



To: Zoning Commission

From: Brookland Neighborhood Civic Association (BNCA)

Re: Testimony related to the 901 Monroe Street NE Development Project (Office of Zoning Case Number 24-15)

Date: June 22, 2025

I am testifying in my capacity as the President of the Brookland Neighborhood Civic Association (BNCA). Brookland Civic, founded in 1880, provides a forum for considering and advancing the interests of Brookland residents on issues affecting the Brookland community.

As the BNCA President, it is my responsibility to carry out the BNCA mission and to ensure that its members' voices are heard and that this critical project, one with the potential to transform our neighborhood, reflects our shared vision for Brookland.

For the record: BNCA is not opposed to development. On the contrary, we request further assurances and improvements for this project in alignment with participant recommendations. The space has been vacant for far too long and we look forward to welcoming more people to our beautiful Brookland.

This testimony relates to the feedback received at our BNCA Member Meeting on April 15, 2025. It was a community listening session and feedback was reported in Exhibit 44. Approximately 40 Brooklanders, including ANC 5B03, 5B04, and 5B05 Commissioners, attended the standing-room-only meeting at the historic Brooks Mansion. The 901 Monroe development team kindly attended so that they could hear the community feedback firsthand. Concerns raised including those related to scale, safety, security, traffic, and community benefits are still outstanding. I've provided the items from Exhibit 44 and our understanding of the current disposition.

- 1. Scale and Character:** Community members have expressed strong concern regarding the scale and height of the proposed building, currently planned at six stories. The primary issue is that the height is inconsistent with the surrounding residential neighborhood, particularly affecting properties on 10th Street NE due to loss of sunlight and compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood. Neighbors request a reduction in scale, with increased setbacks and a design that scales downward closer to adjacent streets to preserve neighborhood character.

Disposition: Despite the ANC5B's Development, Zoning, and Land Use Committee's draft position paper, which cited scale, massing, and character as issues, the ANC's Resolution (Exhibit 77) states: "The developer shall retain alley massing. The developer shall create front doors for all units facing Lawrence St." We support the creation of front doors for all units facing Lawrence Street as shown in Exhibit 106. We request that the concerns about scale and massing be reviewed by the Zoning Commission.

2. **Health and Safety:** The community highlighted critical concerns regarding vehicular access and traffic management. Currently, the proposed sole vehicular entry and exit point via the Lawrence Street alley poses significant safety risks, particularly given existing traffic congestion associated with nearby schools. Neighbors strongly advocate relocating the vehicle access to either 9th Street (as it was designed—and DDOT approved—in the previous proposed Monroe Street development) or on Monroe Street to alleviate safety concerns and traffic bottlenecks. Additionally, concerns about adequate safety and security, including potential issues related to evacuation and vandalism risks, were underscored.

Disposition: The ANC Resolution Exhibit 77 states “During the schematic design and design development phases, the developer should seek community input regarding the safety, security, and aesthetic aspects of the alley. This should include, but is not limited to, pole locations, lighting, security barriers at both six townhomes and proposed development (fencing, walls, garage doors, pedestrian doors), cameras, pavement styles, sidewalk design for pedestrian access to the garage, and relocation of street drop-off from Monroe to 9th St NE.” BNCA is concerned that the term “seek community input” is not strong enough to ensure that these matters are addressed. Further, the Applicant’s Supplemental Statement (Exhibit 56) makes no mention of the Applicant’s plans to refine its designs as a result of community input. BNCA requests that a process be defined to seek out and report on community input requests, along with the process for how requests are accepted or rejected.

3. **Monroe Street Life:** The development, as currently proposed, lacks meaningful retail or mixed-use components. Community members emphasized the importance of foot traffic to activate Monroe Street, enhance pedestrian safety, and support local economic vitality. While the 200 Footers did not define a solution for street life, a petition signed by approximately 120 Brookland residents and nearby neighbors underscores community-wide support for integrating “retail ready” spaces within the project design to allow flexibility for the space to allow retail in the future. Stakeholders urged developers to reserve at least a modest portion (approximately 2,000 sq ft) of ground-floor space capable of future retail use to meet community needs and enhance street-level vibrancy.

Disposition: BNCA is excited by the inclusion of retail-ready space in letter b) of the ANC Resolution Exhibit 77. BNCA is pleased that the sustained advocacy by individual residents in the community helped shape this aspect of the project. It shows that when the community speaks up, change is possible. Our association will provide its support to advertise and market this space.

4. **Community Amenities:** The proposed development's limited green space and lack of sufficient family-oriented and ownership opportunities were raised as points of concern. Community members request enhanced provisions for accessible green space, including more trees at ground level rather than primarily on upper floors. Additionally, there is strong community interest in increasing the availability of larger, family-sized residential units (3-4 bedrooms), as well as providing opportunities for partial tenant ownership, such as condominiums, to support long-term community stability. The community was pleased that the power lines on Monroe Street would be put underground. Additionally, the community request prioritizes actual project-related amenities to benefit the immediate neighbors instead of dollar contributions to unrelated non-profit organizations.



Disposition: The inclusion of 10% more family-sized units (3 or 4 bedrooms) was listed by the ANC as a “suggestion” in Exhibit 77. BNCA would like to see this be a condition. The Applicant’s public amenities are limited to primarily underground electrical wires on Monroe Street. Amenities are \$95,500 cash contributions provided to non-profit organizations plus “\$30,000 for a study to examine activation of the land surrounding Brooks Mansion.” Comparing 901 Monroe to the development at 8th and Jackson Streets, NE, The Hanover (Z.C. Case No. 18-21 Exhibit 135), while larger than 901 Monroe, provided many transit-oriented benefits to its residents such as \$100 SmarTrip cards and bikeshare subscriptions. Additionally, The Hanover has delivered tangible public amenities including a public plaza of 5,150 square feet and associated landscaping, streetscaping and lighting improvements along 8th Street, 20 public bicycle racks, drinking fountain, additional docks for Capital Bikeshare bikes at 10th and Monroe. These tangible amenities at The Hanover were in addition to \$199,000 in donations to charter schools, community and educational programs. BNCA requests that additional tangible public amenities be included.

Thank you for your consideration and engagement in addressing these critical community priorities. We look forward to ongoing collaboration to ensure the 901 Monroe Street NE development aligns positively with our vision for Brookland.

Sincerely,

Dawn Amore
President, Brookland Neighborhood Civic Association