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DC Zoning Commission
441 4th Street, NW – Suite 200S
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Opposition to ZC No. 24-15 – 901 Monroe Street NE

Dear Chairman Hood and Members of the Zoning Commission:

As an owner of the property directly across the street from the proposed development at 901 Monroe Street NE, I strongly oppose ZC No. 24-15 as currently proposed. My opposition is based on serious concerns regarding building height, lack of homeownership opportunities, insufficient parking, failure to underground power lines, the absence of a construction management plan, alley widening, pedestrian safety risks, and the lack of meaningful community benefits.

1. Building Height is Inconsistent with the Neighborhood & Prior Court Decisions

This proposal seeks to exceed the recommended height limit in the Brookland Small Area Plan (SAP), which states buildings in this area should not exceed 50 feet. At 75 feet, this project is incompatible with the surrounding neighborhood and will block sunlight, diminish air quality, and adversely effect adjacent homes. Additionally, the previous Planned Unit Development (PUD) for this site was rejected by the DC Court of Appeals multiple times. The current proposal is even larger and taller than the one previously denied, demonstrating a clear disregard for judicial precedent.

2. Lack of Homeownership Opportunities Hurts Long-Term Community Stability

Brookland is a neighborhood of homeowners who invest in the community long-term. However, this proposal includes only rental units with no condominium or townhome options. The lack of homeownership opportunities exacerbates transience and fails to support community equity-building.

3. Insufficient Parking Will Overburden an Already Strained Area

The project proposes only 54 parking spaces for 230 rental units, which is inadequate given existing parking challenges. Without sufficient on-site parking, spillover parking will overwhelm nearby streets. A comprehensive traffic impact study should be required, and the developer must either increase parking availability or implement enforceable measures to limit car ownership for tenants. At a minimum, the project's renters should be prohibited in the project's lease agreements from applying for a Residential Parking Permit (RPP).

4. Power Lines Must Be Undergrounded to Improve Safety & Aesthetics

The proposal fails to include undergrounding of power lines along Monroe Street, which is a standard expectation for modern developments. Undergrounding improves public safety, reduces outages, and enhances the streetscape. The developer should be required to complete this infrastructure improvement.

5. A Construction Management Agreement is Essential to Mitigate Harmful Impacts

Without a Construction Management Agreement (CMA), residents will be exposed to excessive noise, dust, rodent infestations, traffic disruptions, and potential damage to their homes. Specific concerns

include health risks from dust, disruption of utilities, disruption of local business operations, foundation damage to older homes, location of materials staging, and rodent control. The developer must commit to a binding Construction Management Agreement before any approval is granted.

6. Alley Widening Will Endanger Residents & Disrupt Community Spaces

The proposal to widen the alley behind 10th Street rowhouses is completely unacceptable. The alley is a shared community space where children play and residents safely navigate their homes. Expanding and converting it into a high-traffic vehicle access point for 230 apartments would create severe pedestrian safety risks and environmental concerns. The Zoning Commission should prohibit this expansion.

7. Pedestrian Safety & Traffic Congestion Risks Are Ignored

The development fails to consider pedestrian safety in an already congested corridor. The proposed entry/exit for the parking garage through the alley is dangerous, particularly for children walking to nearby schools. Instead, parking access should be moved, traffic-calming measures should be implemented, and a formal pedestrian impact study should be required before approval.

8. The Development Offers No Meaningful Community Benefits

Unlike other Brookland developments, this proposal lacks retail, public green space, and community amenities. The planned green space is located on the second floor, making it inaccessible to the public. To better serve the community, the developer should move green space to the ground level, include small-business retail space, and provide neighborhood-focused amenities.

Conclusion & Direct Request

This proposal, as currently designed, does not align with the Brookland Small Area Plan, ignores past legal rulings, and prioritizes developer profits over community interests. While responsible development is welcome, it must be done in a way that supports homeownership, pedestrian safety, community stability, and infrastructure improvements.

I urge the Zoning Commission to deny this proposal unless the following changes are made:

1. Reduce building height to align with neighborhood scale and SAP guidelines.
2. Include a percentage of homeownership units to promote long-term residency.
3. Increase on-site parking or impose enforceable restrictions on tenant car ownership and require tenants not to apply for a DC Residential Parking Permit.
4. Underground all power lines on Monroe Street as a community benefit.
5. Implement a binding Construction Management Agreement (CMA) before approval.
6. Remove alley widening from the proposal and require Monroe Street vehicle access.
7. Conduct a full traffic and pedestrian safety study, with safety measures in place.
8. Incorporate public green space, small-business retail, and community-focused amenities.

If these changes are not made, the development should not be approved, as it will permanently alter the character of Brookland, harm existing residents, and set a dangerous precedent for future overdevelopment.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your response and to continued engagement on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Damien Agostinelli
Owner, 815 Monroe Street, NE