

Martin R. Welles
917 6th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024
martinwelles@lawyer.com
(202) 677-1029

Public Testimony
Before
DC Zoning Commission

PUD CASE NO. 17-21
501 I Street, SW

March 28, 2019
6:30 p.m.

Martin R. Welles
917 6th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024
martinwelles@lawyer.com
(202) 677-1029

Prepared March 28, 2019

Good Evening Commissioners:

My name is Martin Welles and I am a 20 year resident of Southwest, DC – living in several places within about 5 blocks of 501 I Street, SW. I currently own property about 5 blocks away which I rent out on a long term basis. I live at Waterside Townhomes and my house is about 500 feet from the project – although the complex where I live is diagonally across the street – about 100 feet.

My family spent 8 years at Amidon-Bowen Elementary School and they are now in middle school. During my eight years at Amidon-Bowen, I raised more than \$300,000 for the Amidon PTO and school. I was successful in persuading the DC government to spend approximately \$17 million rebuilding the school. I also serve on the Jefferson Middle School School Improvement Team. I successfully persuade the DC Government to spend \$75 million to renovate the middle school. The renovation is currently underway.

Hopefully I can persuade this panel to view the PUD with a critical eye toward zoning purity and deny the zoning change.

No Commercial Activity On Eye (I) Street, SW

For many years, the ANC and residents of Southwest have sought to develop vibrant commercial corridors on Maine Ave., 4th Street, SW, and M Street. Eye Street, SW from 7th Street to South Capitol Street boasts 6 or 7 parks in the 1 mile stretch. It has churches, schools, townhomes, apartments and public housing – but no commercial enterprises. There are no office buildings, retail locations, restaurants, or services on I Street. Nor should there be.

We have vacant office spaces and empty lots on 4th Street, M Street, and Maine Ave. That is where zoning should direct offices workers, retail, and services. We need them there, we want them there. We need to concentrate our commercial areas for the synergies that come with office workers and for the convenience of the shopper. With a

Martin R. Welles
917 6th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024
martinwelles@lawyer.com
(202) 677-1029

concentrated commercial sector, retail will thrive, restaurants will be full and office workers will be clustered in office buildings.

If the Zoning Commission grants a zoning change to include commercial activities, then a beach head will be established and other projects currently slated or anticipated along I Street such as at 400 I Street, and 200 I Street, will also have an argument to change their zoning to commercial. This would not be fair to the developers who build within their zoning constructs, nor would it be fair to divert potential tenants away from the commercial zones. We want those commercial spaces to fill up – right now there are vacancies.

A Solution

Right now, PN Hoffman is developing a vacant lot at 1000 4th Street, SW – right next to CVS. This has the desired zoning for commercial and residential. PN Hoffman plans to build a theater in this space, but does not have a tenant. Why doesn't Erkilitian – the developers of 501 I Street, SW talk with PN Hoffman to see if they can work out a deal where Shakespeare's administrative offices can in PN Hoffman's building. PN Hoffman needs a tenant – especially a theater tenant, and Shakespeare needs a place to go. No zoning change required.

5 Story Dormitory Building – on a 38' foot wide lot

The developers plan for a 58 unit dormitory which will house actors for 10 months of the year is just the wrong building for the narrow lot. In order to build this tall, skinny building, they need a variance from setbacks and will build right up to the property line. This is just bad architecture and bad development. There is a school playground right there that is used from 8:00 a.m. in the morning until 9:00 p.m. at night.

Actors work late and children wake early. Generations of problems will be created by this design. If the administrative offices were moved to the theater space on 4th Street, then the dormitory could be folded into the residential design and the proposed space could be used as a parking lot – which is sorely needed.

Martin R. Welles
917 6th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024
martinwelles@lawyer.com
(202) 677-1029

Light Pole – Boundary Dispute

On the North Fence Line of the playground is a light pole that has been in place for 20-30 years. Although the developer states they measured their property and it is their belief that the light pole rests on their property. There are 3 ways that light pole got there – one – the light pole rests on school property; two – the light pole was placed on 501 I Street property with permission of the previous owner, or three, the light pole was improperly placed on 501 I Street without permission. In two out of the three scenarios, there is an argument for adverse possession. However, when viewing pictures, one could reasonably conclude that the light pole rests on school property because of its proximity to the fence. The developer admits that there is not one fence line that is directly on the property line. The developer admits that one fence sits 16' off the property line and two feet (or something) off another property line. But the one fence measuring 200 feet in length is somehow directly on the property line.

Requests

1. Deny the request to change zoning form R-3 to MU-4.
2. Require developer to pay for a survey of the entire contiguous area and have DGS select the surveyor.
3. Require developer to meet with PN Hoffman about establishing a relationship for the 4th Street.



Looking EAST – From Amidon Fence



Looking West – From Amidon Fence



Looking North while standing on Playground



Looking North from West Fence Line



Looking North from I Street



**Looking East while on Soccer Field – Green Junction box on two story Amidon Building controls light pole
– 6:00 p.m. June/July**