



COALITION FOR SMARTER GROWTH

October 5, 2009

Chairman Anthony Hood
D.C. Zoning Commission
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 210 South
Washington, D.C. 20001

ZONING COMMISSION
CASE No. 08-24
EXHIBIT No. 45

RE: **SUPPORT for Catholic University South Campus PUD**, ZC #08-24 & ZC #08-24A / 04-25
(Application by Catholic University & Abdo Development)

Dear Chairman Hood and Commissioners:

Please accept these comments on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, a regional organization based in the District of Columbia focused on ensuring transportation and development decisions are made with genuine community involvement and accommodate growth while revitalizing communities, providing more housing and travel choices, and conserving our natural and historic areas.

We would like to express our support for this proposal. We have tracked the planning efforts around the Brookland Metro station over the years and are eager to see the Brookland Small Area Plan implemented. This PUD is an early part of moving forward with implementation. Overall, we support this arts-oriented project and believe it will be a major contribution to making the Brookland neighborhood an even better place to live and work.

We have a few specific comments and recommendations for the project.

Street connections: We recognize the intersection improvements for Monroe and Michigan, and 7th & Michigan as a benefit. We ask that high priority be given to pedestrians and bicyclists at these intersections in all design and signaling decisions. We also recognize that the project will extend 8th Street as a pedestrian street. This can work if the ground floor uses are animated enough to generate large amounts of pedestrian activity. The crossing at Michigan Ave. should give high priority to pedestrians and bicyclists with a pedestrian signal or full traffic signal. The Commission should stipulate that even though this is a pedestrian street, safe and convenient pedestrian crossings of Michigan Ave. to the Metro station should be a high priority.

Affordable Housing: We ask that part of the affordable housing be available to households earning up to 50 percent AMI. This would be consistent with Inclusionary Zoning for matter of right projects using wood frame construction. Currently, only 80 percent AMI is offered. While this is positive, given the great need for housing at lower affordability levels, we ask that some portion be provided at the lower income level. Keep in mind that 80 percent AMI is above D.C.'s median household income.

Parking Supply: We concur with DDOT's recommendation to reduce the parking supply. Savings from reduced parking can be invested in an expanded TDM program and more affordable housing. Given the site's access to transit, services and jobs, alternatives to car ownership and driving commutes should be strongly encouraged. Vehicle parking needs can be met through better management and pricing, along

with increased bicycle parking and supporting facilities, transit passes for residents and employees, more Zipcars and discounted Zipcar use. Reduced parking will also reduce the amount of traffic generated by the project.

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program: We recognize the TDM program offered by the developer as a benefit. Providing SmarTrip cards, a carsharing fee application subsidy and transit information outreach are helpful offerings. A more aggressive TDM program would further reduce parking demand and traffic generation.

We also suggest that the Zoning Commission require that the project become part of a larger Transportation Management District in the future. Such a management district could better coordinate services, vehicle parking (on- & off-street), and other services that can better tie new development with revitalization of 12th Street. We suggest using Arlington County as a model for such coordination between a site TDM program and membership in a larger Transportation Management District.

Bicycle Parking: We are concerned that bicycle parking should be available for all residents and all workers throughout the project area. If indoor secure bicycle parking is consolidated into one building as proposed, we recommend that high quality changing rooms and showers be provided. Given the consolidation of facilities, this makes changing rooms and showers more cost-effective. Providing high quality bicycle facilities is a key part of ensuring that the TDM program goal to “encourage residents and tenants to ride bikes and walk to work” is fulfilled.

While the Office of Planning recommends encouraging bicycle parking in public space throughout the project, we recommend requiring it. Bicycle parking can be incorporated into the arts theme throughout the project by using custom bicycle racks such as those installed in the Downtown and Golden Triangle BIDs. The decorative bicycle racks are popular with the businesses and bicyclists. The site’s location next to a Metro station, and close to residents, students and workers at institutions, is ideal for emphasizing bicycle access. We ask the Commission to avoid the problems caused by the lack of bicycle parking in front of destinations such as DC USA in Columbia Heights. When the shopping center opened, there was no bicycle parking in front of the stores. Bicycle parking demand was high, with bikes latched to every small tree in the area, and everything else that a lock could attach to. We recommend anticipating higher bicycle demand, and following through on the stated TDM goal to encourage bicycling by providing quality bicycle parking throughout the project in front of buildings.

12th Street & retail study: We also recommend that that this project be part of a larger Community Benefits District that can help support 12th Street revitalization, streetscaping and public spaces throughout the area. How to establish such a District could be part of the retail study to be conducted.

Again, we want to express our overall support for this project. Thank you the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Cort
Policy Director
E cheryl@smartergrowth.net