

Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

From: Vincent DeRosa <smmogpriet@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, October 5, 2024 10:28 AM
To: DCOZ - BZA Submissions (DCOZ)
Cc: Nigro, Rachelle (SMD 2G06)
Subject: Written Testimony in Opposition: Case 21177 District of Columbia Department of General Services

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Dear Chairman Hill and Board Members,

My name is Rev. Vincent J. De Rosa. I am Pastor of the Catholic community at St. Mary Mother of God Parish in Chinatown/Mount Vernon Triangle. My address is 727 5th St NW and I can always be reached at either my office line (below).

I urge the Board of Zoning Adjustment to deny the special exception relief sought by the District of Columbia Department of General Services for the proposed temporary relocation of the Central Cell Block to 501 New York Ave NW.

The District government’s effort in this matter has been marked, at each step by an arrogant disregard for residents of our neighborhoods. First they gave no reasonable public notice of their attempt to relocate the cell block. Now they refuse to listen to common sense proposals to relocate the cell block to a more industrial part of the city where its presence would disrupt the commercial and residential patterns of life less. Over the last four years our neighborhood has already suffered from District leaders’ hiding plans related to homeless shelters, and public safety from our neighborhood. The same obfuscations have been present throughout this process related to the central cell block. They cannot be tolerated.

Aside from problems with the process and public discourse in this matter, the construction of the Central Cell Block, necessitating special exception relief, will detrimentally, adversely, and significantly impact the neighboring properties in direct violation of the Zoning Regulations and Maps. The substantial increase in cells and detainees will lead to heightened traffic, noise, and security concerns, including, but not limited to:

- Disruptions from the facility's 24/7 operations due to six police forces transporting detainees to the facility.
- Noise pollution from potentially over eighty detainees and from increased activity at the building.
- Increased traffic from police, employees, vendors, etc., leading to congestion.
- Safety risks associated with the potential release of detainees into the community -most notably to the community organizations and business that cater to children. The facility's proximity to Bambini Child Care Center is causing great distress among parents and staff. The proposed cellblock is also just feet from residential property.

The proposed temporary relocation of the Central Cell Block to 501 New York Avenue, N.W., will have a direct, significant, and adverse effect on the residents, business owners, and community organizations nearby. This neighborhood has undergone transformation over decades from a state of neglect, characterized by parking lots and dilapidated houses, to a vibrant area with mixed-use residential developments. We are asking that this Project not be allowed to undo that progress and that DGS be directed to find a more appropriate and less impactful location.

Thank you for your consideration.

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