

12/16/2024

Testimony of Larry Handerhan
Commissioner, ANC 1B01 – LeDroit Park
District of Columbia Zoning Commission
ZC Case No. 24-01 – Howard University Map Amendment
https://app.dcoz.dc.gov/Home/ViewCase?case_id=24-01

Dear Zoning Commission members –

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Commission today. My name is Larry Handerhan and I am ANC Commissioner for 1B01 which covers LeDroit Park. I am here to testify in enthusiastic support of the map amendment as proposed in Case No. 24-01.

For context, my Single Member District abuts the southern border as well as approximately 20% of the eastern border of the property in question – notably, it encompasses the least dense and only RF-1 zones directly adjacent to the property. On a personal note, I am also an immediate neighbor, residing within 200 feet of the southern property lines.

I will speak to my support of the upzoning contemplated in the map amendment in three areas:

1. Appropriateness of upzoning;
2. Benefit of upzoning; and
3. Comprehensiveness of public engagement.

Appropriateness of upzoning

I'll start with the first and most obvious – this upzoning proposal is consistent with Comprehensive Plan and will help ensure consistency with the property's designation in the Future Land Use Map (or FLUM). It will increase density in a transit-accessible, mixed-use corridor of the city.

Benefit of upzoning

Moving on, the benefits of this density are numerous: it will provide opportunities to add much needed multifamily housing, including affordable housing, so that the area is accessible to more Washingtonians. There are no current residents being displaced by this zoning or the planned future use – and in that way, is consistent with equity and inclusivity goals of the District. It will also enable stronger connection between the North Shaw and the Georgia Ave corridors. All of these outcomes benefit all neighbors and are easier to maximize with high density instead of medium density.

Comprehensiveness of public engagement

When it comes to public engagement, during my four years as a Commissioner in the U Street corridor, I have seen similar efforts to add density fail to adequately address public sentiment, regardless of intentions. That is not the case here. The applicant Howard University has undergone months of public engagement with the LeDroit Park community and neighboring ANCs to address possible implications of this development, both at the margins of the site and regarding broader issues such as vehicle access. We have a MOA on record that – while not perfect, has made significant strides towards a future state that is good for all parties. Because of this work, the map amendment was endorsed by the LeDroit Park Civic Association and ANC 1B, who voted unanimously in support at our November 2024 meeting. I hope this serves as a future model for engagement. As a side bar, I also hope that in the future, more engagement

can be done around the FLUM changes – the majority of the community was not tracking those decisions at the time which has undermined community trust in the ensuing years.

Concerns with two elements of DDOT Report

I do want to briefly highlight my concerns with, and strong opposition to, two portions of the DDOT report in this case, specifically:

1. DDOT's required closure of existing curb cuts on Georgia Ave and unwillingness to support future curb cuts on Georgia Ave; and
1. DDOT's expectation that all loading, trash pick-up, and vehicle parking will take place from alleys or internal streets.

I have been in contact with DDOT leadership and they shared that this is pro forma standard language that will get addressed in the design phase. However, taken at face value these positions would undermine all the advantageous uses of the site, and all the community work done to mitigate anticipated challenges. If support for this upzoning was contingent on DDOT's advice, which I don't believe it is, it would not have my or community support due to the adverse effect on traffic flow and hospital demonstration.

Considerations for the site moving forward

In closing, I want to note that we look forward to continuing to work with the District and Howard on development of the site to address possible impact to LeDroit Park, most notably:

1. Providing adequate mitigation regarding noise, lights, and traffic flow associated with the placement of the new emergency room adjacent to rowhouses; and
2. Implementing an adequate transition zone between all new MU-9 and MU-10 development and existing RF-1 development; and
3. As noted above, ensuring primary access from Georgia Ave for hospital uses and traffic flow related to the residential buildings.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any follow up questions, I can be reached at the contact information below.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Larry Handerman', with a stylized, flowing script.

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