



Coalition for Smarter Growth

DC • MD • VA

May 25, 2016

Mr. Anthony Hood, Chairman
DC Zoning Commission
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 210
Washington, DC 20001

RE: Testimony in support for Case No. 15-16: 680 Rhode Island Avenue NE PUD

Dear Chairman Hood & members of the Zoning Commission:

Please accept these comments on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth (CSG). The Coalition for Smarter Growth is the leading organization working locally in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region dedicated to making the case for smart growth. Our mission is to promote walkable, inclusive, and transit-oriented communities, and the land use and transportation policies and investments needed to make those communities flourish.

We want to express our enthusiastic support for the proposed PUD Case No. 15-16. This proposal will transform an aging strip shopping center and surface parking lot adjacent to the Metropolitan Branch Trail (MBT) and the Rhode Island Ave. Metro station pedestrian bridge. The proposal also establishes a pedestrian-oriented frontage on to Rhode Island Avenue itself.

This redevelopment proposal is largely the culmination of work we began in 2002 to make the area around the Rhode Island Avenue Metro station, and the Avenue itself, a safe, accessible, and inviting place to walk. Our outreach efforts focused on Edgewood Terrace and its more than 1000 residents who lived so close to the Metro station, but had a long, circuitous walk due to the hilly terrain and railroad tracks. In the early 2000s, we conducted several community workshops, walk-thrus, surveys, and other outreach efforts to identify concerns and ways to improve the walkability of the neighborhood and access to the Metro station. The results from this effort identified a pedestrian bridge across the railroad tracks (where people were walking across active tracks), stairs between the shopping center and Edgewood Terrace, and improved pedestrian facilities and streetscaping along Rhode Island Avenue (see attached table and map).

We are gratified that the pedestrian bridge was built and is well used. It creates a safe and direct connection for neighborhoods on the west side of the railroad tracks to Metro. Despite this accomplishment, we were left with several unfinished items to improve westside accessibility. Now, the PUD proposal for this site fulfills these priority items.

We have long sought stairs between the project site and Edgewood Commons to shorten the walk to Metro by as much as 10 minutes. This proposal offers to build two stairways connecting the site to the north. The proposed stairs will significantly decrease the time and distance for Edgewood Commons residents, and beyond, helping thousands of people have a more convenient walk to Metro and reach the future full service grocery store and pharmacy at the project site. We hope that the siting of the

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ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.15-16
EXHIBIT NO.81

easternmost stairway can ensure the most direct connection for Edgewood Commons (as proposed by the applicant) rather than bury the stairs in the middle of the block. To address CPDC's concern about security, additional measures could be considered. The stairway connection will be a great benefit to Edgewood Commons residents, so we hope a good plan can be agreed upon to give those residents the shortest possible walks to Metro.

We also sought to establish a safer pedestrian environment to and along Rhode Island Avenue, which this proposal will do. These, and the other walk/bike connections proposed, are major contributions to the neighborhood and make the most of this site's transit, walk, and bicycle access.

The project will provide significant enhancements to access and safety along the Metropolitan Branch Trail and the pedestrian bridge to the Rhode Island Ave. Metro station. The project offers programed activities, a police presence, lighting, and call boxes to enhance MBT safety. These are all welcome improvements.

While this project offers tremendous benefits for people who already live nearby, the project also meets another critical need – more housing for a growing city. Replacing an aging strip shopping center and surface parking lot with approximately 1500 homes, a full service grocery store and pharmacy, public plazas, a useable park, enhanced walk/bike connections to Metro, the MBT, and the neighborhood, benefits everyone. Increased supply of housing near transit is critical to addressing growing demand for housing in the city, and rising prices.

While we are thrilled by this proposal, we wish to suggest some ways to make it even better.

Access to MBT & Metro pedestrian bridge during construction: While both the completion of Phase One and the completion of the entire project will offer greatly improved access to the MBT and the pedestrian bridge to the Metro station, we ask that disruption to neighborhood access to these connections be minimized during construction. We ask that the applicant minimize disrupted access from the west across the property, acknowledging that this is a customary pathway across private property. We appreciate that the applicant is offering an alternative west to east pathway to the MBT/bridge via a new signalized shared driveway with Edgewood Commons at 4th and Channing Streets that connects to a stairway that links to the MBT. This pathway should be maintained throughout construction. Further, we ask that the new street through the site is available to provide access to the MBT as much as possible through both Phase One and subsequent phases.

Southside MBT access for bicycle riders: The developer for proposing a bicycle track connecting the northeast end of the site to 4th Street, NE. This is a unique and commendable bicycle facility offered on private property. For connection to the southeast portion of the site, we appreciate the applicant's bicycle circulation plan which shows a link to the curbless street with a short dedicated bicycle lane, arrow, and "Metropolitan Branch Trail Wayfinding Signage" to the MBT, and distinct pavement markings that appear to be a shared walk/bike pathway. It would be helpful to clarify the design for this facility for bicyclists, and how bicyclists will make the connection between from the MBT and 4th Street in this section.

Parking: The 0.6 parking ratio in Phase One is higher than we would recommend. Since the project has multiple phases, we suggest that this high ratio can reconsidered at later phases. We note that the application shows a lower 0.5 ratio at full build out. In Phase One, we support the reduced parking ratio for building 5B. For management of all the parking, we ask the price for parking covers the cost so that

users of the parking pay the full cost. (In most cases, the user is subsidized by non-car users because market prices are usually below actual costs.)

Affordable Housing: While we appreciate the applicant's offer to provide half of the 8% IZ units at 50% AMI, we suggest that a better approach is to provide all the IZ units at 60% AMI. We recommend this given that 80% AMI is either too close to or exceeds local market rents. We also base our recommendation on the precedent set by the recent Elkington Yards case.

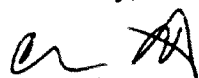
Overall, we are eager to see this transformative project move forward. The project will help knit together this community and provide needed new housing on an underutilized site next to Metro.

Lastly, we want to present a preview of our new certification program, called "GreenPlace." We are piloting this evaluation program to quantify the traffic and pollution reduction benefits of well-designed transit-oriented development, and encourage more transportation demand management measures (please see attached evaluation report).

GreenPlace Certification: Our evaluation for the 680 Rhode Island Ave. project quantifies the environmental, transportation, and health benefits. According to the analysis using the URBEMIS land use and transportation model, on a household basis, this project will generate 53% fewer miles of daily driving and 70% fewer pounds of the greenhouse gas Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) from driving than the region's average. The project offers a robust set of transportation demand management measures to reinforce the opportunities to drive less, and walk, bicycle, and ride transit more. This is an important contribution for our region to welcome growth in a more sustainable way.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Cort
Policy Director

Table & map from 2002 community workshop:

Walking Time for Edgewood Terrace Apartments to Rhode Island Ave. Metro station

	Legal Crossing	Illegal Crossing*	Direct**
Distance in Miles	0.8	0.71	.023
Time at 2.5 mph (grade not accounted for)	20 minutes	17 minutes	6 minutes

*"Illegal Crossing" refers to pedestrian crossings of the CSG railroad tracks at #4.

** "Direct" refers to stairs and pedestrian bridge directly linking walkers from Edgewood Terrace to Metro station





GreenPlace

Living where green transportation prevails

PRELIMINARY CERTIFICATION REPORT

certified April 25, 2016 (pending entitlement)

RHODE ISLAND CENTER

680 Rhode Island Avenue NE, Washington DC
DEVELOPER: MRP Realty



DRIVE LESS

Reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) reduces air pollution, fossil fuel use, and encourages healthy habits.

BENEFITS: 53% less driving / 70% less CO₂ emitted

VMT TARGET: 30 daily miles/household

THIS PROJECT: 21 daily miles/household

REGIONAL AVG: 45 daily miles/household



PEOPLE OVER PARKING

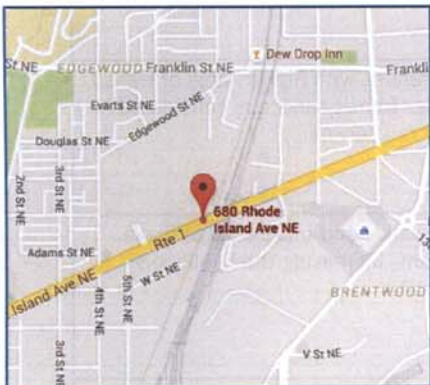
Places that prioritize people over car parking are healthier, more walkable, and more sustainable.

THIS PROJECT: 0.6 spaces/unit

PARKING TARGET: 0.6 - 1 spaces/unit

WHAT KIND OF PLACE? Different kinds of places have different GreenPlace standards:

- urban center
- suburban multi-use center
- revitalizing urban center
- dense mixed-use center
- close-in & urbanizing center
- satellite city



WALK MORE: WHAT'S NEARBY

If there are pleasant, useful, interesting walking routes to everyday destinations, you're more likely to walk!

Rhode Island Ave Metro	5 MIN	0.2 MI	450 STEPS	26 CAL
Giant Grocery	10 MIN	0.5 MI	1000 STEPS	52 CAL
McKinley Tech High School	14 MIN	0.7 MI	1500 STEPS	73 CAL
Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception	22 MIN	1.1 MI	2300 STEPS	115 CAL

GET ACTIVE! To be considered "physically active" adults should walk > 10,000 steps daily.

BY THE NUMBERS



- 3 structures, 3.7 acres, 451 units in Phase 1 (Total 1555 units in 8 buildings on 13 acres)
- 37 affordable units
- 5-minute walk to Rhode Island Ave Metro
- 1 Capital Bikeshare station within 1/4 mile
- 9 bus lines within 1/4 mile

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE Here are some of our favorite things about this project:



- Capital Bikeshare station to be installed by MRP
- Met Branch Trail and pedestrian bridge to RI Ave Metro station enhanced and incorporated into project, and connected through site by bicycle track to 4th St, NE bike lane.
- 2 stairways built by MRP to connect to Edgewood Commons
- \$225 per unit provided for: Capital Bikeshare or carshare memberships, driving credits, bike repair expenses.
- Indoor bicycle parking for 502 bikes exceeding required by 60%, plus more outdoor bicycle spaces.
- Bicycle repair stations in bicycle rooms in each building.
- One cargo bike and 2 grocery carts for residents to use in each building.
- 2 public plazas and a new park
- 8% affordable homes, split between 80% AMI and 50% AMI

ABOUT GREENPLACE CERTIFICATION

GreenPlace helps people understand how living at new transit-oriented housing will reduce traffic, air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and foster healthier, active living. GreenPlace measures vehicle miles traveled (VMT), parking, and transportation demand management (TDM). GreenPlace is an initiative of the Coalition for Smarter Growth. Learn more at smartergrowth.net/greenplace.



GreenPlace

better transportation options for healthier living

METRICS & ANALYSIS

certified April 25, 2016 (pending entitlement)

RHODE ISLAND CENTER

680 Rhode Island Avenue NE, Washington DC

DEVELOPER: MRP Realty

To earn a GreenPlace certification, residential projects must first qualify by meeting minimum eligibility criteria: 20 units or more, minimum density of 20 homes/acre, and location inside a Council of Governments activity center with frequent transit service.



CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Depending on the location and place type, a GreenPlace project must have two or three of the following characteristics:

- Less parking: No more than 0.5-1.5 parking spaces per home (depending on the place type)
- Traffic reduction: 2-3 transportation demand management (TDM) strategies, including transit passes, bikeshare memberships, carshare memberships, unbundled parking costs from the leasing or buying of the unit
- Maximum daily vehicle miles traveled per unit: 25-35 miles (depending on place type)



DRIVING REDUCTION MODEL PROJECTIONS

The URBEMIS model we use gives credits to factors known to reduce the need for driving. When modeling, we start with a baseline standard for vehicle miles traveled (VMT) from the Institute for Transportation Engineers (ITE) conventional approach. The model then calculates how much each of several main factors reduces the projected miles driven for the project we're rating. From there, the model calculates the CO₂ emissions reduction based on VMT and other project factors.

FACTOR: DENSITY 48% VMT reduction 122:1 units per acre	Density reduces vehicle travel because the distance of any given trip tends to be shorter, and more trips tend to be non-vehicular (instead trips can be taken by biking, walking, or transit).
FACTOR: MIX OF USES 5.2% VMT reduction 4,099 households within 0.5 mi 2,158 jobs within 0.5 mi	Mixed-use environments and local-serving retail encourage people to take trips on foot or by bike over personal car -- especially for errands.
FACTOR: TRANSIT SERVICE 12.5% VMT reduction 640 daily buses within 0.25 mi 388 daily Metro trains within 0.5 mi	Frequent, reliable, and fast transit service correlates with higher rates of transit use and lower rates of personal automobile use. Transit service is considered within 0.25 mi for bus service, and 0.5 mi for rail service.
FACTOR: WALK/BIKE FRIENDLINESS 6% VMT reduction 100% double sidewalk coverage 64% bike lane coverage 489 intersections per sq. mile	Interconnected streets with small blocks, sidewalks, and bicycle lanes make walking and bicycling safer and more convenient, increasing the likelihood people will walk or bike instead of drive.
FACTOR: AFFORDABLE HOUSING 0.3% VMT reduction 37 affordable units, half at 80% and half at 50% of area median income	Lower-income households tend to own fewer cars, ride transit more, and drive less than higher-income households.