

To: zcsubmissions@dc.gov

Subject: Letter in opposition to **ZC No. 24-15**

Dear DC Zoning Commission,

My name is **Guy Durant** and I am a “**200 Footer**” and my house located at **3410 10th Street, NE** is one of the homes that will be the most negatively impacted among neighboring Brookland homes next to the proposed PUD Application for 901 Monroe Street, NE. **ZC No. 24-15.**

I oppose this PUD and I ask that you **please vote it down** and/or greatly modify its size and scope and **require major changes** before any future version approvals.

Unfortunately, the Developer (Horning/Menkiti) has stonewalled and ignored the concerns of the “200 Footer” neighbors and insisted on Profit and **Greed over Community Concerns** and Neighborly compromise to achieve what could have been a Win-Win project that we could support if only they had listened to us earlier and sincerely and not made only Faux changes for their own benefit. There have been many YEARS of SILENCE from the Developers. My Door has always been open to discuss the design and scope of the project and **my Neighbors have always been willing to support Reasonable and Moderate development.** I actually believe that the previous project from over 10 years ago (**ZC 10-28**) **was a better looking and better fit than this much larger and UGLIER eyesore of a design** that they are offering now. I am surprised they rejected having good architectural details to have a **Box-Like monstrosity merely for Profit.** It is almost like **they don’t really care anymore** and just want to build a Monster to spite the community. It is sad. I guess they would say that they lost years and therefore they don’t have to build better, but that is a lost opportunity to **work with the community and to build better not worse! We have positive suggestions and if they listen, they can still make changes to improve the project** but it will take the **architect** and the city to allow us to **work together instead of in an adversarial manner.** Unfortunately, the developers rushed and expected the Zoning Commission to Rubber Stamp the Last PUD (ZC 10-28) and that is why they failed on appeal to get approvals, but instead of creating a **win-win conversation** about how to build better **they simply want to build an ugly and dangerous project** that will negatively impact our Road Safety, our Health and our Air and Light and endanger our children playing in our yards and alley and casting dark shadows over our Solar Panels and costing us money in higher taxes, lower sunshine and healthy air and difficulty parking and mean and ugly brick walls that crush our souls instead of green space and separate entrances for our parking and trash collection in the alley. There are many, many reasons to oppose this project and I plan to speak with my neighbors against the project at the hearing, but I wanted you to know that this was a **terrible design** again and I hope you will hold them accountable and **not give them the 1st Round approval without MAJOR Changes.** Thank you.

I am affected on both sides of my house on the side and back yards and alley and I am within 30 feet on the north and west sides of my house and my side yard and the majority of my windows face the North and the ugly brick wall of the 901 Monroe project blocking my light and sunshine are within 25 feet. This project will cast an overwhelming shadow and block my light and air all around the North and West Sides of my home. I am installing Solar Panels on my roof and the height and density is so terribly thick and will cast a shadow and cause damages to my solar

efficiency and light collection and power without any compensation to myself or my neighbors similarly affected by the unnecessary height and density of this project which is much larger and taller than the previous Project that the Courts rejected from being built years ago due to its being out of scope with the existing Zoning laws at the time. I am asking that you please reject this project as too big, too ugly, too encroaching and not well designed and out of place with the size and character of the surrounding neighborhood even with the new Zoning laws. **The Small Area Plan should still be considered** and the Previous design would have been better than this monstrosity which is an overreach and underwhelming in quality, but overbearing in negative impact on the quality of life to me and my neighbors.

I also wish to express my concern at the developers' lack of responsiveness to immediate neighbors concerns and note some more details about my opposition to the development as currently proposed. I have always known a new development would take the place of the beautiful homes and beloved neighborhood businesses that previously occupied the site. My opposition, and the opposition of my fellow 200-footer neighbors, stems from the ugly design and numerous adverse effects in the current plan, to which the developers have largely ignored.

From where I sit here in my home (at 3410 10th St NE), I will, in a few years, be looking straight at either an ugly brick wall or right into my new neighbors at 901 Monroe Street. Once built, the development will be the closest building to my house (apart from the attached row house, of course). Most rooms in my house will look directly at the new 901 Monroe St. but not in a good or visibly appealing way.

In December 2024 approximately 40 immediate neighbors "200-footers" developed a survey about the proposed 901 Monroe Street development. The survey allowed us to identify the top priorities—including concerns about adverse effects in the current plan, construction concerns, and community amenities--among all immediate neighbors. My concerns about the development align closely with the concerns of other 200-footer neighbors who with me will be most immediately impacted by the proposed No. 24-15. In this letter I'll address both the concerns of my immediate neighbors and those unique to my family.

Adverse Effects

- 1) **Alleyway as Primary Building Access.** My primary concern about the current No. 24-15 zoning case is the proposed widened alleyway which would be the utility entrance and parking entrance for this 230+ unit building. My neighbors and I use the alley regularly for private parking and the kids in the neighborhood play and wander into the current alley, as this dead-end alley is safe for us to use as caring neighbors, but will not be safe if expanded for commercial and public use by the developer's project. Please do not allow this change. There is no need to widen the alley. 9th Street should be the driveway.
- 2) **Building height and blocked sunlight.** Instead of the sunlight currently pouring into our windows, the afternoon sun will soon be blocked by the new 6-story development.

3) **There are little to no setbacks or separation of the building entrance and driveway.**

Instead the massing is straight and ugly. I encourage you to demand that they step back the massing near the top of the building in the alley area in back of our homes and on the sides facing my home. The ANC was also concerned about Massing but only stayed neutral because they were worried that any changes in massing might lower the number of affordable units. I tried to explain that the Developer could keep the number of units almost the same if they massed more on Monroe or put some units below grade or thought outside the box and altered the square footage or ratio of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom units to adjust for any massing or step back changes. They didn't consider this and none of the ANC commenters live within 200 feet of the development; so, they don't feel the negative impact on this status quo. They were very close to agreeing with us, but once again the developers persuaded them that the number of units is needed for their profitability and that may or may not be true, but even if true could be adjusted with decent architectural minor adjustments as I mentioned above. **Please insist on Massing Step-Backs on the 2 sides facing the Row Houses. The alley must NOT be their driveway. The previous ZC 10-28 project allowed cars to enter and exit on 9th Street which has a large Curb Cut. DDOT has been all over the place over the years with policies about the Alley use, but that was not the case before and should not be the case now. Please ignore DDOT's dangerous Alley Widening and Sharing proposal when there are so many other already existing curb cuts to chose from that can also leave our small alley alone.**

4): **Parking Availability**

With the project and the number of residents coming in (and a relatively small amount of parking spaces in the building), even a small number of people choosing to get a street parking permit rather than parking in the building, or having guests parking on the street, will quickly take up the surrounding parking.

Proposed Amenity/Remedy: Provide additional parking in the building sufficient to support the number of residents housed there. Have the parking entrance on 9th St and ensure rental agreements don't allow for the residential parking permit. Alternatively, provide designated parking spaces within the building that we can utilize for us and our guests.

5): **Elimination of Natural Light**

My North and West sides of my house have sunlight right now and as I add Solar Panels to my house, I need as much Solar and Sunshine as possible. Unfortunately, the towering walls of this project will block my light and cast dark shadows on my house and panels much earlier and reduce my energy savings and efficiency.

The height of the building and its proximity to my house mean that the little natural light we have will be reduced or eliminated as the building will be between the sun and my house. We do not do well mentally in darkness, and I am very concerned about the mental well-being impact as well as enjoyment of my home from this impact.

- **Proposed Amenity/Remedy:** Reduce the height of the building, especially around the alley and on the north side of my house and on any street with residents, increase the setback so the building shadow will not have impact, have an **INDEPENDENT shadow study** before moving forward with building design to see how to minimize impact.

6): Air Quality/Ventilation

Construction will reduce the quality of the air outside, but also with the proximity to the house, it will reduce the indoor air quality, potentially causing health impacts to my family. Odors from the Large Trash Room in the Alley area will linger along the ground level and prevent us from having safe and family gatherings as we enter/exit our driveways or have block parties in the alley.

- **Proposed Amenity/Remedy:** Provide high quality air purification system during construction. Utilize construction equipment and materials that minimize impact on the air quality. Have a Construction Management Agreement (CMA) in place to prevent dust and construction debris from going into nearby homes and **prevent Trash Odors from exiting near the alley** and have a **Powered Vent directing the Odor from the Trash Rooms** out of the North and East Front Roof of the Building over Monroe Street.

7): Impact on structural integrity

We are concerned the shaking and drilling and truck movement during construction so close to our homes will cause structural impact to my older house and that of my neighbors.

- **Proposed Amenity/Remedy:** Project developers must jointly enhance our CMA or Construction Management Agreement and conduct pre-inspection and post-inspection of our foundations and bricks and siding and mortar, paint, etc. and pay for any structural damage caused by the construction and also add each of the 200 Footers to the Insurance Policy for the Construction project as “Named Additional Insured”.

8): Increased property taxes

Completing this large project will likely increase the assessment of my home and therefore increase the property taxes, making my home less affordable.

- **Proposed Amenity/Remedy:** Make the Developer pay the difference each year in the current assessment value and tax rate of the surrounding properties for current owners and their descendants from the higher assessments after construction. If that is not possible, then a lump sum payment in advance should be paid to each 200 Footer now as part of an Amenity to compensate for this added expense and loss to our income. I suggest \$50,000 should be given by the developer to each 200 Footer.

Additional amenities that can make the project an added value to us as local neighbors:

- Usage of the pool and other building amenities
- Access to host in / utilize event and public gathering spaces in the building event rooms or conference rooms or entertainment or gym areas for renters be made also accessible for free to 200 footers.

- The Developers should agree to **maintain the sidewalks and alley all around the block near the development by Shoveling the Snow and raking the leaves and cutting the public tree box grass on the entire block** and not just on the $\frac{3}{4}$'s of the block they own or maintain, but they should maintain and clean the entire block year round also to clear the alley and the sidewalks in front of our 200 footer homes and not pile up snow mounds or leaves in front of our homes. If Salt is spread on the sidewalks in front of their buildings, they should offer and salt the entire remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ area of the block including our homes so that the entire neighborhood is protected from slip and fall and leaves and snow and **the entire block is maintained as far as grass and tree box consistency in the public spaces and sidewalks on all 4 corners of the block** all around as a good neighbor.

As a whole, this project has not considered the impact or interests of the surrounding neighbors and community and presently appears to take away from our quality of life without seeking to make this a project where we can look forward to what's coming after the challenges of construction. We would love to see this be a mutually beneficial project where neighbors (current residents and future) can come together and have the ability to gather, meet, and enjoy both natural outdoor and indoor space. We'd love to see this project improve in value and incorporate what's important to those around it who are directly impacted now and for as long as they're in the area.

- **Avoid Alley Ingress & Egress / Traffic / Parking** - We oppose plans to have the sole ingress/egress for all vehicle traffic constructed in the tiny alley across from Lawrence Street.
 - This small alley as the planned building ingress/egress route is directly behind my home and the six (6) row houses on 10th Street. Even if widened as proposed, this will still be problematic as Lawrence is already too narrow to support two-way traffic when cars are parked on both sides – and particularly challenging for the large vehicles that need access (garbage trucks, deliveries). This incurs a real risk of damage to any vehicle parked around our homes.
 - Lawrence, 9th, and 10th are all small streets and Monroe can be congested. These appear insufficient for the volume of traffic and size of vehicles anyone would reasonably expect the several hundred residents of the proposed development to generate. It is unrealistic for the city to expect 75% of a building's occupants to not generate vehicle traffic (owned, rented or services like Uber or GrubHub).
 - **Where will mail and packages be delivered? Please do NOT allow all these deliveries into the Alley along with all other major traffic 200 times a day?**
 - The proposal includes no other adjustments to accommodate such a large increase in population density while decreasing the resident to parking ratio – 54 spaces for 232 units (i.e., 23%, or less than half of the 50% ratio for R-2). Further, widening the

alley will reduce the available on-street parking, as will any adjustments that must be made to allow for the turning radius of larger vehicles.

- We are concerned that the overflow of vehicles will be unmanageable and dangerous traffic flow in the neighborhood, which includes both single family homes and schools - with a large number of families and children walking, bicycling and playing. This skyrocket in traffic on streets not designed for it will increase accidents (traffic and pedestrian).

SUGGESTIONS:

- *Add a drive-through or other purposefully planned traffic flow for Uber, package/ food deliveries, or other similar traffic directly on Monroe Street or 9th Street.*
- *Utilize instead the existing curb cut on 9th Street or Monroe Street that could be used for all traffic entering and leaving the building, not unlike the parking that exists between Luke C. Moore High School and St. Anthony's, which is only a block away and has an entrance off Monroe Street.*
- *Keep and use the existing ingress/egress on 9th Street during the construction project, which currently has government, business, and residential on its block, and would create an easier and quicker traffic route via a stoplight already in place to the main street of Monroe.*
- *Additionally, if the larger 230+ unit goes forward, the project should have to build more expansive first floor or underground parking as most apartment buildings in DC traditionally do to alleviate all the new coming street parking on already small roads.*

- **Make partly Condo and Not Only Rental** - We are opposed to an all-rental use of the lot.
 - Research has shown that **home ownership** not only creates personal wealth, but is also critical for its ability to strengthen neighborhoods, communities, and cities. Homeowners tend to be more involved in their communities through volunteer work and other social engagements. Homeownership also positively impacts public health, with homeowners generally experiencing better physical and mental health compared to renters. In addition, owning a home leads to greater stability in neighborhoods, with reduced crime rates and an increased sense of safety and pride. Finally, property taxes paid by homeowners fund local services like schools, roads, and other essential infrastructure, directly benefiting the community and city.
 - With prices for home ownership rising to astronomical amounts, it is more important than ever to build structures for first time home buyers. Per this [report](#) based on Census Bureau information: (1) DC homeownership rate was 40.2% in 2023, meaning about 2 in 5 households owned their home while the remainder rented; (2) DC's homeownership rate in 2023 was 25.7 percentage points lower than the broader US, and when compared with other metro areas in 2022, DC ranked below the average rate of 67.2% coming in at 63.9%. It is critical that DC have not only more affordable housing, but **more affordable homeownership housing**.

SUGGESTIONS:

- ***Convert 25% or more of the building to condo units.***
- *Set aside a portion of the lot for small “first time buyer starter” row homes.*
- *Divide the huge lot into two sections with half for a rental building and the other half for homeownership condo units or small homes.*

For all these reasons, we oppose the current building proposal as written and urge the Zoning Commission and the project owners to explore alternatives that prioritize community benefits and compatibility with the neighborhood’s character.

If it isn’t economically feasible for the additional rental residents to support additional businesses, then perhaps it is best for development plans to stay within the current zoning restrictions or use appropriate Residential Apartment zoning rules – both of which keep the development more consistent with the surrounding neighborhood. Further, it is unrealistic to not plan for the additional traffic. Perhaps the large-scale development or adjustment to zoning should be limited to the area nearest the Metro and the remainder of the area – that is immediately adjacent to single-family homes – should continue to be restricted to MU-3 or R-2.

Development should align with the needs and values of the community it aims to serve, rather than disrupt and diminish them.

Respectfully,

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200 Footer and DC Native Washingtonian.