

**SPCA TESTIMONY
DC ZONING COMMISSION
APRIL 2, 2015**

Good evening Mr Chairman and members of the Zoning Commission. I am Ed Atkins, a member of the board of the Shepherd Park Citizens Association. As you may know, our neighborhood borders the Walter Reed Campus (WRC) on the north. It is a highly sought after residential area composed principally of well-maintained, stately single-family homes.

Mr. Chairman, we at the Shepherd Park Citizens Association strongly support the overall vision for new development proposed for the former Walter Reed site. We believe that more options for affordable and market rate housing in a variety of styles including “townhomes” and apartments should be offered to District residents. We eagerly look forward to shopping at new, high-quality retail establishments and attending new cultural, and recreational offerings near our neighborhood.

We support development that lasts, development that creates a sense of place, a sense of timelessness: development that after 20 or 30 years looks just as fresh and inviting to residents and visitors as it does the day it is built. We support building a neighborhood.

Since we are located immediately adjacent to the proposed zoning classification WR-1, our comments focus primarily on that area.

WR-1

We support new residential development that as the Small Area Plan notes: “complements the character of nearby established residential neighborhoods”, enhances property values and provides for “affordable” housing in accordance with city norms and regulations. Unfortunately, we believe the proposed WR-1 zoning does not meet those goals.

First of all, the amount of townhouses allowed under the proposed zoning is too dense and way out of proportion to the neighborhood. The proposed zoning would cram 90 “townhouses” on a three-acre site. This is significantly denser than a comparable new development with 63 town

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homes on a five-acre site a scant two miles away. Additionally, the minimum lot size at 18 feet wide is too narrow and, the proposed 16 feet width for “affordable” housing (section 3501.4) is disgraceful. Why should “affordable” housing be less wide than market rate? The height at four stories even accounting for the slopping site is too tall in our opinion; parking provisions for residents and guests is confusing and the lack of rear yards is out of scale with the existing neighborhood. Frankly, this proposal at this density would allow for a tightly packed island of suburban type “townhouses” and stacked units in a sea of lower density residences. We firmly believe that allowing up to 90 “townhouses” (page 142 of the WR reuse plan) would negatively impact traffic, parking, property values and our overall quality of life. We request that this section be rewritten to allow up to forty three story townhouses with rear yards, front porches and a variety of creative designs compatible with our neighborhood.

WR-2

Equally important will be the increased traffic and parking needs associated with this development. We are pleased that the District government has updated its traffic and parking study for the Walter Reed campus. We support the District government’s efforts at Transportation Demand Management for the Walter Reed campus and especially provisions to encourage car sharing, bike lanes, and the goal of residential units being 50% non-auto occupants.

However, we believe the height for the “mixed use” buildings along 13th Street is too high at eighty-five feet even with the gently slopping site. This development, located to the south of the proposed “townhomes”, is so tall that it might cast shadows on them during the day, deprive residents of much needed privacy and potentially lower their property values. We are also unclear about arrangements for upkeep of the shopping plaza, and parking there. We request that this section be rewritten to allow for only 5 stories maximum height, and to detail parking standards and upkeep arrangements.

WR-3

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Mr. Chairman, the proposed zoning allows for up to a five-story “mixed use” building at Fern Street and Georgia Avenue and up to six story buildings from Fern to Aspen Street. We believe the five-story “mixed use” building at Fern and Georgia is too tall for the existing neighborhood and could be ten feet taller than the maximum height allowable for a future building to be built across Georgia Ave. We support taller buildings from Dahlia to Aspen since they are compatible with uses already there. We request that the height for “mixed use” building at Fern and Georgia be limited to three stories.

WR-8

This site, while not immediately adjacent to our neighborhood is of key interest to us because it abuts 16th Street NW, a major north south thoroughfare for our community and the entire region. Our citizens association supports multi-family use for this large parcel if its setback conforms to other apartment buildings along 16th street between Aspen Street and Military Road. That is a half a block setback from 16th street. We respectfully suggest that the vehicular and principal entrance to the proposed building be located along Main Drive.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Mr. Chairman, the neighborhoods surrounding WRC - Takoma, Brightwood and Shepherd Park - are residential in character. We request provisions in the proposed zoning regulations to maintain that status by prohibiting at home businesses on the Walter Reed campus.

While we strongly support new restaurants, we request provisions, such as “voluntary like” agreements, with restaurants serving alcohol that limit hours and noise to a reasonable standard (section 3513.7). Furthermore, allowing restaurants to be 25 feet from residential uses is too close, in our opinion (section 3514.6). We request this provision be amended to 100 feet.

SUMMARY

In conclusion, Mr Chairman, we believe that proposed zones WR 1 through 3 should be rewritten to limit the number of housing units and their height allowed and to increase their size; to reduce the height of mixed use buildings near the proposed townhouses along Fern and Elder streets and to

clarify parking arrangements for residential and retail uses. We further request that the District government ensure that residential home businesses are prohibited on the WRC.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Commission.