

RE: Case 24-24 / “The Heritage” - Strong Opposition to Proposed Homeless Shelter

Dear DC Zoning Commission Members:

I am writing in **strong opposition** to the re-zoning for the construction of the proposed homeless shelter at 1201 New York Ave NE.

I am a resident of Ivy City and live on the 1800 Block of Corcoran St NE, a few hundred feet away from the location of the planned facility. I have personally experienced the consequences of inadequate shelter management and services in this neighborhood. Homeless individuals have slept on my porch, used drugs on my property, used my porch as a bathroom, washed themselves there, engaged in sexual activity, drug exchanges, and more. This is my home, and these experiences have fundamentally undermined my sense of safety and dignity in my own community.

Ivy City Deserves Equity and Respect

It is beyond time that Ivy City receives the same respect, investment, and thoughtful development that other neighborhoods throughout the District enjoy. We have experienced violence. Our children lack safe places to play. We are denied basic city services that are standard elsewhere.

While there is a clear need for services for the unhoused, the community of Ivy City remains burdened, overwhelmed and under-resourced. Positioning a large shelter in an isolated location, in a community that already hosts a disproportionate number of social services facilities, is a poor decision and will further create challenges for our neighborhood and the city.

Ivy City: Treated as the City’s Dumping Ground

Ivy City is too often treated as a dumping ground for projects others don’t want. The community has too long been seen as the ‘easy answer’ by planners who know they won’t face much opposition in a community where many residents have below-average incomes and may not have the time or means to object to planning decisions—if they’re even aware of them at all. For example, community notification for this project was limited to 2 signs posted at the property with no wider notice given to the residents who live just one block away.

These types of longstanding practices have contributed to the inequities residents in this area face daily.

The neighborhood is already home to multiple shelters, halfway houses, the Youth Services Center, an animal shelter, DPW yards and school bus storage for OSSE—while lacking basic services that actually benefit the residents.

We Are Denied Basic City Services

Up until recently, we did not even have proper street signs for many streets. We suffer from chronic illegal dumping of garbage. There are open drug markets and overdoses in the streets. We don't get street sweeping. We can't get DPW to mow and maintain spaces that are clearly their responsibility. We barely get trees to provide clean air. There is a cell tower 10 feet across the street from our windows. Heavy heavy wire cover our windows. Just take a look at our sister street in NW and it's clear which residents matter.

Instead of working to solve these issues, the District is simply dumping more on us. Arguably, the D.C. government actually hurts more than it helps in an area where many people are hurting to begin with.

Our Pleas for Help Have Been Ignored

My neighbors and I have consistently reached out to city services, leadership, police, and council, and have rarely seen any reasonable solutions. We have made phone calls, sent emails, attended community meetings, and filed reports—only to be met with delayed responses, unfulfilled promises, or complete silence. When solutions are offered, they are often inadequate band-aids that fail to address the root problems plaguing our community.

This pattern of neglect sends a clear message: our concerns don't matter, our safety is not a priority, and our neighborhood is not worthy of the same attention and resources provided to other parts of the District.

A Pattern of Broken Promises and Failed Development

For the past several years, we continue to be deceived with potential development. Plans have been approved to create beautiful spaces, commerce, recreation, housing and more—but nothing has happened. We have watched as grand visions were presented to our community, zoning changes were approved, and promises were made about transforming Ivy City into a thriving neighborhood. Yet these plans gather dust while our reality remains unchanged or worsens.

Businesses have come and left. The cycle repeats: initial enthusiasm, eventual disappointment, and ultimately abandonment. Meanwhile, we are asked to accept yet another social services facility that will further burden our community rather than invest in the actual development and amenities that have been promised to us time and time again.

The message is clear: Ivy City is deemed suitable for facilities no one else wants, but not worthy of the investment and follow-through that would actually improve residents' quality of life.

Current Facilities Are Poorly Managed with Devastating Spillover Effects

The District continues to be neglectful in management of its existing facilities in Ivy City, which result in significant spillover effects on residents.

Because there is little public transit to Ivy City, and the community is far removed from areas with services, users of the existing shelter at 1355 New York Ave NE are essentially stranded in the community.

There is a high level of open drug use, loitering, public intoxication, public defecation and urination, open alcohol use, and high rates of vehicle break-ins from users of the shelter in the direct vicinity.

This currently impacts the many businesses in the commercial area, but the new location will effectively drop shelter users in the residential area—even further removed from the few public transit options and where there is no commercial landlord or private security who might try to rectify some of the problems.

My neighbors and I have repeatedly reported these issues to city services, MPD, and our elected officials, yet the problems persist and worsen. Adding a larger facility will only amplify these challenges that the District has already proven unwilling or unable to address.

DGS Cannot Be Trusted to Manage This Facility

The Department of General Services does not adequately manage its existing properties in Ivy City, placing a substantial burden on residents.

One such example is the existing Family Shelter at 1861 Corcoran Street NE. The property has sat vacant for nearly two years. During this time, DGS has abandoned basic maintenance and upkeep. In late 2024/early 2025, people broke into the shelter building and began operating a drug operation out of the facility. DGS was unreachable and unresponsive despite multiple requests to secure the building.

There was open, unfettered drug manufacturing and sales happening from DC government property, and no one could be reached to shut it down.

Ultimately, through contact with MPD, DGS Protective Services was engaged to evict the squatters and illicit activity. Even after that, DGS still had to be called to the property multiple times to secure it adequately because the drug users kept breaking in.

Since then, the broken windows have not been replaced, the lawn and grasses have not been tended to resulting in massive overgrowth, and exterior faucets have been left turned on—resulting in unhoused individuals wandering up and regularly bathing naked in the public street.

Again, DGS has been contacted about this numerous times and, despite promising to resolve these issues, has not. I have attached copies of this correspondence.

Simply put, if DGS cannot manage a single family shelter properly to prevent negative impacts on the community at large, how can it be properly expected to manage the impacts of a much larger shelter?

Similarly, DGS does not adequately maintain sidewalks at the rear of the Youth Services Center on Fairview Ave NE, which are DGS property—resulting in trash, snow accumulation, and overgrowth—while refusing to respond to resident calls to clean up the area.

The Proposed Location Is Inappropriate and Incompatible

The new shelter location is inappropriate for multiple reasons:

- The lack of transit access
- The proximity to residential areas
- The fact that ABCA has licensed multiple retail cannabis operations directly adjacent to the proposed shelter location (one at 1135 Okie St NE and one at 2020 Kendall St NE)

None of this is compatible with the Ivy City Small Area Plan or the broader vision for revitalizing the community. Nobody is coordinating actual planning uses.

Conclusion

There is little reason to believe that the new, larger shelter will have anything but a more substantial negative impact on the community. Given DGS's history of neglectful property management and the District's consistent failure to respond to residents' concerns, it is reasonable to expect that residents will suffer an unfair burden as a result of the new shelter. Furthermore, there is reason to question whether such an isolated, inaccessible location will truly serve the best needs of homeless and vulnerable individuals.

My family and I deserve to live in safety and dignity. Ivy City deserves the same respect, services, and thoughtful planning that other DC neighborhoods receive. We are not a dumping ground. We deserve the development that has been promised to us—not more facilities that burden us further while those promises remain unfulfilled. We deserve a government that actually responds when we ask for help.

For these reasons, I strongly object to the re-zoning and urge the commission to reject this proposal.

Respectfully submitted,

JaNay Nazaire

1869 Corcoran St. NE
09.28.25