

December 5, 2016

Testimony from Sylvia Robinson regarding PUD application 16-11

My name is Sylvia Robinson and I am a resident of Pleasant Plains and co-founder of the Georgia Avenue Community Development Task Force. Since 2009 the Task Force has organized residents, students, homeowners, university officials and businesses along lower Georgia Avenue, ensuring the community has a voice in development projects. This community has been deeply concerned about the disposition of the Bruce Monroe site since the Bruce Monroe School was demolished. In 2010 we successfully worked with city officials to construct the park in its current layout rather than accept the planned parking lot. With no further correspondence from DMPED we took it upon ourselves to be proactive and assess the community's desires. At our 2014 Biennial Community Review attended by over 100 community members it was determined that 74% of the participants favored a non-commercial/non-residential use (reference:

https://sites.google.com/site/pleasantplainsdc/task-force/Community_Review_2014_Final_Report.pdf

We later participated in the design and distribution of the ANC 1A/B Bruce Monroe Task Force survey distributed to 10,000 residents, with 800 responses showing that 64.4% of the respondents favored a park or a public use of the site (reference: <http://anc1a.org/library.html>).

Even though I am technically speaking in opposition, I am not here today to stop the project or deny the Park Morton residents the opportunity for new housing. I am here to voice community concerns that have been disregarded throughout this process.

There were many community engagement meetings which were referred to in the PUD documents. Having attended most of them I can attest to the fact that only one of them was designed to gain insight from the community about the design of this site and I have yet to see notes from this meeting that indicated a community preference for what is actually being proposed. The remainder of the meetings focused on announcing the plans for moving forward, and explaining why there could be no compromises.

The community's voice was further suppressed when the ANC Commissioner for the site recused herself from this project in December of 2015 for personal/professional reasons. She did not discuss or vote on any issues related to this project since then, and the Commission did not appoint anyone to represent them in her place.

I would like to stress at this point that despite the issues with the process and the battle to save at least half of the land for the park, it was not the desire of the Georgia Avenue Community Development Task Force to stop the project or deny the Park Morton residents the opportunity for new housing. But for a project of this size and impact not to have the benefit of full community input will have lasting damage to our community.

We therefore want to raise the following concerns to you related to this PUD and ask that these be considered prior to approving this legislation.

- **At 120 feet, the building planned for the site is too tall, and the design is not compatible with the neighborhood. We ask that the building height to be reduced by at least two stories, with the units removed (approximately 46) being added to the Park Morton site.**
 - The building and design are not consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, specifically Policy UD-2.2.7: Infill Development, Policy UD-2.2.8: Large Site Development, and Policy UD-2.2.9: Protection of Neighborhood Open Space
 - The building and design are not consistent with the Future Land Use Map which calls for medium density residential/moderate density commercial at this site, immediately bordering on a low density residential/commercial area to the south
 - The building and design are not consistent with the Office of Planning's Small Area Plan, or the Georgia Avenue After Small Area Plan.

- The building and design are not consistent with the surrounding community's desires
 - The GACTDF 2014 biennial Community Review attended by over 100 community members determined that 74% of the responses favored a non-commercial/non-residential use (reference: https://sites.google.com/site/pleasantplainsdc/task-force/Community_Review_2014_Final_Report.pdf)
 - The ANC 1A/B Bruce Monroe Task Force survey distributed to 10,000 residents, with 800 responses showed that 64.4% of the respondents favored a park or a public use of the site (reference: <http://anc1a.org/library.html>)
 - DMPED held a public engagement meeting on December 12th at which participants could indicate their preferences for development using building blocks. The notes from this meeting gave no evidence of a community preference for a building of this size.
 - The developer's claim that there are three PUDs in the area that are comparable in height is false because the heights that were approved for those buildings were for buildings that were truly 90 feet as opposed to this PUD where 90 feet only goes to the top floor and doesn't include the penthouse and roof structure adding an additional 20 feet.
- **The area designated for the park is not delineated, nor is there any firm commitment to design, develop or fund the park.** Neither the Surplus document, Land Disposition document nor the PUD requires either the city or the developer to build or fund the building of the park. As of 3pm on December 5th, the developers have not shared their community benefits proposal so there is no commitment at this point to create a park. We raised this issue during testimony at the Surplus and Land Disposition hearings for Bruce Monroe on November 29, and are urging you to support us in documenting this commitment as well.
 - A requirement for tenants to pay for parking spaces will give them an incentive to park in the neighborhood as an alternative. Paid parking spaces are assumed in the appraisal, although the developer has been non-committal on this issue. **We want parking spaces to be given to residents at no additional costs.** Furthermore, the traffic reports suggest that Irving St and Columbia Rd. will be operating at failing levels in the future but the city has not presented a realistic proposal to deal with the increase in congestion.
 - **We want to see more three bedroom affordable units added to the project.** Currently between the two sites there are a total of 41 three or four bedroom units. 13 of them are PHA units and 28 are market rate. Lack of three and four bedroom affordable units adversely affects the ability of African American families to live in the Ward.
 - **We're concerned about the lack of home ownership opportunities in the project.** The Home Fund, Public Housing Self Sufficiency Program, and Home Opportunities for Public Housing Residents are opportunities that the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) encourages City Government and Public Housing Authorities to utilize when there is a relocation of Public Housing Residents. The GACTDF is very concerned there has not been any exploration of these opportunities for the residents at Park Morton.