

FIRST RISING MT. ZION BAPTIST CHURCH

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“84 Years of Walking By Faith”

Rev. Oran W. Young, Pastor

Deacon Harold J. Gilliard, Chairman
BOARD OF DEACONS MINISTRY
Sister Arlene Williams
CHURCH CLERK

Trustee John Holland, Chairman
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MINISTRY
Sister Darleen Perry
TREASURER

March 23, 2020

Dear Madam/Sirs:

MidCity Development has been at the forefront of affordable housing for over fifty years and Miles Memorial CME, First Rising Mt. Zion Baptist Church and the community are willing to partner with MidCity to develop a “good neighbor policy” with a long-term approach for their integration into the community. We have expressed this to MidCity and are still hopeful.

We have received two proposals from MidCity that doesn’t think outside the box, they just added more things to the box. MidCity considers their proposals comprehensive but fall way short of meeting the long term needs of the churches and a better affordability posture in the community.

On February 26th, MidCity sent a proposal via email. What differed from their proposal offered prior to the February 24th Zoning Commission meeting was a five-year plan, instead of 2 years, for offsite parking spaces, a \$35,000 cash donation to each church for vans, Uber, Lyft, etc., and a job fair prior to construction.

Miles and First Rising countered MidCity’s proposal on March 13th with the request for MidCity to add to their proposal the return of the sixty-three tenants displaced/relocated at the rate when they left, by increasing the affordable housing units to 30%, with those units to be priced at 20% of AMI. We also requested MidCity to add 100 permanent onsite parking spaces to be used by the churches and the community. We believed this counter would address those 63 tenants who had to vacate the current facility, it addresses the affordable housing shortage in a more dynamic way and will help alleviate the probability of parking shortages.

Consequently, MidCity representatives, leaders from the faith community, the Chair of our Deacon’s Ministry, our Building Manager, Rev. Andujo and myself met on March 17th to hear MidCity’s thinking on our proposal. It became apparent MidCity had not given serious consideration to our request. They came with a legal pad to take notes of the conversations, implying they had not done much to crunch the numbers. There was a lot of explaining away, citing city regulations and an unwillingness to make the sacrifice to meet us in between or move the needle towards a good neighbor policy. We asked they seek information on a variance to increase the parking. They agreed to take it back to their team and look into it.

On March 18th, MidCity sent a counter proposal extending the 5-year plan to become a 10-year plan to handle short term parking with no consideration for adjustments in their housing stance and explained away the recommended variance.

On March 20th, we sent another counter proposal to MidCity requesting they add to their 10-year plan a compromise, which consist of permanent usage by the churches of 40 of the 100 proposed onsite parking spaces, the permanent usage of 12 spaces across the street from First Rising, at another Washington Apartments complex, the development of 10 to 12 additional space to the left of those spaces, for MidCity to seek a DC Housing Authority program that would subsidize 22% of affordable housing at 20% of AMI to go along with their 12% of affordable housing proposal.

On March 21st, we receive a follow up to our counter with more explaining away and maintenance of their stance to offer the 10-year plan with pre-construction parking onsite, parking during construction offsite, \$35,000 for each church, parking for the pastors and a job fair. In our view, MidCity's proposal would just extend the evitable; it doesn't address any of the housing issues at all, it assumes they will have no impact on parking after 10 years and it doesn't address the tenants that had to vacate the premises to make room for the proposed facility.

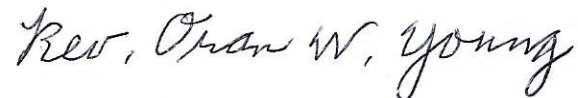
Plus, it is short sighted. If MidCity is going to charge a fee for the parking spaces, where are the guest of the tenants going to park? Plus, in 10 years everything is going to change; there will be marriages, tenants having babies, etc. and create a need for cars, not to mention it is going to take a while for people to trust public transportation due to the coronavirus. Lastly, MidCity's response talked about developing surface parking onsite, when our last request was developing offsite parking in addition to usage of onsite parking. This way MidCity will not intrude on our right to worship. Listening and refusing to hear us will hinder the process of developing a model for others to follow.

Up to this point, there has been no compromise coming from MidCity, they have allowed no room for concessions. Because of the submission deadline for this letter, we are constrained to make additional offers to MidCity, responses from MidCity or receive points of clarity. We want to let them know we are aware of another developer who is willing to build at the 30% of affordable housing with a range of affordable percentages of AMI. It seems if it will work for one developer, it should work for MidCity.

We have been informed by MidCity the Zoning Commission meeting scheduled for March 30th has been postponed but last we looked, it was still posted on your website. Please let us know if the date has been rescheduled so we will know how much time we have to try and partner with MidCity to help them think outside the box, establish a good neighbor policy that will work to be a good fit with the community and churches. The faith community is waiting to see if we are able to develop this partnership which can be a model for other developments going forward.

We send this letter with our prayers for your favorable consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rev. Oran W. Young". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Rev. Oran W. Young