

Good evening members of the Zoning Commission, I am Aakash Thakkar of EYA, a member of VMP, and will be providing rebuttal testimony in response to FOMP and other testimony about whether we have studied any alternative plans that could reduce the height of the healthcare facility on Parcel 1 by two floors so as to achieve a typical moderate-density height of 90 feet. These comments relate to remand issues 1 and 3.

Starting in 2008/2009, we developed several concept plans that included a mix of housing, retail, commercial, park space, and historic preservation. Over the next five years, in hundreds of meetings, we heard thousands of comments from the community, ANC's, Office of Planning, Deputy Mayor, City Council, HPRB, and many, many others. As a result of that valuable feedback, VMP and the District prepared and evaluated dozens and dozens of master plan alternatives during that time, including the six plans reviewed by Mr. Bell at the April 19th hearing.

Several iterations had many more housing units and less healthcare facilities than our current plan. I will note that, contrary to Ms. Ferster's assertions, we never reduced or failed to include residential housing due to the "slow" residential market in 2007-2010. We always took the long view and knew that the project had to stand the test of time, not the cyclical ups and downs of the real estate. Our goal was, and is today, to put forth a mixed-use program that is viable and addresses market demand. A plan with more residential and less healthcare is not viable and does not address market demand.

I also note for the record, contrary to Mr. Vining's testimony, we did not make the park bigger because of DC Water. We did move the park location because of DC Water, BUT increased the size of the park of our own accord to make a better project and win more community support. We could have proposed development south of the southern service court but chose not to do so.

The opposition asked about reduction in height at Sibley hospital. Like Sibley, our project did reduce height and reduce buildable area to increase park size, introduce the healing gardens, and preserve as open space the land on top of cell 14. In summary, like Sibley, VMP has already reduced its project significantly to address ZC, HPRB, and community requests.

After hearing from the community, ANC, City Council, OP and the HPRB, we finalized this development program in 2014 for very particular reasons, including the following:

1. **Jobs** - Numerous administrations and the Council want this project to create jobs and a project without the medical component and with more housing would not deliver the needed jobs.
2. **Retail** - All parties want a grocery store and other community serving retail and that cannot happen at McMillan without both the evening traffic from the surrounding community and new housing at the site and the daytime traffic from the new healthcare facility on Parcel 1. A project without the healthcare component would greatly alter our proposed retail mix and could put in jeopardy our grocery store anchor.
3. **Open Space and Preservation** - All parties want, and the Comprehensive Plan and HPRB demand, open space and preservation. Neither of those can happen at the SAME SCALE without the higher height healthcare facility, which allows for more of the site to be developed as park space while still maintaining the viability of the project. Contrary to some of Ms.

Ferster's questions at the last hearing, replacing office with housing is not a zero sum option. A plan would need far more housing, particularly with the 20% affordability requirement, to make up for the loss of two floors, approximately 190,000 square feet, of healthcare facility use. This would result in drastically less open space, as seen on the plan's previously discussed by Mr. Bell, which were considered infeasible or unacceptable either individually or collectively by the community, ANC, HPRB, or the District.

4. **Affordable Housing** -The 20% affordable housing for this project is heavily subsidized by other parts of the project and without the additional height for the healthcare building on Parcel 1, the development of the proposed affordable housing would not be viable. Further, the rowhomes offer affordable and market rate FOR-SALE housing, which is a key goal of our plan and would be removed from our plan per Ms. Ferster's suggestions in these hearings.
5. **Contextual Site Design** – The current plan intentionally increases in height from south to north. From the large park, to lower density rowhomes, to moderate density, mixed-use, to the tallest buildings on the north end, adjacent to Children's Hospital. The HPRB, Zoning Commission, and the Court explicitly allowed this step up moving north.
6. **Comprehensive Plan** - Finally, we would not be advancing over 100 Comprehensive Plan policies in such a robust manner - including jobs, open space, preservation, and retail – without the healthcare facility at its current size.

So yes, VMP and the District did study many alternatives up through 2014. In fact, as developers and planners, that is what we do for a living. Our conclusion, after working diligently with the entire community for 11 years, is that in order to retain a substantial part of the site as open space and make the site usable for recreational purposes, while at the same time balancing the many other competing interests, addressing the constraints of the site and surrounding context, and providing the significant public benefits and amenities that we have offered, we really must have the taller healthcare facility on the northern end of the site. The DC City Council and Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development have supported this conclusion.

As Mr. Weers has stated, if the healthcare facility dies, as FOMP proposes by suggesting a 27% reduction in square footage, then we lose the economic and jobs driver of the project. If this happened, the project itself could not and would not move forward.

This result would not be good news for residents in Ward 5 and across the District. They want and need open space and recreation for their families, they want and need BASIC retail services in their neighborhoods, they want and need affordable housing, and they want and need jobs to support their families and to put food on their tables. Economic development and amenities, that is what this case, this project, has always been about.

Thank you Zoning Commission members for your time and diligence in this matter.