



# Advisory Neighborhood Commission 5E

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Zoning Commission  
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*via email*

## Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner Single Member District 5E03 Written Testimony for ZC 17-09

As the Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner for Single Member District (SMD) 5E03, I am submitting this testimony in support of ZC Case 17-09, Eckington Park (3581//0015). As the Commissioner for the SMD where this development is proposed, I, along with the Eckington Civic Association, have led the negotiations with the developers on behalf of the community for this project. The testimony below reflective of the views of both myself and many of my constituents who are most affected by the project. This letter is not intended to represent the views of the ANC 5E Commission, which has separately submitted its report (Form 129) on this application.

### History of Engagement with the Community

I have had a great working relationship with the developers of the proposed Eckington Park project for over a year. I first met with Foulger-Pratt representatives in December 2016, and have met with them on numerous occasions since. I have facilitated their engagement with the community through a variety of venues, including three presentations at Eckington Civic Association (ECA) public meetings, four presentations at ANC 5E public meetings, as well as separate discussions with the ECA’s Development Committee and participation at our Fall Festival in October, which was attended by over 600 residents attended. I found the dialogue to be positive and collaborative. Foulger-Pratt has made it clear they are making a long-term commitment to the community both by declaring their intention to manage this property over the long term, and in their recent acquisition of other properties in the neighborhood.

### Community Concerns

Throughout the course of these engagements, the community has identified several concerns. While no project is perfect, it was the general consensus of the residents participating in through engagement with the developer we were able to resolve the major issues. These included:

- Increased Traffic—Traffic was the primary concern raised by residents. Because the Eckington Park project is adjacent to the train tracks, any traffic going to and from this project will have to use the

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already disastrous intersection at New York and Florida Avenues or cut through residential streets. Obviously, it is not incumbent upon the developer to resolve the much larger traffic issues (i.e. Dave Thomas Circle). However, the developer did offer several measures to encourage future building residents to seek alternate forms of transportation. The developer also agreed to fund traffic calming measures at Harry Thomas Way and Eckington Place, which will be important as there are likely to be additional pedestrians and cyclists transiting through that intersection when the new park is open.

- Traffic Pattern on R Street—The 300 block of R Street has long been a dangerous area. It is one of the primary entrances to the Fort Myer Construction Company as well as the Metropolitan Branch Trail (MBT), meaning that one small block serves as a critical node for construction trucks, cyclists from the MBT, and local residents. Unfortunately, it is the only logical place to locate the loading dock and parking garage entrance for Eckington Park, which will exacerbate the existing conditions. Foulger-Pratt appreciates this concern, and has committed to providing ample safety measures during construction, including flaggers to conduct traffic and ensure that cyclists are still able to use that route in their daily commutes. The community anticipates that this will be an evolving issue and looks forward to continuing working with the DC Department of Transportation, the developer, and others to ensure that area can be transited safely by all.
- Affordable Housing—There has been an explosion of construction in the Eckington and NoMa areas, and in my SMD specifically. In addition to Eckington Park, there will be another 650+ units constructed as part of the JBG Smith/Boundary Companies Eckington Yards project, and another 300-600 more planned in the latter phases of MRP’s Washington Gateway. Many of the current and proposed units of these buildings are responding to current market demands by focusing on studio and one bedroom units. However, many in Eckington have long been concerned about the relative lack of larger, family-sized units offered at affordable rates. Starting with my initial conversation, I indicated it was important to me and the community that the set-aside for Inclusionary Zoning be skewed towards 2 and 3 bedroom units so that some of the families in the neighborhood who are feeling the crunch of rising housing prices would have a chance of staying in the neighborhood by entering the IZ lottery. Foulger-Pratt was responsive to this request, and I am excited that as a result we will be bringing more affordable, family-sized units to the neighborhood.
- Height and Massing of the Structure—One concern raised early on with the project was the height of the building, particularly as there are single family townhomes to the west and north of this project. While personally I will always wish for smaller buildings, I appreciate Foulger-Pratt’s efforts to set back many of the roof elements and remain conscious of the height as it relates to other buildings in the area.

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- Design—Some residents and ANC Commissioners had concerns with initial drawings of the project, particularly on the south side of the building. The architects have heard these concerns, and we found the current design to be much improved and will blend better with the rest of the neighborhood.
- Parking—Residents appreciated the addition of a provision in Foulger-Pratt’s residential leases to restrict its tenants from attaining residential parking permits, and an agreement to annually coordinate with the Department of Motor Vehicles to determine if any residents are violation of that provision.

## Community Benefits

The Development Committee of the Eckington Civic Association spearheaded the effort to conduct identify items for the Community Benefits package. Starting in early 2017, they conducted outreach to solicit ideas for the CBA, which became a survey that was sent broadly to the community asking for residents to prioritize among nineteen different potential investment areas. The most desired community benefits included:

1. Amenities for the new public park
2. Plant new trees or relocate existing trees
3. Affordable housing
4. Adjusting traffic patterns
5. Investment in Harry Thomas Rec Center
6. Adjusting building design to fit neighborhood in terms of scale, massing, and height
7. Donation for new park upkeep
8. Car and bike sharing and ample bike racks
9. No residential parking permits
10. Transportation study for all of Eckington

Based on these results, the ECA and developers discussed several items which could be funded as part of the CBA:

- Amenities to the New Park—Over the last year and a half, Eckington residents have participated in the NoMA Parks Foundation’s public design process, and are really excited about the amenities coming to the area. Items of particular interest to the Eckington residents include wide, open spaces, children’s play areas, a public restroom, and a dog park. Because of its location adjacent to the park, it was logical that the developers would make a significant contribution to the park itself, and residents are excited

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about what is going to come. A minority of residents have expressed concern that a large sum of the Community Benefits are devoted to the park, and would have liked to see those monies directed elsewhere.

- Improvements to the Metropolitan Branch Trail—The “z-curve” at R Street as always been one of the most dangerous sections of the Metropolitan Branch Trail, both because of blind corners difficult for cyclists and pedestrians to navigate, but also because there has been a history of criminal activity in the area. Residents are very excited about Foulger-Pratt’s commitment to fixing this long-running problem by deeding a significant portion of their parcel to the park and paying for improvements in design to create a softer “s-curve.”
- Affordable Housing Outreach, Training, and Education—In addition to Foulger-Pratt’s commitment to set aside additional 2 and 3 bedroom units are part of the Inclusionary Zoning process, the Eckington Civic Association identified a need to preserve, wherever possible, our existing affordable housing stock. The Development Committee met with several community-based organization to identify ways that we can provide outreach, training, and education for current residents who are at risk of losing their homes. Through this effort, the ECA, MANNA, Inc., and the Latino Economic Development Center put together a proposal to provide a range of programming to help our residents. This will include a series of workshops in Eckington on tenant rights and responsibilities, housing condition standards, credit counseling, apartment locating, and other tenant services. In addition, LEDC will duplicate a series of workshops it ran in Edgewood and Brookland for tenants of 4-unit buildings which are particularly at risk as developers convert these buildings into high-priced condominiums. There will also be training provided for residents who wish to become home owners and assistance in leveraging DC housing programs, including the Home Purchase Assistance Program, DC Open Doors, Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act rights, and Inclusionary Zoning. Foulger-Pratt agreed to fund this \$40,000 effort, and if approved, the ECA will develop a clear statement of work with measurable objectives to meet any conditions imposed by the Zoning Commission.
- Equipment Purchases for Neighborhood Schools and the Recreation Center—During a December 2, 2017, Committee of the Whole meeting with Folger Pratt, the ANC expressed a desire to see additional funding for local schools and the Harry Thomas Recreation Center as part of the CBA. During the following week, the schools and Recreation Center identified their priority funding items, including technology purchases and upgrades to existing facilities. Foulger-Pratt identified an additional \$60,000 to fund these initiatives. However, ANC 5E has not deemed this sufficient and is requesting additional funding.

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While no project is perfect, from my perspective, the engagement with Folger Pratt on its Eckington Park application has been a positive and collaborative process. I appreciate the efforts Foulger-Pratt has taken to respond to the feedback of the community and look forward to continuing to work with them in the future.

Sincerely,

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