



Southwest / Navy Yard / Buzzard Point
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6D

1101 Fourth Street, SW
Suite W 130
Washington, DC 20024
202.554.1795
Email: 6d@anc.dc.gov
Website: www.anc6d.org

November 10, 2020

Anthony Hood, Chairman
Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia
441 4th Street, NW, S200
Washington, DC 20001

OFFICERS

Chairperson
Gail Fast

Vice Chairperson
Andy Litsky

Secretary
Edward Daniels

Treasurer
Ron Collins

Submitted via IZIS

With a copy emailed to DCOZ-ZCSubmissions@dc.gov

**ANC 6D Response to Supplemental Pre-Hearing Statement
Z.C. CASE NO. 20-14, 5 M Street SW Design Review**

Dear Chairman Hood and Members of the Zoning Commission,

COMMISSIONERS

SMD 1 *Gail Fast*
SMD 2 *vacant*
SMD 3 *Ronald Collins*
SMD 4 *Andy Litsky*
SMD 5 *Fredrica Kramer*
SMD 6 *Rhonda Hamilton*
SMD 7 *Edward Daniels*

At a regularly scheduled and properly noticed special meeting on October 27, 2020, with a quorum present, a quorum being four Commissioners, Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 6D voted 5-0-0 to oppose ZC Case No. 20-14, a design review case located in the heart of ANC 6D. This was ANC 6D's second opposition vote on this project, and **we urge the Commission to provide our conclusions on this case great weight under law.**

As we have said before, the 5M project sits at the confluence of cultures and communities in ANC 6D. Though just across South Capitol from the rapidly changing Navy Yard neighborhood, the 5M site is a world away and firmly rooted in residential Southwest, a community with a strong tradition of inclusiveness, diversity, and tolerance. Located at South Capitol and M—arguably the two most important streets in our ANC—**this site presents the extraordinary opportunity to create a sense of place and serve as a gateway to Southwest.**

Following the directive of the Zoning Commission, ANC 6D met with the Applicant to discuss our concerns regarding the project and hoped, after our two meetings, to see revamped renderings that would show a building that both ANC 6D and the Applicant could be proud of. Unfortunately, we still feel the building is architecturally heavy-handed, domineering and unwelcoming.

In the revised renderings, ANC 6D was pleased to see that the Applicant had replaced the three-story grid on So. Capitol St with two-stories and added balconies and terraces that eliminated the “stacked tissue boxes” seen in the first iteration. ANC 6D is in agreement that the two-story grid softens the building design however ANC 6D repeatedly requested that the Applicant entertain the idea of taking the concrete framing and using it as an exoskeleton to “wrap” the entire project. By extending the exoskeleton around all three buildings, the Applicant would have addressed one of ANC 6D’s fundamental criticism of the project -- the lack of continuity to the streetscape.

On the flip side, ANC 6D feels the revised tilt-back windows create an even fatter and heavier design. The same can be said for the balconies on the North elevation and the Southwest corner (L and Half Streets) which look like hanging inside-out pockets and give the appearance of extending into public space. The balconies in the Applicant’s original submission were more aligned with balconies seen throughout Southwest. The Applicant should also rethink the maisonette entry stairs that still look and feel industrial, a theme ANC 6D has repeatedly emphasized is not consistent with the character of Southwest.

Where the Applicant has really squandered an opportunity is on M Street. ANC 6D has repeatedly discussed tiering the building on M Street as it makes it way into Southwest. The Applicant continually has interpreted tiering to mean set back, which it is not. We have argued that tiering the building, like seats in an amphitheater, would create a welcoming nod to the sanitary homes across the street. Since the Applicant is only required to use a minimum of 60% of the street wall to be constructed on the set back line, use the remaining 40% and tier the building starting at So. Cap and M Streets and ending at the Northwest corner on Half. This would create a welcoming nod to the sanitary homes across the street while creating a more cohesive project.

ANC 6D is still troubled by the amorphous proposal for the parking spaces in the building. The Applicant will be providing 185 parking spaces for residents with an additional 130 spaces reserved for its retail tenant. While the Applicant has indicated to the ANC that it will actively be seeking a grocer to fill the retail space, ANC 6D is concerned that the site cannot sustain the 24/7 commotion of truck traffic to stock it. With a general industry ratio of six spaces to every 1,000 feet for a grocery store, ANC 6D is not convinced that the retail square footage warrants the number of spaces they hope to get approved? More importantly, while the Applicant has indicated that it is “absolutely not” going to create a commercial parking lot if they do not secure the grocer, ANC 6D will definitely want in the Zoning order wording that restricts the Applicant from operating or leasing out any portion of the parking lot to a PMI or any other parking company to serve anything other than that which ends up as their retail tenant(s).

Finally, ANC 6D is concerned about the proposed addition of units on L St that now extend over the private drive directly adjacent to the lot owned by the Ruben Company. In meetings with the Applicant, we reiterated numerous times our concerns regarding at-risk windows, and/or a lack of sunlight and air for those residents living in those units. We are convinced they were added at the last minute in an effort to eke out a few more market-rate units in this already enormous project. More importantly, nowhere in Southwest is the entrance to a parking and loading area designed this way, again creating a design feature that is not synomous with Southwest. ANC 6D was not surprised when we saw the Ruben Company’s letter of opposition appear in the case file and their concerns aligned with ours.

In closing, our residents are steadfast in their desire to maintain the economic and racial diversity that makes Southwest so strong and vibrant. ANC 6D wants to be clear regarding the Applicant’s response to

the affordable housing issue. They are still positioned, based upon their penthouse habitable space, to provide only one (1) unit of affordable housing. The remaining 19 units they are proffering will be workforce housing. While their total contribution to the District of Columbia's housing needs has almost doubled; boasting that 2.6% is a lofty offer is shameful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gail Fast".

Gail Fast

Chair, ANC 6D

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