

Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

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Subject: Case 21177 District of Columbia Department of General Services

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Case 2177: Written Testimony in Opposition

Dear Chairman Hill and Board Members,

My name is Richard Finkelstein and I reside at 436 M Street NW. I am urging you, as the Board of Zoning Adjustment, to deny the special exception relief that the D.C. Department of General Services is seeking for the proposed temporary (though long-term) relocation of the Central Cell Block (jail) to 501 New York Avenue NW. Building the jail will adversely impact the neighboring properties, including residences, a day care center, struggling businesses, and developments proposed that will help alleviate DC's housing crisis. The presence of jail cells, their detainees, and numerous staff members will **further freeze traffic** on New York Avenue and adjacent streets onto which it siphons, including L and M streets. This move directly violates Zoning Regulations and maps. The jail also raises security concerns for a **densely populated area**, as well as for the day care center and struggling businesses on 5th Street and elsewhere.

As you know, the ANC 2G voted to not support the special exception relief request from the Department of General Services. This decision was made because representatives from the DC prison system testified at our ANC meeting that **this facility will operate 24/7, with an average of 80 detainees moving in and out every day, along with at least 16 staff members also moving in and out for every 8-hour shift.** The holding cells at the jail will inevitably lead to increased traffic, noise, and security concerns on one very short, residential block of L Street NW. The relocation of the central cell block to 501 New York Avenue, N.W. will also damage the **fragile prospects** for the planned residential developments, including at least one that will have affordable housing units, as well as businesses in the immediate neighborhood, adjacent to Chinatown.

I am sympathetic to the needs of the prison system to redevelop a building that is cost-effective for them. However, there is surely **a site in a non-residential neighborhood** that would be more suitable and, over the long-term, more cost-effective. At a time when Mayor Bowser is working hard to increase housing in the city and augment its tax base, planning a jail across from a planned apartment development, one block from another large, planned development, and across from some already occupied large buildings, is surely not cost-effective for the city as a whole. **With so many commercial real estate vacancies in non-residential areas**, it is short-sighted of General Services to choose this densely populated location.

Along with other residents of Wards 2 and 6, I would be greatly disappointed if this project proceeds. Your vote to deny the special exception will encourage the city to find a more appropriate site in a less densely populated area.

Thank you for your consideration.

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