

**VIA Mail**

Anthony J. Hood, Chairperson  
Board of Zoning Adjustment  
441 4<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W., Suite 210S  
Washington, DC 20001  
December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014

**Re: Case No. 08-07A, Submission of Four Points LLC regarding Stage II Planned Unit Development at 2255 Martin Luther King Ave, SE**

Dear Chairperson Hood & Members of the Board,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the application above to redevelop a vacant, under-utilized, surface parking lot into a 71-unit mixed income residential building. As a member of the community, and a design professional within the field of architecture and urban design, I believe the project would be a wonderful addition to the languishing main street. The proposal helps to activate Martin Luther King Boulevard and Chicago Street and adds much needed density and a mix of uses. These uses will complement other proposals within the PUD application ultimately resulting in a more vibrant 24-hour community, providing and supporting amenities that our community currently lacks.

The proposal's intent to provide artist walk-up studios is an effective way in creating "defensible space", promoting surveillance along Martin Luther King Boulevard, and creating eyes on the street. These techniques have been demonstrated to increase safety. Any concerns of loitering are largely unfounded. Targeting the ground level units to artists are also a creative way of infilling the street front with small artist studio's where it has clearly been demonstrated that retail demand is low. Revitalization of Anacostia through the arts is a proven successful and recurring strategy in the area; which include fixtures such as the Anacostia Arts center, the Anacostia Playhouse, Honfleur Gallery, and Kraft Studios. Such a project can help Anacostia become a premier artist district with the District of Columbia.

It should not be under-scored of the importance in providing much needed affordable housing within the District—the need for which served as the basis for the Mayor's agent's recent decision in allowing the historic houses adjacent to the site to be relocated. Four Points LLC's plans to work with Teach for America and other community organizations to target the housing to teachers and artist is truly commendable. A similar project your board approved, PUD application 08-08; at 3910-3912 Georgia Ave NW should be noted. I previously resided at the mixed-income project which is also near a metro, along a main street, with a non-traditional use at the ground floor. This project was critical in providing affordable housing for me to live as an aspiring architect. It also provided a foundation which I could successfully transition out of, and enabled me to purchase my first home in Anacostia. It also highlights an interesting case study of the area around Georgia Ave/Petworth. Here the mix-income project provided a community serving clinic at ground level in an area with low retail demand at the time, while simultaneously helping

revitalize the main street. Now it helps to preserve affordably in an area where subsequent projects, are rapidly changing the area. It is with such foresight that we must approach this project.

Many areas around the city also demonstrate how taller building can co-exist harmoniously with buildings of a lower scale. The topography of the land also rises steeply after crossing Martin Luther King Boulevard, heading southward. This places many of the buildings in the adjacent district at a notably higher elevation than the proposal. It must also be pointed out that this project is not within the historic district and thus is not subject to any of the secretary of interior's standards on historic preservation, nor any group's opinion of what historic preservation should be. What the proposal does achieve, through its use of materials, and concatenation of forms, is a breaking down the massing and scale of the proposal. It also successfully pays respect to the adjacent historic district, and DC's row house vernacular, in a contemporary way.

I have attached my resume providing additional details about my background. I cannot reiterate my full support—as well as that of the majority of the community—for this project. This development positively and meaningfully helps to create a sense of place along Martin Luther King and in-fills an area of the main street currently plagued by a large expanse of lifeless surface parking.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Rhett James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Below the signature is a horizontal line.

Rhett James, Assoc. AIA  
B. Arch (Howard University)

Name

Rhett James ASSOC. AIA

Objective

To lead a career that continuously challenges my abilities and makes a meaningful impact in the communities in which we live, work, and play.

Experience

**Sorg Architects · Architectural Designer · Washington DC · March 2014 - Present**

- Assisted in preparing a masterplan report for the District of Columbia analyzing public safety facilities district-wide and determining the feasibility of a consolidated Justice Center Campus in Southeast Washington DC.
- Supported several multi-family, mixed used, hospitality, recreational, educational and cooperative interior projects including Sweet Green Headquarters, North Capitol Commons, Anacostia High School, Park View Elementary, Good Hope Recreation Center, Engine Houses 14 & 22, and Skyon Clubhouse in Gurugram India
- Partnered with developers to work on community development proposals including Takoma Junction, MD and the Historic Grimke School

**Cannon Design · Architect IB · Arlington VA · September 2010 - March 2014**

- 3+ years developing a range of projects including buildings for academic study, higher education, sporting, scientific inquiry, and technological advancement
- Engage with diverse teams spanning several geographic regions, including project consultants, local architects, contractors, clients, and product representatives
- Act as the Building Information modelling coordinator, feature space designer for Texas Christian University's Intellectual Commons projects
- Assist on several projects from schematic design to construction administration including Pro-Health Regional Cancer Center, TCU Intellectual Commons, UDC Student Union, GMU Life Sciences Building, GMU Mixed-Use Residence Hall, Georgetown Student Center Visioning Study, UVA New Library, NSU Rec. Center
- Perform research including identifying GSA building for renovation and participate in project pursuits helping identify new business opportunities and win work

**National Trust for Historic Preservation · Sustainability Intern · Washington DC · June-August 2010**

- Developed case studies of LEED historic buildings featured on the National Trust's website, demonstrating how older buildings can be adapted and reused sustainably
- Created guidelines for historic home energy renovations, in partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency, to be featured on the Energy Star for Homes website
- Drafted, edited, and reviewed a "Sustainability Action Plan" which will result in more sustainable internal practices at the National Trust

**Smithsonian Institution · Architectural Intern · Washington DC · July-December 2009**

- Assisted in bidding and contract negotiations for the National Museum of African American History and Culture by preparing bid forms and comparing proposals to help meet deadlines
- Prepared the Basis of Design and the Owner Project Requirements for the National Museum of Natural History 3rd Floor Renovation; critical to project's LEED accreditation
- Established and maintained the Smithsonian Sustainability Committee's website and office's library, providing sustainable design resources to designers and engineers

**Bynoe Rowe Wiltshire Partnership · Trinidad and Tobago · May-August 2007**

- Assisted in the design of the floor plans and elevations of the Parliament security building, eventually leading to improved security for the building
- Helped in the historic detailing of architectural elements for the Historic Red House restoration and adaptive reuse project, accelerating project delivery

Education

**Howard University Bachelor of Architecture · 2011 · Valedictorian · Summa Cum Laude**

Minor in Interior Design · Focused electives on Real Estate and Community Development, and Urban Housing

**Architect Registration Exams Passed**

Construction Documents & Services · Programming Planning, & Practice · Schematic Design · Site Planning and Design

Skills

**PHOTOSHOP, ILLUSTRATOR, INDESIGN, AUTOCAD, REVIT, SKETCHUP, RHINO, MODEL MAKING, CONCEPTUAL DESIGN, SKETCHING, 3D VISUALIZATION AND RENDERING, 3D PRINTING**

Achievements

Achievement in Thesis Design Award (2011) · AIA Henry Adams Medal of Merit (2011) · Highest Graduating Class GPA (2011) · CIEE Study Abroad Barcelona, Spain (2010) · Junior Year Design Award (2009) · NOMA Design Competition Participant (2008) · School of Architecture and Design Honor Roll (2006-2011) · Howard University Founders Scholar for outstanding achievement and leadership potential (2006)

Volunteer

**Habitat for Humanity (New Orleans Rebuilding), Architecture in Schools Yearly Volunteer, Engineers Without Borders (Brazil), Construction, Washington Metro Area 2050 Scenario Planning Workshop**

Contact

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