



Where DC Comes Together

April 1, 2021

ANTHONY HOOD
CHAIRMAN
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA ZONING COMMISSION
441 4TH ST NW STE 210S
WASHINGTON DC 20001

Dear Chairman Hood:

Regarding ZC Case No. 20-08, Howard University - 2020-2030 Central Campus Plan 2731 Georgia Ave. NW (Sq. 0330, Lot 800; Sq. 2872, Lots 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 217, 275, 803, 820, 822, 823, & 824; Sq. 2873, Lots 1109 & 1110; Sq. 2877, Lots 930 & 933; Sq. 2882, Lots 950, 951, 952, 953, & 1037; Sq. 2885, Lot 889; Sq. 3055, Lots 15 & 821; Sq. 3057, Lot 92; Sq. 3058, Lots 834 & 835; Sq. 3060, Lots 41, 830 & 839; Sq. 3063, Lot 801; Sq. 3064, Lots 44, 45, 826 & 837; Sq. 3065, Lots 33, 36, 829, 830, 831 & 0833; Sq. 3068, Lots 809 & 810; Sq. 3069, Lots 65 & 66; Sq. 3072, Lots 52 & 818; Sq. 3074, Lot 11; Sq. 3075, Lot 807; Sq. 3080, Lot 73; and Sq. 3094, Lot 800):

Shaw Main Streets supports the goals and objectives of the Howard University 2020-2030 Campus Plan. The plan proposes to bring more students to the campus by adding new residence halls, expanding the customer base for the retail businesses that our organization recruits and supports. The retention or creation of replacement greenspace wherever possible helps to balance the increased density proposed for the campus. The replacement of the current hospital and redevelopment of the current hospital site with mixed use development will support the continued revitalization of our service area, bringing new retail opportunities, residential and office space, and daytime foot traffic to the area.

We do have two areas of concern.

The proposed reduction in the amount of on campus vehicular parking is troubling. At present, it can be very difficult to find parking on and immediately adjacent to the campus when visitors seek to attend events and activities there. Once the surface parking lots on the west side of Georgia Avenue have been redeveloped, parking near the campus will become even more difficult. Despite the trend by some consumers to use bicycles and car sharing services, there are a significant number of customers who will not patronize businesses to which they cannot drive. Shaw Main Streets has found that the success of retail businesses in our service area is directly tied to the availability of public parking. Where such parking is in more limited supply, retailers suffer and are more likely to fail. Where parking is more available, our businesses thrive and expand. Intentionally reducing the availability of parking where retail demand calls for increasing parking is counter to the incorporation of retail into plans for the revitalization of Georgia Avenue and jeopardizes the revenue generation from such redevelopment that is needed in order to support the implementation of the campus plan. If on campus parking is to be reduced, then below grade parking must be maximized in the development projects that will be undertaken on the west side of Georgia Avenue between V Street and Barry place, NW.

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As a historic preservation organization, we applaud and endorse the proposed expansion of the Howard University Historic District in order to ensure the preservation of many notable buildings that have significant historic importance or are the works of recognized master architects. We do, however, have concerns about some of the proposed unnecessary demolition of buildings that should be contributing structures to the expanded historic district, and urge the retention of as much original fabric where significant additions are proposed to buildings deserving of protection.

Of particular concern is the proposed demolition of several historic stables adjacent to the original Freedmen's Hospital. These stables are part of an architectural ensemble that collectively should be one of the two most important landmarks within the new historic district. The stables should be retained and incorporated, along with the main Freedmen's Hospital building, into the new complex on the site. With modest setbacks, these stables could be incorporated into the new building, enhancing the overall structure and allowing the historic hospital complex to be preserved in its entirety and allowing the full complex to be interpreted and appreciated.

As much historic fabric of Wonder Plaza, 2301 Georgia Avenue, NW as possible should likewise be retained. There are few remaining buildings from the era when light industry was an important part of Shaw's commercial activity. Wonder Plaza is an important example of industrial architecture in the neighborhood. There are several outstanding examples in Shaw Main Streets' service area of the incorporation of historic commercial buildings into 21st century mixed use developments. These include the O Street Market, part of City Market at O, 1400 7th Street, NW; The Wonder Bread Factory, 641 S Street, NW, and the buildings on the 1000 block of 7th Street, NW and 600 blocks of New York Avenue and L Street, NW that are now part of 655 New York Avenue, to name but a few. The historic fabric at Wonder Plaza should likewise be incorporated in its entirety or with as little demolition as possible, and with appropriate setbacks, into the expanded development needed to accommodate Howard University's plans.

The retention and incorporation of this historic fabric into the proposed redeveloped buildings will enhance each of these buildings and help to maintain the historic character of the streetscapes in the campus plan footprint.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the 2020-2030 Howard University Campus Plan.

Sincerely,



Gretchen B. Wharton
Chair, Board of Directors
Shaw Main Streets, Inc.



Alexander M. Padro
Executive Director
Shaw Main Streets, Inc.