

ZONING COMMISSION HEARING – Case 11-03

July 18, 2011 and July 21, 2011

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- My name is Alice B. Wender and I am the owner of Townhouse 458 M Street SW, #9. I have been a resident of Southwest since 1980. I raised a family here and believe that the Southwest Waterfront is a wonderful community. I have supported this community for over 30 years by paying property taxes, maintaining and improving my property and the overall design integrity of the Tiber Island Condominium community, supporting the schools, patronizing local business to help keep them in the community, and being a good neighbor to St. Augustine Church and the rest of the neighboring Southwest community.
- As a long-term resident, I believe the area will significantly benefit, on balance, from much of the proposed redevelopment. However, I am here to oppose Parcel 11 as currently configured and its proposed R-5-B zoning and the proposed changes to Sixth Street and Maine Avenue and the new traffic circle due to its direct negative impact on the 6th Street Townhouses.
- I have amended my testimony to address additional information presented at the July 18, 2011 Hearing.
- I bought my Townhouse in 1980 specifically because of its award-winning Mid-Century design and its location. Although my house has an M Street address, the main rooms (i.e., dining room and kitchen, living room, and master bedroom) all face 6th Street. The design of the community, and in particular my home, offers the amenities that I most cherish - open space, glass doors and balconies in every room letting in light and sunshine, wonderful breezes, water views, beautiful sunsets, scale of and proximity to neighboring buildings, gardens and landscaping around the entire property, and convenient access from 6th Street to my patio and dining area. Although a less expensive comparable 3-story Townhouse (on N Street NW) was on the market at the same time, I bought my Townhouse at a higher price just because of these amenities.
- I bring to the attention of the Zoning Commission that I, along with several other Tiber Island Condominium owners with Townhouses facing 6th Street are uniquely aggrieved by the PUD proposal. The quality of life currently enjoyed by the 6th Street residents will be adversely affected by the proposed changes to Parcel 11 and 6th Street. A few examples:
 - The proximity and scale of any building in Parcel 11, if granted R-5-B zoning, are not in harmony with the scale and character of the neighboring

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Tiber Island Condominium residential structures and its immediate surroundings. It will completely overpower our Townhouses, in particular, Townhouses 456-468. I am particularly concerned that Hoffman-Stuever Waterfront (HSW) now plans to also include a penthouse raising the height of the building even more. Mr. Stanton Eckstut, the principal architect for the HSW, testified at the July 18th Hearing that heights of buildings were stepping down to what already exists near the residences. That is not accurate. A building with R-5-B zoning will be significantly higher than the closest residences, Townhouses 456-468 on 6th Street.

- I respectfully remind the Commission that Parcel 11 is currently zoned R-3, exactly like the adjacent Tiber Island Condominium complex. I find it both disturbing and disingenuous that HSW's expert witness testified that the PUD originally called for a mixed use commercial zone C-3-C; but in concession to the Southwest community residents, the HSW amended the PUD to change Parcel 11 to a zoning designation of R-5-B. He failed to testify that the current zoning is, in fact, R-3 and thus, the amended PUD (R-5-B) is not a concession to the neighborhood residents. My neighbor, Ms. Randolph of Townhouse 462, will identify additional concerns with the PUD regarding the zoning of Parcel 11, reflecting my concerns as well.
- While the Townhouses on 6th Street were designed to maximize light, breezes, beautiful sunsets, and a view of sky above and beyond the existing church, all of these assets will be significantly diminished by the proposed PUD. My Townhouse is across from and directly faces the proposed building. I will not be able to see to either side of the building or over it. My view will be totally blocked. Even Stanton Eckstut testified at the July 18th Hearing that shadows cast from a 4-story building can, in fact, result in greater light reduction than those from the 130-foot building. Further, it is my understanding that the HSW made concessions to Harbor Square and Arena Stage to preserve the view corridor for their buildings. With all due respect, people go to Arena Stage primarily to enjoy a play, not the water view. Also, the PUD proposal will minimally impact Harbor Square's views. In contrast, no consideration was given to preserve any view corridor for the 6th Street residents as evidenced by the fact that my views will be completely blocked and light will be significantly reduced.
- The loss of my current water view will result in significant economic injury due to the loss of property value (as I mentioned earlier, I paid more just to have a water view). Ms. Randolph, in her testimony, will provide the original brochure for the Tiber Island Condominium that lists 6th Street Townhouses as having water views. Even back in 1964, these Townhouses cost more to purchase because of their views. It is also my understanding that the HSW recognizes the higher value of a water view since its properties with water views will be assessed at a higher dollar amount per square foot.

- The increased density of the R-5-B Zoning of Parcel 11 will result in increased traffic and noise and reduced availability of already limited parking due to an increase in residents and visitors.
- Because the PUD proposes that 6th Street be changed to a narrower one-way street, 6th Street residents will have no other option but to wade through a high volume of traffic on Maine Avenue before we even get to the new traffic circle. Then we will be further inconvenienced by having to drive through the traffic circle (with lots of pedestrians also trying to cross the street) to get onto 6th Street.
- 6th Street residents will no longer be able to load and unload packages and receive deliveries (e.g., appliances, furniture) because the street will be narrowed to one traffic lane.
- Emergency vehicles (ambulances and fire trucks) will have greater difficulty accessing 6th Street, raising significant safety concerns for the residents in the Townhouses and the Apartment Building.
- Most importantly, I believe these concerns are not insurmountable. I respectfully request that the Zoning Commission :
 - a. Require that the zoning for Parcel 11 remain as R-3 or at most be given an R-5-A zoning designation (not the R-5-B currently being sought). This will allow for a larger setback, reduced FAR, and reduced building height, which will be in more harmony with the scale and character of its neighboring residential structures and its immediate surroundings.
 - b. Require that the width, two-way direction, parking, and trees that currently define 6th Street remain the same; but make it a dead-end street for residential use only.
 - c. Reconsider the proposed traffic circle along Maine Avenue and opposite Arena Stage and require that traffic engineers redesign and study an alternative route to better accommodate traffic flow on Maine Avenue, and minimize the direct impact on 6th Street residents.
- My neighbor, Leslie Randolph (owner of Townhouse 462 M Street, #7), has provided in her testimony to the Zoning Commission a much more detailed discussion of the adverse impacts of the proposed PUD to our properties as well as our recommendations. In an effort to be respectful of your time, her testimony reflects my position on the PUD as well.