

February 27, 2017

Statement regarding BZA Case 19450

My name is Colin Stackhouse. I reside at 3505 Porter Street NW together with my wife and one year old son, approximately one-third of a mile from the proposed Ward 3 shelter for families experiencing temporary homelessness.

My family and I fully support Mayor Bowser's goal to end homelessness in DC, and have been encouraged by the innovative strategy of creating several smaller-scale shelters distributed city-wide to provide needed services. We also understand the relative lack of suitable locations in Ward 3 and the decision to select 3320 Idaho Ave, NW. We have no objection to the construction of a permanent shelter on this site, however we believe every effort should be taken to engage with the community to ensure any new construction is in keeping with the character of the neighborhood and provides the best possible environment for existing and future residents. This is especially urgent given the facility is likely to serve the community for many years to come.

As of today, I have been unable to locate precise plans and dimensions for all the proposed changes to the site online (including a new parking structure and shelter building). However, after witnessing the city's presentation at the February 21, 2017 ANC 3C meeting, I now understand that plans call for the construction of a new above-ground parking structure on the parking lot directly behind the existing police station, adjacent to the community garden. This is in addition to the plans for the new five-story shelter building under review for zoning relief.

As many members of the community have noted, adequate parking is vital to this project. That said, I am concerned the approach to planning this site has been rushed, reactive and piecemeal. No clear, comprehensive site plan with dimensions was presented at this week's ANC 3C meeting, and I have been unable to find any renderings whatsoever of the proposed parking garage, especially as seen from the community garden. This is important as changes to the garage –as proposed below-- could help solve the building height problem and obviate the need for zoning relief regarding this particular issue.

Several points for consideration:

- No other above ground parking garages exist anywhere in the local area. Garages at e.g. National Cathedral, Cathedral Commons and Sidwell Friends School are located underground
- A new parking structure – proposed to be significantly taller than the existing Police building – would dramatically impact the quality of life for future shelter residents as well as existing neighborhood residents and citizens from across the city hoping to enjoy the tranquility and unique vistas offered by the community garden. This would be the only new shelter in the city located adjacent to a multi-level above ground parking garage.
- Placing the garage underground would free up space behind the police station to expand the shelter's footprint and lower its height, solving the zoning issue and other concerns regarding the building's height.
- If necessary, two separate yet connected low-rise shelter units could be built, each with the ten units per floor that has been deemed optimal.
- Any additional funding requirements could be met through extra appropriations suitable to the site's requirements and/or a local fundraising effort to support sustainable growth in the community.

I respectfully request these views be taken into consideration when deciding how to proceed with the design and construction of the Ward 3 shelter and especially regarding any zoning relief for the proposed shelter building height.

Submitted on 2/27/2017 by:

Colin Stackhouse

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