

**ZONING COMMISSION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

**In the matter of**

**Southwest Waterfront PUD**

**(Hoffman-Struever Waterfront [HSW])**

**Zoning Case No. 11-03**

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**Declaration of Gregory K. Hunt, FAIA**

**I, Gregory K. Hunt, declare under penalty of perjury the following:**

**1) I own the residence at 464 M Street, SW, #6, Washington, DC, 20024. I am a registered architect, a member of the College of Fellows of The American Institute of Architects (FAIA), past president of the Virginia Society of the American Institute of Architects (VSAIA), recipient of the William Noland Medal from the Virginia Society AIA for distinguished service to the profession, and a past member of the Board of Architectural Review in Old Town Alexandria (Virginia).**

**From 2003 until 2008, I served as Vice Chairman and Director of Design at Leo A Daly, an international planning, architecture, engineering and interior design firm. Prior to joining this firm, I was an architectural educator for over 25 years at both Virginia Tech and The Catholic University of America (CUA), serving as Dean of the School of**

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Architecture and Planning at CUA from 1996 to 2003. Since 2008, I have served as the Founding Dean of the School of Architecture at Marywood University in Scranton, Pennsylvania.

## 2) Concerns

At the outset, I must state that I strongly believe that the most successful livable cities must always promote and support creative, positive change. New planning visions, well-scaled building massing and details, innovative architectural design, additional urban amenities, and civic opportunities for all, can both improve the quality of urban living and nurture healthy and vibrant urban communities. Growth and development – when planned and implemented with intelligence, sensitivity and care – can be major assets to urban life and the economy of cities. The Southwest Waterfront Redevelopment currently under review has such promise.

### Concern 1: Parcel 11 and its Relationship to Tiber Island

While I applaud a great many aspects of the PUD proposed by Hoffman-Struever Waterfront, L.L.C. (HSW), for the Southwest Waterfront, I am most particularly concerned with the development of Parcel #11 directly across the street from my house at 464 M Street, which faces 6<sup>th</sup> Street.

When I originally purchased this residence, I did so for four main reasons: the views to waterfront, the scale of the neighboring buildings, the contemporary design and planning of the Tiber Island building complex, and the fact (I assumed) that St. Augustine's Church on 6<sup>th</sup> Street across from the property would always be there. Copper-roofed and low in height, this modernist religious structure is wonderfully sited relative to

the Tiber Island houses across the street principally because of the building's generous setback from 6<sup>th</sup> Street. Large areas of grass, along with trees along the sidewalk, lessen the building's physical and visual impact along the streetscape and there is a pronounced and unusual visual serenity to the building's architecture.

The proposed HSW Plan will negatively alter these urban conditions that led me to purchase 464 M Street in 2005 and will significantly lower the value of my property

#### Proposed Zoning Change

The developer is requesting that the zoning of Parcel 11 be changed to R-5-B, which permits *"matter-of-right moderate development of general residential uses, including single-family dwellings, flats, and apartment buildings to a maximum lot occupancy of 60%, a maximum FAR of 1.8, and a maximum height of fifty (50) feet."*

R-5-A zoning, on the other hand, would permit (with Board of Zoning Adjustment approval) *"low density residential uses including row houses, flats, and apartments to a maximum lot occupancy of 40% . . . a maximum FAR of .9 and a maximum height of three (3) stories/forty (40) feet."*

I strongly urge the Zoning Commission to require an R-5-A zoning designation for Parcel 11 in the HSW Plan and not the R-5-B currently being sought. If the members of the Commission walk the immediate neighborhood and local environs, they will see that the majority of the street frontages consist of attached townhouses (Tiber Island, River Park, N Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Street, etc.). Neighborhood apartment towers, however, are set back from the street and are configured to shape inner landscaped courtyards, grass reserves, and other open spaces. The neighborhood thus enjoys streetscapes that feature trees, grass,

small entry gardens, entry stoops, and other such means of bringing a pleasant human scale to the sidewalks and streets of our neighborhood (even along M Street!).

While the developers are apparently promising to limit the building height of Parcel 11 to forty-five (45) feet plus a penthouse, this means that the bulk-of-building along 6<sup>th</sup> Street could reach heights of fifty-five (55) feet (45 feet with an additional 10-foot high penthouse). Most importantly, the small setback dimensions shown on the drawings will inevitably prevent the possibility of having trees along the sidewalk, resulting in a building edge that will simply overpower 6<sup>th</sup> Street. Larger setbacks, sidewalks with trees, and lower buildings will keep the new structures along 6<sup>th</sup> Street compatible with the neighboring Tiber Island residences across the street.

By limiting the Parcel 11 zoning to an R-5-A zoning designation, its development would necessitate reduced lot coverage, a lower FAR, and buildings of reduced height. By doing so, the sky exposure plane (SEP) affecting the current houses across 6<sup>th</sup> Street (which range in height from two to four stories) would permit more light to enter the streetscape and the houses themselves; Tiber Island residents across the street would still be able to see sky beyond (over Washington Channel); and the streetscape along 6<sup>th</sup> Street would be more compatibly-scaled along both sides of the street.

It is clear from the current plans that Parcel 11 is a physically unique parcel within the entire development: it is the only parcel that does not directly enfront the Channel; it is the only parcel that is directly across the street from Tiber Island townhouses; and it is the only parcel that is positioned to “connect” the large-scale building grain proposed along Maine Avenue with that of the existing Tiber Island building complex.

Tiber Island is a residential complex consisting of various low-rise townhouses and four high-rise tower structures. Its interior public courtyards are residentially-scaled, well-planted, and shade-giving. It has received design awards because of its planning concepts, its external aesthetic, and its contributions to the streetscapes of Southwest Washington.

Given the large number of residential units that are within the proposed HSW PUD, it does not seem unreasonable that the developers be asked to produce a design for Parcel 11 that is more in harmony with the scale and character of its neighboring residential structures and its immediate surroundings.

It is also critical that the width of 6<sup>th</sup> Street not be reduced. Given the need to service nearly all the Tiber Island units – townhouses and high-rises alike – service vehicles use 6<sup>th</sup> Street very frequently. In addition, street parking along 6<sup>th</sup> Street is highly necessary for area residents (for parking, loading, and unloading).

With full appreciation of extensive efforts the developers and planners have expended to date, I ask that Zoning Commission deny their request to change the zoning of Parcel 11 to R-5-B.

By doing so, and by requiring that HSW be granted an R-5-A zoning designation instead, the Zoning Commission will truly fulfill its obligation to guide the intelligent, insightful planning that Southwest DC truly needs and deserves. The Commission should require a development plan that exhibits both appropriate sensitivity and foresight. Parcel 11 must not display the profit-driven, characterless architecture and planning that characterizes much of Clarendon (Virginia) and downtown Bethesda (Maryland). We do not need another agglomeration of anonymous, scaleless buildings that frequent so many areas outside of the urban core of Washington, D.C.

### **Concern 2: Maine Avenue Traffic Circle**

The proposed traffic circle along Maine Avenue and opposite Arena Stage should be reconsidered. Those of us living in this neighborhood know well the density of traffic along this major traffic artery. Morning and evening rush hour traffic is currently highly congested and slow-moving, and the presence of a new circle will simply exacerbate these current conditions. An alternate means of giving urban prominence to the axis extending from the Arena Stage site to the new proposed pier extending into the Channel should be studied, and traffic engineers should give more thought to designing Maine Avenue to better accommodate traffic flow during hours of peak use.

### **Concern 3: Possible Narrowing of 6th Street**

As any area resident knows, we have had increased and serious parking problems in the area due to the expanded Arena Stage, an influx of DC government workers in the new buildings surrounding Safeway, and the construction of the new Nationals Stadium. Many people now park along 6<sup>th</sup> Street along Parcel 11 and walk to the Stadium for events. Similarly, people park wherever they can along 6<sup>th</sup> Street to attend performances at the Arena Stage. In all of these cases, neighborhood residents and their guests now have to compete with these visitors for parking spaces.

Secondly, any narrowing of 6<sup>th</sup> Street to provide more land for development (via increased FAR) will certainly eliminate a considerable number of spaces for residential

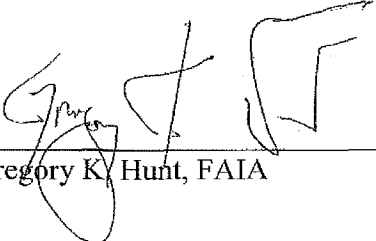
street parking. Trucks that serve Tiber Island's south tower, as well as those serving the current residences facing 6<sup>th</sup> Street, will have a more difficult time making deliveries, collecting trash, etc.

Thirdly, the narrowing of 6<sup>th</sup> Street will reduce light to those Tiber Island residences that currently view the sky above St. Augustine's Church.

The current width, parking, and trees that define 6<sup>th</sup> Street should not be altered and serious consideration should be given to increasing the setback distances to whatever new structures are built on Parcel 11 so that 6<sup>th</sup> Street may be spatially enhanced, the currently limited parking spaces are not reduced, and neighboring residences are not "choked" by the proposed new development.

Southwest, DC deserves more, and Parcel 11 – a "fringe" parcel within the total waterfront scheme currently proposed – should be re-designed to more appropriately relate to the scale and character of the Tiber Island townhouses that it faces. Only then will the HMW scheme reflect true sensitivity to the historically important grain and character of the adjacent neighborhood of Tiber Island.

I would appreciate your thoughtful consideration of the points raised herein. I regret that I am unable to attend this hearing in person.

  
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Gregory K. Hunt, FAIA

7/9/11  
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Date