in the partial lay-by. This also had a significant impact on the emergency vehicles at the fire station and their ability to easily maneuver through traffic. In that case, the Residences actually went back to DDOT to have these widened. We'd simply ask that we make the right decisions about this now and not later, and let's learn as a neighborhood what works and

doesn't with this.

Community Amenities

The ANC wants to ensure that the retail space along the corner be specified in the final Zoning Order as a “community amenity” and that it is truly open to the public. As noted by Office of Planning in its reports both in the original case and this modification, the applicant’s argument is that “the restaurant, bar, patio and roof deck” were originally envisioned to compensate for the relief related to the 10% public space requirement of hotels in CR zones. This is now indicated as solely the restaurant and bar. We’re willing to support this relief but want to ensure that it remains “public.”

The ANC has seen multiple times where this type space is repurposed (e.g. World Wildlife Fund Zoning Case) and closed off to the public. And, currently we are receiving complaints regarding the park at Square 54 which is supposed to be “public” but, in fact, is locked at night and on weekends.

We do hope the applicant will be open to working with the community specifically related to addressing the public space improvement priorities and is open to some flexibility on bench placement or rethinking benches. The ANC knows Ms. Kahlow wants benches at certain locations, but there are concerns from residents regarding too many benches in the West End as it relates to loitering, and also concern about how the benches may fit or not fit given the proposed West End Library redevelopment.

As it relates to the other amenities we hope that the applicant address the concerns articulated in the ANC’s resolution, specifically that the amenities be placed prior to the Certificate of

Occupancy and the applicant demonstrate that this has occurred (or receives the appropriate temporary CoO as required).

In conclusion, we view what the ANC is requesting as minor changes to a major modification. They may seem small but they are important in making this project appropriate for the West End. These changes are based on practical experience, and overall will help mitigate potential issues.

To reiterate, here is what is outstanding that we would like the Zoning Commission to include in its decision and as part of the final order:

1. Transportation Management

- a. Spell out the delivery times in the Zoning Order as this is something the commission has done prior (most recently in the GWU School of Public Health case this past Spring). It should be noted that the ANC proposed 8:00 am to 9:00 pm weekdays, and 9:00 am to 9:00 pm on weekends. The Applicant has not provided an alternative.
- b. Explicitly state the truck sizes be of no greater than the size of 30 feet as proposed by the applicant which has stated this will be part of the contracts with its vendors.

2. Overall Design

- a. Include greenscaping on the building sides. The applicant has greatly reduced all the greening that was to be part of the originally approved PUD and while they are planning to achieve LEED silver, they are not seeking certification (which I believe was a requirement of the original PUD). This will go a long way to further the attractiveness of the building and serve for graffiti prevention as well.

- b. Increase the depth of the lay-by. The recent Ritz Carlton Residences experience demonstrates that this partial type typically wreaks more havoc on transportation and safety issues than helps.
 - c. Revisit the wide of the sidewalks along M Street and the pedestrian clear-way of 6 feet and this as café space as well.
3. Community Amenities
- a. Explicitly state that the restaurant is the community amenity in the final order. The ANC has expressed our concerns about past practices, and how applicants agree to it and then it changes, and the intent is lost. From a neighborhood perspective this is potentially the greatest amenity that the project can offer, and we don't want to lose sight of it or ultimately lose it completely.
 - b. Be open to working with the neighborhood to address the priority public space improvement requirements given.
 - c. Ensure that the delivery of the amenities is tied to the issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy and that the applicant demonstrates that these have occurred.
4. Construction Management Plan
- a. Ensure that the hours are consistent with the regulations of 7:00 am start-time on weekdays and 8:00 am start-time on weekends. The management plan included by the applicant indicated 7:00 am on Saturdays.

The ANC is hopeful that through this evening's discussion these can be addressed so that the ANC can deliver a firm non-objection in this matter.

Thank you.

“Boutique hotel gets welcome in Georgetown”

October 4, 2011, Georgetown Current

“Watergate Hotel sold; luxury rebirth planned for landmark

Thursday, May 27, 2011, Washington Post