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21 May 2011

The Honorable Anthony Hood, Chairman
Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia
441 4th Street NW, Suite 210
Washington, DC 20001

Subject: Zoning Commission Case No. 11-02/ 11-02A/
Statement on Van Ness Street Traffic

Dear Chairman Hood:

I would like to address this Commission regarding the planned expansion of the UDC Campus and the accompanying increase in student population. I believe that this action as planned will have a devastating effect on the local neighborhood, especially Van Ness Street between Reno Road and Wisconsin Ave.

I am a retired Marine Colonel, presently employed in the defense industry and have lived on the 3700 block of Van Ness Street for 10 years.

Van Ness Street has a two-lane traffic pattern with parking only on the north side of street. This provides the major east-west bus route, truck route and emergency vehicle route in the immediate area between Connecticut and Massachusetts Avenues.

Van Ness has continually taken the brunt of all east-west traffic decisions in the immediate area. Quieting on such streets as Upton have already pushed more traffic over onto Van Ness Street.

Van Ness Street is a common route for Maryland commuters between Massachusetts Ave and Connecticut Ave. Typically these drivers exceed the speed limit, do not observe the four-way stop signs and continually violate the school zone speed restrictions in the 37th Street vicinity. Such traffic is already a menace to the safety and welfare of both pedestrians and especially children on their way to and from the two schools within two blocks of Van Ness (Hearst Elementary and Sidwell Friends). Typical of this traffic flow is the danger of hit-and-run damage to both pedestrians and parked cars - an example of which was the total demolition of my car last summer by a hit-and-run Maryland driver. The movie theater at Upton and Van Ness used to create parking overflow on Van Ness St two to three blocks from Wisconsin Avenue because of inadequate parking near the theater. As such, there is every reason to believe that Van Ness will take the brunt of overflow parking from an enlarged UDC population unless the issue of adequate parking is addressed up front in the planning stages.

The many Embassies west of Connecticut Avenue and the Taiwan Cultural Center at the corner of Van Ness Street and Wisconsin Avenue generate additional parking overflow between Reno Road and Wisconsin Avenue. I have frequently been asked for directions to an Embassy by folks who have parked on Van Ness and are just getting out of their car.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

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UDC students currently use the limited spaces on Van Ness Street west of Reno Road as overflow parking, which creates problems for residents finding parking spaces. Master bedrooms on Van Ness homes are typically on the street side of the house and subject to noise from non-residents at night. These revelers appear to be younger people from both AU and UDC.

I rise before 5 am as I commute to Baltimore and do not do well with late night revelry on the street.

It is for these reasons that I am strongly opposed to the planned expansion of the UDC student population without provisions for increased parking spaces being included in the plan. Our experience to date has made it clear that parking is inadequate or unaffordable for many UDC students, who currently park in front of my home.

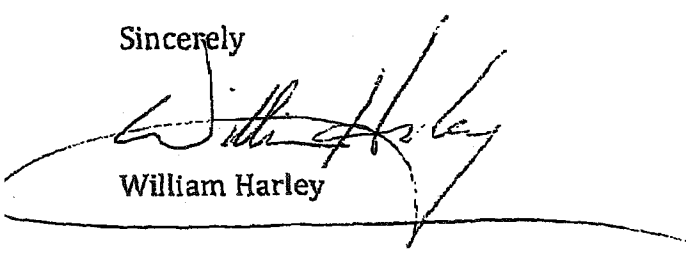
We are also strongly opposed to the placement of additional students in other apartments within a mile of campus. If the University rented apartments in the building at the corner of Van Ness and Wisconsin, it would lead to more pedestrian traffic as they walked to campus and back to their apartments, and the noise and revelry would be even greater on weekends.

I recommend that the following provisions included in the planning for an expanded UDC:

1. Increased underground parking for proportionate to any increase in student/faculty population should be included in the new Student Center;
2. One hour parking for non-residents on Van Ness Street between Reno Road and Wisconsin Ave.
3. If dormitories are constructed, they must comply with the Zoning Regulation requirement of 1 parking space for every 5 beds. UDC should not be granted a special exception to this requirement.
4. UDC should explore alternatives to placement of the dormitories on Van Ness Street in order to minimize the impact of several thousand new students on a single family residential area. In particular, placement of the dormitories in Building 52 on Connecticut Avenue, which already has more than 3,000 apartments, would reduce the impact of student housing on our neighborhood.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this Commission on this important matter.

Sincerely



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SHEET

FAX

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Subject: Zoning Commission Case No. 11-02/11-02A/
Date: 5-22-11
Pages: 3 (including this sheet)

Comments:

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