

PARK VIEW COMMUNITY & THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Z.C. CASE No. 16-11

TESTIMONY OF

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1. Good evening Mr. Chairman and members of the Commission. My testimony this evening will focus on the consistency of the Applicant's proposed PUD and related map amendment for the redevelopment of the Subject Property with the District Elements of the Comprehensive Plan (the "Plan").
2. The Applicant proposes to redevelop the Subject Property with a total of 273 new residential units, the large majority of which will be devoted to public housing replacement units and affordable housing for moderate income households with the remainder devoted to market rate. The Subject Property and proposed redevelopment will serve as the "build-first" site for the Park Morton Public Housing Community, which is a targeted site that is part of the District's New Community's Initiative.

Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan

3. As stated in DC Code § 1-245(b), the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to:
 - a. define the requirements and aspirations of District residents and, accordingly, influence social, economic and physical development;
 - b. guide executive and legislative decisions on matters affecting the District and its citizens;
 - c. promote economic growth and jobs for District residents;

- d. guide private and public development in order to achieve District and community goals;
 - e. maintain and enhance the natural and architectural assets of the District; and
 - f. assist in conservation, stabilization, and improvement of each neighborhood and community in the District.
4. To achieve these purposes, the Comprehensive Plan establishes an extensive set of policies that are organized into a series of citywide and area specific elements. The citywide elements include, among others, the Framework Element, which provides the context for the rest of the Comprehensive Plan, establishes the Plan's guiding principles, and contains the Generalized Policy and Future Land Use maps; and the Land Use Element, which is considered the cornerstone of the Comprehensive Plan as it establishes the basic policies for guiding the physical form of the District and provides direction on a range of development, conservation, and land use compatibility issues.
5. Importantly, it is the Land Use Element that integrates the policies and objectives of all other elements of the Plan, and describes the balancing of priorities that must take place in order to accommodate multiple land uses. For these reasons, the Comprehensive Plan states that the Land Use Element should be given greater weight than the other elements as competing policies in different elements are balanced.
6. As my testimony will establish, the proposed PUD will significantly advance the stated purposes of the Comprehensive Plan by promoting the social, physical, and economic development of the District through the provision of a vibrant new mixed-income community that has been planned and designed in a manner that balances the critical need for increased housing, and in particular affordable housing for low and moderate income families, with the

need for the provision of publicly accessible open space that can be enjoyed by the community, while at the same time exhibiting context sensitive design, increased connectivity, transit-oriented development, and environmental sustainability.

Consistency with the Future Land Use Map

7. With respect to the PUD's consistency with the Future Land Use Map ("FLUM"), the land use designation of the majority of the Subject Property is included in the "Local Public Facilities" category, which the Framework Element describes as "land and facilities occupied and used by the District of Columbia government or other local government agencies, excluding parks and open space. The southwestern portion of the Subject Property is designated as Moderate Density Residential.

8. The Framework Element's "Guidelines for using the Generalized Policy Map and Future Land Use Map" (the "Guidelines") contain guidance on how to analyze the portion of the proposed PUD that is designated as Local Public Facilities on the FLUM, and specifically with respect to what is appropriate for height and density. First, the guidelines specifically state that the FLUM does not show density or intensity on Local Public Facility sites, and that if a future change in use occurs on these sites, such as a school becoming surplus or is redeveloped, the new designations should be comparable in density and intensity to those in the vicinity. As stated in the Applicant's detailed Comprehensive Plan analysis included as Exhibit 35B of the case record, the Commission has previously applied this context-based approach to determining the appropriate PUD zoning designation for properties identified on the FLUM as "Local Public Facilities."

9. The Guidelines further state the following regarding use of the FLUM:

- a. [t]he FLUM is not a zoning map and is intended to be interpreted broadly. While zoning maps are parcel-specific, and establish detailed requirements...the FLUM does not follow parcel boundaries and its categories do not specify allowable uses or dimensional standards.
- b. [t]he densities within any given area on the FLUM reflect all contiguous properties on a block, and the land use categories describe the general character of development in each area, noting the granting of density bonuses (for example, through Planned Unit Developments) may result in heights that exceed the typical ranges cited in the land use category descriptions.
- c. [t]he zoning of any given area should be guided by the FLUM, interpreted in conjunction with the text of the Comprehensive Plan, including the citywide elements and the area elements, as well as approved Small Area Plans.”

10. Taken together, the Subject Property’s FLUM designation, combined with the text of the Comprehensive Plan, have guided the planning and design of the proposed PUD.

11. The Applicant is proposing to rezone the Subject Property from the R-4/C-2-A to R-5-B/C-2-B. The R-5-B and C-2-B zones proposed for the Subject Property are appropriate given the: (i) surrounding FLUM designations and corresponding zone districts, and (ii) nearby PUDs with similar heights and densities.

12. The FLUM primarily designates properties to the immediate north and east of the portion of the Subject Property proposed to be zoned C-2-B as Mixed-Use (Moderate Density Commercial and Medium Density Residential). The properties to the immediate north and west of the proposed R-5-B portion of the Subject Property is designated as Moderate Density Residential.

- a. The corresponding zone districts for the Moderate Density Commercial designation include the requested C-2-B designation.
 - b. The corresponding zone districts for the Medium Density Residential designation, and the Moderate Density Residential designation in some locations, include the requested R-5-B.
13. The proposed heights and densities for the buildings within the PUD are consistent with the development parameters of the C-2-B and R-5-B Districts. Under a PUD, the C-2-B District permits a maximum height of 90 feet and a maximum density of 6.0 FAR. The Applicant proposes to construct the apartment house to 90 feet and 5.8 FAR. Similarly, the R-5-B District permits a maximum height of 60 feet and 3.0 FAR. The Applicant proposes to construct the townhomes to a maximum height of 40 feet and 1.7 FAR, and the senior building to 60 feet and 3.9 FAR, or an average density of 2.8 FAR. The resulting density of the R-5-B portion of the Subject Property, if including the area of the proposed new street, will only be 1.9 FAR.
14. The area surrounding the Subject Property is mixed-use, with a variety of housing types and densities that include both apartment houses and townhomes. As shown on the Development Map and New Development Along Georgia Avenue Sheets of the Architectural Drawings, there are several existing and approved buildings in the immediate vicinity of the Subject Property that have heights within the 72-90 foot range, and densities between 4.5 – 5.95 FAR. The majority of these developments have been approved through the PUD process and have similar surrounding contexts.
15. With respect to number of stories, as stated in the Guidelines, the FLUM is intended to describe the general character of development in a given area, with some buildings being

higher and some being lower than the ranges stated within each land use category description, and that density bonuses provided through the PUD process may also result in heights that exceed the typical ranges cited. Such is the case in the proposed PUD, where as a result of the community's desire to have open space frontage along Georgia Avenue the orientation of the proposed buildings has been rotated and the designed in a manner that steps down towards the west in response to the existing residential to the north and west.

16. The flexible manner in which the FLUM is to be used is also apparent by comparing, for example, the number of stories stated in the Moderate Density Commercial category and the corresponding zone districts. While the FLUM describes buildings in the Moderate Density Commercial category as generally not exceeding five stories, the corresponding zone districts permit building heights of 65 – 90 feet under a PUD. Thus, assuming an average ceiling height of 10 feet, a building containing 7 – 9 stories could typically be achieved through a PUD. Moreover, the language could not reasonably be read to permit 90-foot buildings that are limited to five stories. Thus, the proposed apartment house on the Subject Property will have eight stories, which is consistent with this interpretation, and the massing and articulation of the apartment building has been refined along the north to relate to the surrounding context.

17. Furthermore, this interpretation is also applicable to the Medium Density Residential land use designation which identifies 4-7 story apartment buildings as the predominant use, and also may apply to taller residential buildings surrounded by large areas of permanent open space, while allowing 60 – 75 foot buildings under a PUD. The proposed senior building will have six stories and have a height of 60 feet.

18. The height, number of stories, and density of the proposed PUD is appropriate given the Subject Property's location along a major corridor and its close proximity to Metrorail. The scale, height, and design of this infill project does not overpower the surrounding context. The proposed design orients the higher height and density portion of the project toward the Georgia Avenue commercial corridor, where similarly sized buildings exist or have been approved, and steps down to relate to the existing lower-scale residential towards the north and west. In addition to the lower building heights proposed along the western portion of the site, the scale and density of the project is further reduced through the massing and articulation of the proposed buildings, separation provided by existing and proposed streets, the substantial streetscape improvements that are proposed, and future public park that will be developed.

Consistency with the Generalized Policy Map

19. With respect to the PUD's consistency with the Generalized Policy Map, the eastern portion of the Subject Property is designated as a "Main Street Mixed Use Corridor," and the western portion of the Subject Property is designated a "Neighborhood Conservation Area."

20. As defined by the Framework Element, Main Street Mixed Use Corridors consist of traditional commercial business corridors that are pedestrian-oriented, and consist of older storefronts along the street that oftentimes have upper story residential or office uses. Development or redevelopment occurring within these areas should support transit use and enhance the pedestrian environment."

21. The proposed C-2-B zoning for the eastern portion of the Subject Property is consistent with what is envisioned for Main Street Mixed Use Corridors. The PUD will strengthen the

character of the Georgia Avenue commercial corridor by bringing development up to the street wall, improving the pedestrian experience through active ground floor space and streetscape improvements, further activating the commercial corridor and promoting economic development through upper-story residential uses, and promoting transit use through proximity to transit and a robust TDM plan. The future park space will only serve to further support the ongoing revitalization of the corridor.

22. The proposed map amendment to the R-5-B District and the corresponding townhouse and senior building residential development on the western portion of the Subject Property is consistent with the guiding philosophy of Neighborhood Conservation Areas, which seeks to conserve and enhance established neighborhoods by maintaining the diversity of land uses and building types in these areas, and ensuring that new development and alterations are compatible with the area's existing scale and character, with densities being guided by the FLUM.

23. The western portion of the Subject Property will be developed with lower-scale residential uses that respect the neighborhood's existing architectural character and scale. The southwestern-most portion of the Subject Property will be developed with corresponding new row dwellings, built to a maximum height of 40 feet and setback from the existing dwellings with a 15-foot rear yard. The row dwellings will front onto the new street, which will also form the eastern boundary of a complete block of row dwellings to the west.

24. The northwestern portion of the Subject Property will be developed with the 60-foot senior building. The senior building will be separated from the closest existing row dwellings by the new street, sidewalks, and landscaping, such that approximately 60 linear feet is provided

between the senior building and the closest row dwellings. The senior building mimics many other apartment houses that have been built as infill developments within the surrounding area. Thus, the proposed development plan maintains the existing scale and character of the surrounding neighborhood by providing both row dwellings and a medium-density apartment house, both of which exist throughout the area.

Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan Guiding Principles and the Policies and Objectives of the Citywide and Mid-City Elements

25. As set forth in the Applicant’s initial submission, and in the Office of Planning’s reports, the PUD is consistent with many of the guiding principles of the Comprehensive Plan relating to managing growth and change, creating successful neighborhoods, and increasing access to education, and in particular the principle addressing the importance of taking advantage of redevelopment and infill opportunities along corridors near transit stations to reinvigorate and enhance neighborhoods in a way that is sensitive to neighborhood context.

26. The Applicant and the Office of Planning have already provided the Commission with an exhaustive analysis of the many Comprehensive Plan policies and objectives that are advanced by the proposed PUD ranging from:

- a. land use policies that promote infill development on large sites with a range of uses, transit oriented development, and context sensitive design and neighborhood beautification;
- b. transportation policies that also promote transit oriented development, improved connectivity, and improvements to pedestrian and bicycle facilities;
- c. environmental policies that promote streetscape enhancement, increased tree canopy, energy efficiency, and sustainable storm water management;

- d. housing policies that promote private sector support in addressing the critical need for more affordable housing, mixed-income development and neighborhoods; and advancement of District housing initiatives such as the New Communities Initiative, and;
- e. MidCity area policies that promote the protection of affordable housing in this particular area of the city, and the continued revitalization of the Lower Georgia Avenue corridor.

Conclusion

27. Based on the forgoing testimony, I believe that the proposed PUD and related map amendment is not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan, including the Subject Property's land use designation on the FLUM, and Mixed Use Main Street Corridor designation on the Generalized Policy Map.

28. The proposed height and density of the project is consistent with that which is considered appropriate within the FLUM designations of adjacent properties, and consistent with corresponding zone districts and densities permitted in the vicinity of the Subject Property. In addition, the height and density of the proposed PUD is consistent with the range of heights and densities that have been approved in other PUDs along the Georgia Avenue corridor and in close proximity to the Subject Property that have similar surrounding contexts.

29. As previously stated, the Land Use Element is described as the cornerstone of the Comprehensive Plan, and in fact the Plan specifically states that "because the Land Use Element integrates the policies and objectives of all other District Elements, it should be given greater weight than the other elements as competing policies in different elements are balanced.

30. The Land Use Element specifically addresses the need to balance multiple land uses within the boundaries of the District, and in the redevelopment of large infill sites. Specifically, the Land Use Element provides that land use policies “must ensure that all neighborhoods have adequate access to commercial services, parks, educational and cultural facilities, and sufficient housing opportunities while protecting their rich historic and cultural legacies.” Furthermore, there are multiple policies in the Land Use Element that specifically promote the reuse of large, publicly-owned sites to address multiple competing demands, including the creation of housing and provision of green space, and the importance of incorporating uses that provide public benefit as part of the redevelopment of large, District-owned sites, including affordable housing and new parks and open spaces.

31. The proposed PUD is effective at balancing the dual priorities of providing housing, including affordable housing, and preserving open space, all in a manner that is context sensitive, increases connectivity and promotes use of transit, and improves the environmental sustainability of the Subject Property.