

6/28/2025

John Feeley
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To: zcsubmissions@dc.gov

Subject: Letter in opposition to ZC No. 24-15 Dear DC Zoning Commission,

My name is John Feeley, a former commissioner on Advisory Neighborhood Commission 5A and 5B. I also served on the 2001 Brookland Cultural Resources Survey, which concluded that Brookland qualifies for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. I oppose the current application before the Zoning Commission (Case 24-15) to grant 901 Monroe Street, LLC, a planned unit development. My opposition is based on two factors. First, the development team has not engaged in meaningful community discussion concerning their plans for the block which contains the 900 block of Monroe and Lawrence Streets and the 3600 blocks 10th and 9th Streets, Northeast. Second, the development team has failed to recognize the historic importance of the site they wish to develop.

The 901 Monroe Street, LLC. partners have a history of ignoring the input of those most affected by their plans for this city block. While they have made the required number of community presentations concerning this proposed development, they have, throughout their fifteen years of attempting to get project approval, ignored input from 5B residents with concerns about it, especially the current residents of the block. On the other hand, they have gotten the support of citywide development groups like Greater Greater Washington and the Coalition for Smarter Growth. The staff from these developer funded not-for-profits testify in support of this project whenever hearings are held. The 901 Monroe Street, LLC. partners have ignored and dismissed community suggestions for architectural modifications to the proposed project. They have not shown any willingness to work with the 200th-footers. This demonstrates a lack of commitment to a major element in the PUD process: considering and incorporating community input. This is part of the process which they have continued to ignore since 2011. Their tactics in community engagement included a well-remembered intrusion into the Brookland Neighborhood Civic Association meeting in 2012. With a resolution pending concerning the first 901 Monroe LLC PUD from the Civic association, a crowd of Col. Brooks Tavern employees arrived to become BNCA members the same night and then vote for a resolution in support of the PUD. One waiter informed the gathered members that he had been told to come that night, join Brookland Civic and cast his vote for the first PUD or lose his job.

In terms of recognition of the impact on the historic nature of this site, the developer has ignored the already identified historic resources surrounding their project. At this entrance to Brookland, instead of an Art Deco sign welcoming you to the neighborhood, like the one at 12th and Rhode Island, or a gateway garden, like at Michigan and 10th or at Michigan and 12th, the developers

have designed a building that will dwarf everything else around it and at the same time ignore its history and varied architecture. Currently, the 901 Monroe, LLC. web site praises the current project design as “a seamless connector between Monroe Street Market and 12th Street”. Where are the architectural features that would create this “seamless” bridge from one neighborhood to another? The height and density created by the proposed 901 Monroe Street design dwarfs the historic Luke C. Moore High School building (1891), ignores the landmarked DCTV building (1835) and towers over the current homes on the block.

Also, and just as significantly, the proposed structure pointedly ignores the homes of the 200-footers and makes no attempt to accommodate their access to light or open space. There are no height setbacks proposed on the east side of the building where the current residents of the block reside. The service entrance and dumpsters for the new structure are proposed for the current half block long alleyway designed for the remaining row houses that face 10th Street. Basically, there is no attempt to create any sort of seamless architectural context that reflects the early twentieth century row houses, Greek Revival mansion and wood frame houses, just a large rectangular prism with a central break in the six-story height facing Ninth Street not Tenth where the remaining row houses in the block are located. Needless to say, the current design does not reflect any of the community input that suggested accommodations should be made for the comfort, sense of space or even recognition of the existence of the 200-foot neighbors.

One would think that after fifteen years of considering how to develop this site, a building that somehow reflected the neighborhood for which it was designed might be proposed. One would think that some greater understanding of shared concerns might have produced a compromise between residents and the development team, but no, 901 Monroe, LLC has remained committed to their original purpose to build a structure of the maximum height and density allowed by the city.

Based on their unwillingness to follow the intent of the PUD process and their lack of appreciation of the historic nature of their site, I believe that 901 Monroe, LLC should not be granted their request PUD in case #24-15 before the Zoning Commission.

Yours truly,

John J. Feeley, Jr.

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