

To whom it may concern,

I'm writing in full support of all zoning relief sought in BZA application no. 19452, for the construction of the Ward 5 shelter at 1700 Rhode Island Ave. NE. I have watched for over a year as my neighbors have sought to delay and obstruct this project for various reasons, and know well the arguments, both explicit and implicit, being made against it.

However, I believe closing DC General is of the utmost importance. Having been foster parent to a child with relatives in DC General, I'm well aware of its problems. While there is no quick solution to various institutional and logistical challenges inherent in caring for families experiencing homelessness, the research is clear that smaller shelters, better integrated into the community, will better serve those residents. The site at 1700 Rhode Island Ave. NE offers proximity to many amenities my family and I enjoy daily, including a community grocer (Good Food Market) and a newly rebuilt public library (Woodridge Library), and is therefore a great location for such a shelter. The site is proximal to many other residential projects, including many market-rate units, being planned or constructed in the surrounding neighborhoods, which will make for a great mix of demographics added to the already diverse and friendly community.

Further, I generally believe that housing affordability across all strata will require a relaxation of our current zoning standards, particularly with regard to density and parking requirements. Attaching the cost of parking to the cost of real estate serves to inflate the cost of real estate at a time when our city is experiencing an affordability crisis, and also incentivizes personal car usage when more cost-efficient, environmentally sound, and equitable transportation methods are available. Strictly capping the height of buildings further increases the cost of housing and, in spreading destinations further apart, diminishes the effectiveness of public transportation. In this particular case, the shelter will house families unlikely to own cars, and sits directly on the route of several buses and under a mile from a Metrorail station. As such, it is an appropriate place for added density and low off-street parking requirements. If stakeholders do not believe the required loading/delivery provisions are necessary, I defer to their judgment on the matter.

I also commend the building's architect for maintaining the facade and many parts of the original MPD Youth Division building that currently sits at the site. This preserves history and neighborhood character while modernizing the site to serve an important contemporary need. This further justifies the zoning relief sought. While the rendered facades of the building additions do not enamor me, I look forward to seeing the aesthetics evolve with input from the Commission of Fine Arts, and have no reason to tie that matter to the zoning relief being sought.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

Very respectfully,

Vijay Kapur
1923 Rhode Island Ave. NE

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 19452
EXHIBIT NO. 80