

To the DC Board of Zoning Adjustment:

I am a resident of ANC 5B03, past ANC 5B03 Commissioner, and I served as co-chair of the 1700 Rhode Island Avenue Short-Term Family Housing Advisory Team.

These comments are in my capacity as a private citizen and resident of the ANC 5B community.

I am in strong support of the 1700 Rhode Island Avenue Short-Term Family Housing project as applied for by the DC Department of General Services. The Rhode Island Avenue community is perfectly capable of absorbing this project, and I believe that the project can be a success with strong direction by the District and solid community engagement during the construction phase and continued into the operational phase.

Housing for homeless families in the District is a very real need, and the 1700 Rhode Island Avenue location is ideal because: 1) it is a District-owned property and the District will benefit by improving this property; 2) the location is within a welcoming and vibrant community; and 3) Rhode Island Avenue NE is a dynamic, family-oriented location with easy access to District resources.

It is a fact that the Council did not provide 30 day notice to the ANC prior to the site selection vote as required by the DC Code Section 1-309.10 when the District Government "intend[ds] to change the use of property owned or leased by or on behalf of the government." Such notice would have greatly helped to have given the ANC 5B community an opportunity to have had more of a voice in the site selection process, and would possibly have eased some of the tensions surrounding the project. Still, I do believe that the selection of the 1700 Rhode Island Avenue location for the short-term family housing project is a good one.

I am sympathetic to some of my neighbors who are opposed to the project, because they have valid fears that the District may not run the housing in a suitable manner. I am also understanding of the neighbors who live closest to the project, as the project will have quite an impact on the immediate area and their daily lives.

I do not object to the proposed 70 foot height of the project. I do not think that the height is out of line with other buildings and projects along the RI Ave corridor. Certain members of the ANC 5B community have expressed strong opposition to the height of this project, but there was no similar objection to the height of the Brookland Manor redevelopment project that will be upwards of 65 feet along RI Ave. More density along Rhode Island Avenue will help to stimulate growth, and Northeast is an area of the city of lesser density capable of housing more people. The Brookland, Woodridge, and Langdon Park neighborhoods are family-oriented communities well-suited to families in search of stability.

I do not oppose the density of the project. Housing for forty-some families in a six story development directly on RI Ave is in line with Comprehensive Plan Policy UNE-2.5.1 calling for medium to high-density projects along RI Ave. Likewise, the redevelopment of the existing and abandoned police station is in line with Comprehensive Plan Policy UNE-2.5.2.

In tandem with this project, I hope to see increased District support for general improvements to the RI Ave area. As called for in the Comprehensive Plan, the area greatly needs increased streetscape and pedestrian safety improvements, job training programs, and economic development initiatives.

Best,

Michael Morrison

Submitted on 2/25/2017 by:

Michael Morrison

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