

June 26, 2023, Zoning Hearing on 1617 U St, NW and 1620 V St, NW
Statement of Ronnie J. Kweller
1925 16th Street, NW

- Thank you for the opportunity to state my strong objections to rezoning and privatization of the 2 acres of public land at 1617 U and 1620 V Sts., NW, currently housing a police station and a firehouse – buildings valued at 16.5 million dollars and, with the land, a whopping 32 million dollars.
- As a 35-year resident owner at the Tiffany Condominium on 16th Street, just south of U St, and a member of the Dupont Circle Citizens Association, I join other DCCA members and neighbors in unequivocally opposing the rezoning of those properties to MU-10. A 100-foot building is clearly incompatible with the existing low-rise homes in the adjacent historic districts.
- None of the buildings abutting the police and fire station site are zoned MU-10 or any other designation allowing buildings that high. The existing homes would literally be overshadowed by such a structure, depriving residents of sunlight.
- Most important, public land should not be put into private hands, whether by outright sale or a 99-year lease. Let's not repeat the mistakes made when the West End fire station was re-developed 12 years ago.
- With falling commercial property tax revenues and other post-pandemic tax losses, DC literally cannot afford to give away public assets for a pittance.
- I strongly support DCCA's resolution stating: "***The entire 2-acre site should remain public for public uses and to meet public needs.***"
- First and foremost, public needs include construction of new MPD and DCFD stations, affordable and/or low-income housing with support services, a public library and a community center.
- It's disgraceful that instead, our elected officials propose and support plans that enrich private developers of luxury housing, causing rents to spiral in neighborhood after neighborhood and displacing long-time – but not wealthy – residents.
- Further, rumor has it that the police station, once displaced by the reconstruction, might not be rebuilt. While I cannot independently confirm this, I am trusting the long-time neighborhood activist who brought the problem to my attention. We need our police station for rapid response to the surging violent crime in our area.
- I urge the Zoning Board to reject any land deeds or long-term leasing to private interests and to support community-driven, transparent planning. It's unacceptable that so far, details on this project have been held back, there are no impact studies and affected residents have not been engaged in discussions of a long-term vision for this valuable public land.