

Presentation to Zoning Commission

Tom Graham

Neighbor at 3600 Ordway Street, NW



Good Evening Chairman Hood and fellow Commissioners.

My name is Tom Graham

I have lived at 3600 Ordway Street, NW since 2002.

Before that I lived at 3515 Macomb Street, NW for 10 years.

I have raised my two college age boys in this neighborhood. They have attended John Eaton Elementary, NCRC and Sidwell Friends.

I have been an eye witness to the changes to this section of Wisconsin Avenue. I have eaten pizza at the Zebra Room and at Two Amys. I have had my prescriptions filled at the same pharmacy as it switched from CVS and Giant. I go to the Giant (when I absolutely have to) and I have seen many of the people on both sides of this debate when I have been there. I still go over to Foxhall to get my Baba ghanoush from Shemalis and look forward to the day when they return to the strip.

I love my neighborhood and have spent over 5 hours canvassing to understand how people feel about this development.

I reluctantly raise my voice in opposition, not as somebody said the other night to stop this project, but to make it better.

The Way Forward

Reduce the North building by one story.

Position the loading dock opposite the Police Station and realign townhouses.

Address remaining concerns raised in the ANC.

Somebody said that Giant could build the Empire State building as long as they put in a decent grocery store on the first floor.

It's a joke but it sums up the debate that you have patiently listened to.

Nobody I have spoken to doesn't want the project.

And nobody I have spoken to wants it as is without a few small concessions IF they were sure that asking for the concessions would not stall or kill the project.

And nobody wants to have the street boarded up for another 10 year.

You are well aware of the Comprehensive Plan, existing zoning and the neighborhood overlay and what kind of development that would allow.

You have also heard that the neighborhood is tentatively supportive of allowing variations to these regulations.

The burden is upon this Commission to determine what can be done within the spirit of these regulations.

After listening to many neighbors, the developers and elected officials-

I believe there is way forward and that is for the Commission to -

1. Reduce the North Building in line with the developers own presentations.
2. Reposition the loading dock in the South Building and expand the North Building loading dock.
3. Address the ANC's remaining concerns.



To my first point -- one of the reasons the developers have support is that the concept is extraordinarily compelling, especially when compared to the current situation.

During the last decade, Giant has let the grocery store lapse into disrepair, they have vacated vibrant businesses and boarded up the street front. The North parcel remains active but the whole is extremely disappointing. This has also impacted business on the parcel south of the development.

The developers propose a vibrant mixed use design that is architecturally pleasing and the concept is just what the neighborhood wants.

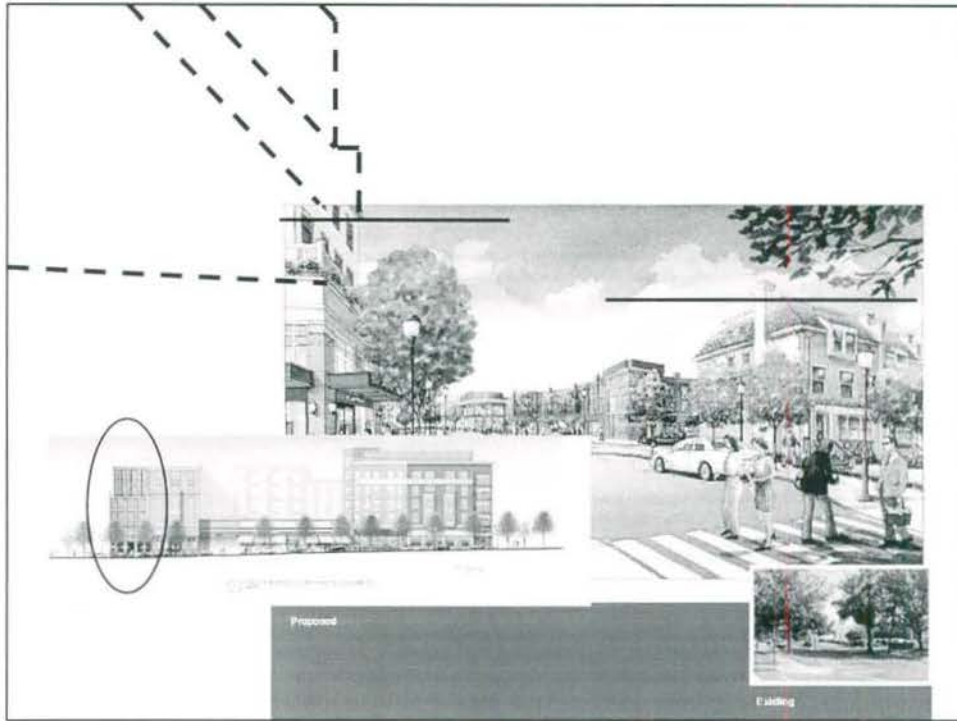
The renderings of the proposal put forward by the developer serve the best illustration of why the Zoning Commission should require modifications to the PUD as currently proposed.

Specifically to the size of the project. Most of the issues the ANC and neighbors has focused on are traffic and parking. If the size of the project was scaled down, many of these issues would be mitigated.

Lets look at the first rendering by the developer. This rendering shows the North Building (looking north on Wisconsin Avenue) as a bit lower than the Abby apartment building which is 4 stories tall.

The actual elevation for this rendering is 5 stories plus an additional story for mechanical. The actual is shown against the rendering by the black triangle showing the actual size of the building in relation to its surroundings.

Holding this elevation to 4 stories as the develops shows would, in my opinion, be the right thing to do and would be a compromise between the existing regulations (1-3 stories) and the PUD request.

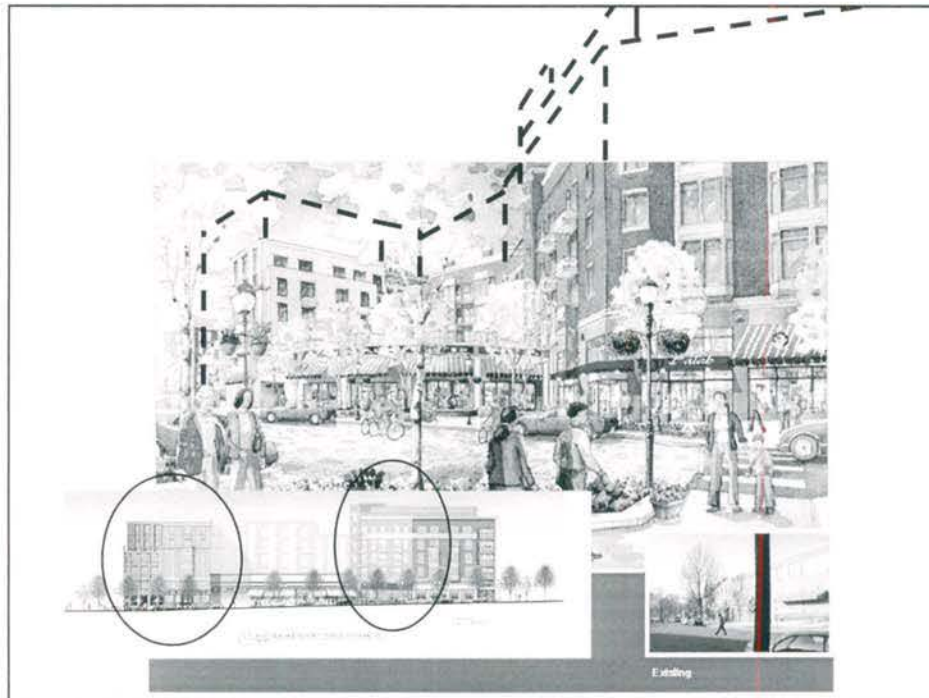


Here is another rendering – this one looking east on Newark Street. It shows the North Building a bit taller than one of the townhouses which are 3 stories tall. The building rendered looks to be no more than 4 stories.

The actual elevation for this rendering is 6 stories and is shown against the rendering by a dotted black line showing the actual size of the building in relation to its surroundings.

Holding this elevation to 4 stories as the develops shows would, in my opinion, be the right thing to do and would be a compromise between the existing regulations (1-3 stories) and the PUD request.

It would also create a step down on that elevation which would be esthetically pleasing and would help reduce the occupancy of the North Building which would in turn reduce the traffic and parking issues.



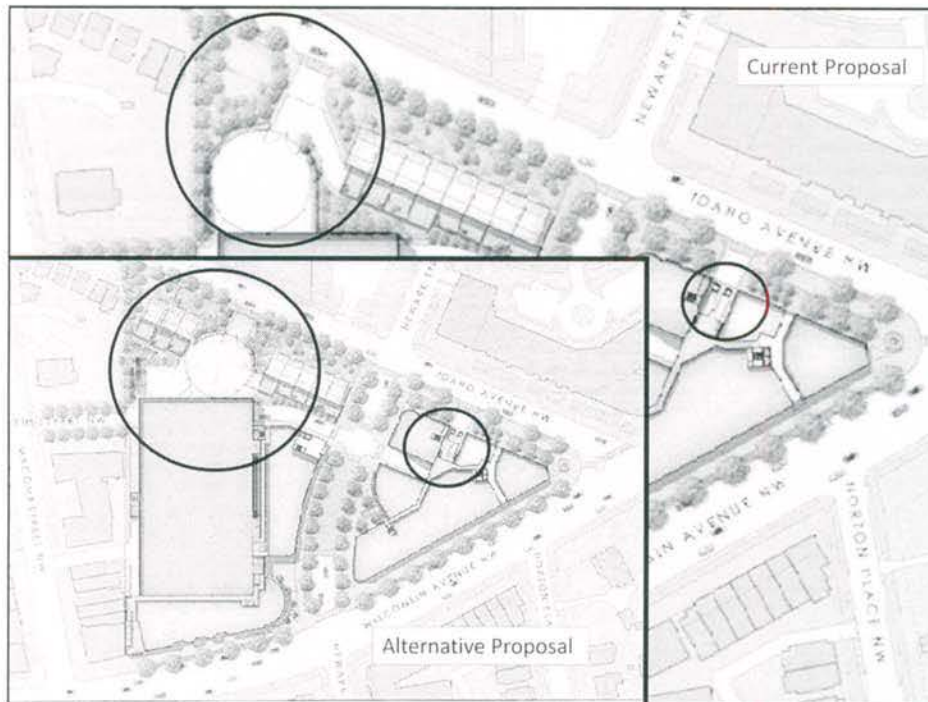
Here is the last rendering – this one of the North Building from Newark and shows a 4 story building on the east side and a 5 story building to the west.

The actual elevation for this rendering is 5 stories plus an additional story for mechanical to the east and 6 stories to the west. The actual elevation is shown against the rendering by a dotted black line showing the actual size of the building in relation to its surroundings.

I'm not saying that the developer has been disingenuous with these drawings, but I think the stark contrast between what is shown and what will be built is at the heart of what separates the neighborhood.

If the developers were building what they are showing, I think you could have spent the last two meetings at home with your families instead of listening to us.

The PUD requests 5 (and in some cases 6) stories. Existing regulations recommends 1-3 stories. The easy compromise, from my perspective, is 4 and I urge the Chairman and fellow Commissioners to enforce this compromise.

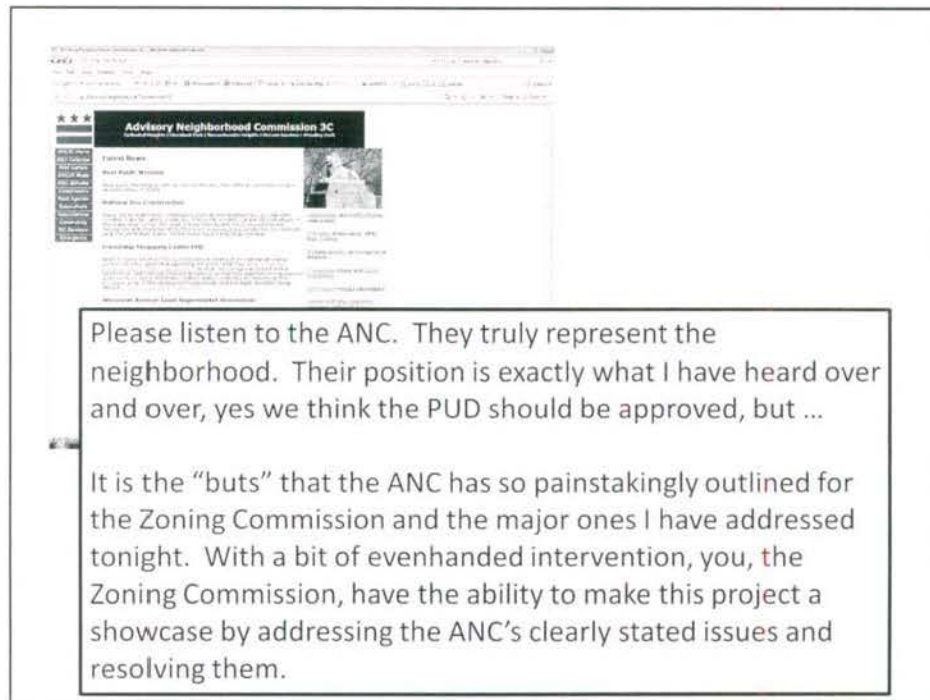


As to my second point, I urge the Commission to use existing regulations to protect those individuals who have, by bad luck, found themselves next to the new proposed loading dock.

It is all too easy to move this area north and buffer it by the proposed housing. There is no doubt that this will reduce the value of some of the new townhouses but it seems more equitable to have the developer bear this than the existing homeowners.

While I only pretend to be an architect, I was able to quickly cut and paste an alternative which kept the number of units proposed. With some real talent, I'm sure an even more elegant solution could be achieved.

Similarly, the developer needs to increase the loading dock for the North Building to a minimum of 2 x 55' instead of 2 x 30'. While I am not an expert in shipping, on any given morning or afternoon, I see a minimum of 2 or 3 - 30' or 55' trucks somewhere around the south and north parcels and a common sense, back of the envelope calculation shows that this is going to be increased at least 5 fold with the added development.



As to my third and last point, please listen to the ANC. While they support the project, this support is qualified.

If you were to address my first two points about reducing the number of stories to what the developer has shown on its renderings and readjusting the loading docks, many of the ANC's issues would be addressed and I believe a vast majority of the neighborhood would be supportive of the plan. The remaining issues the ANC has presented would be able to be resolved as well with the help of the your Commission.

If the Commission were to pass this plan as is, I think it would be doing a grave disservice to :

- The ANC.
- The neighborhood the ANC represents.
- Contiguous neighbors, particularly those on Idaho, Ordway, Norton, Newark and 36th Street.
- The spirit and intention of the Comprehensive Plan, existing zoning and the neighborhood overlay.

I have been told over and over, that it is you, the Zoning Commission, that is the ultimate arbiter in a PUD application and that is why I have come to all these meetings. I hope you don't let down the citizens of Cleveland Park in equitably applying the existing regulations and the neighborhood concerns as outlined by the ANC as you review this application.

I respectfully request that the Zoning Commission -

Reduce the North Building to 4 stories.

General: reduce the height of the building, capping all building heights to 4 stories.
This would reduce many of the parking and traffic concerns.
This request is a compromise between building regulations (3-2.2.2017) and the PUD (3-4.2.2017).

Position the loading dock opposite the Police Station and realign townhouses.

Only 1st and 2nd floor townhouses.
Remove all parking from building south.
Increase dock on North Building to 2 x 10'.
This will keep 500 sq ft building area and give space for the proposed truck proposed loading dock.

Address concerns raised by the ANC and put in mechanism to address future issues.

Help *equitably* reconcile existing regulations with the PUD request.

In conclusion, I respectfully request that the Zoning Commission –

1. Restrict the height of the North Building to a maximum of 4 stories, a compromise that leans in favor of the developer, is what the developer represented to the neighborhood in its drawings. The changes would reduce the parking and traffic concerns of the surrounding neighborhood.
2. Reposition the loading dock away from the existing residents on Idaho and increase the loading dock capacity of the North Building. I would also request that as experts you examine all this to make sure that it is adequate to service the current and proposed retail business for the South and North parcels.
3. Help work out the remaining ANC issues with the ANC, the developer and your Commission to resolve these issues and get the project built.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Tom Graham