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[\(http://thesouthwester.com/2017/01/30/design-unveiled-for-ward-6-short-term-family-housing-program/\)](http://thesouthwester.com/2017/01/30/design-unveiled-for-ward-6-short-term-family-housing-program/)

[unveiled-for-ward-6-short-term-family-housing-program/](#)

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[\(http://thesouthwester.com/category/development/\)](http://thesouthwester.com/category/development/)

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[\(http://thesouthwester.com/tag/community-advisory-team/\)](http://thesouthwester.com/tag/community-advisory-team/), [DC](#)

[General](#)

[General](#)

[\(http://thesouthwester.com/tag/dc-general/\)](http://thesouthwester.com/tag/dc-general/), [Katelynd](#)

[Mahoney](#)

[Mahoney](#)

[\(http://thesouthwester.com/tag/katelynd-mahoney/\)](http://thesouthwester.com/tag/katelynd-mahoney/), [Short-Term](#)

[Family Housing](#)

[Family Housing](#)

[\(http://thesouthwester.com/tag/short-term-family-housing/\)](http://thesouthwester.com/tag/short-term-family-housing/), [Studio Twenty Seven](#)

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## DESIGN UNVEILED FOR WARD 6 SHORT-TERM FAMILY HOUSING PROGRAM

Like 0



Board of Zoning Adjustment  
District of Columbia  
CASE NO 19451  
EXHIBIT NO.45

Photo above: The Short-Term Family Housing project as seen from the north side.

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[unveiled-for-ward-6-short-term-family-housing-program/](#)



(Renderings by Studio 27 Architecture)

In Feb. 2016, Mayor Muriel Bowser announced an ambitious plan to close DC General, a previously shuttered hospital now serving as the largest family shelter in the District for the past seven years, and replace the enormous decrepit shelter with smaller shelters in all of the city's eight wards. In Ward 6, the Short-Term Family Housing location is planned for 850 Delaware Ave. SW, which is the current site of the Unity Health Care Clinic. The site is owned by the city, an important point for the DC City Council to consider while reviewing the proposed plans.

Although Mayor Bowser's initial plan changed once before the DC City Council (including several locations so that the sites were on city-owned land and also the timeline of completion to identify new sites), the plan is now well underway with an important new aspect added: direct community engagement. This new aspect highlights an increase in the level of trust the city has placed in the communities, as well as an increase in the level of transparency for this process. This community engagement comes in the form of a Community Advisory Teams in each ward, which are composed of community members that include ANC commissioners, representatives from neighborhood civic associations, as well as nominations from the respective councilmember's offices.

"It is important for the District government to truly collaborate with local neighborhood residents," said Andy Litsky, chair of ANC6D and co-chair of the Ward 6 Community Advisory Team. Litsky also stated that "it takes trust on both sides, but when that happens—especially here in Southwest—we arrive at a much more satisfactory result." Ward 6 Councilmember Charles Allen, who helped spearhead the fight for the Community Advisory Teams, also praised the process and the Southwest community saying: "When we began this process, I said it would be a mistake to underestimate the capacity of neighbors in Southwest—and they came through like I knew they would. By engaging neighbors and community leaders in thoughtful and substantive work, the end result will be something that Southwest can be proud of—dignified housing for families in crisis, a new community health center, and a building that fits the special character of Southwest DC."

The Community Advisory Teams are tasked with three main responsibilities: provide feedback on concerns related to quality of life during construction, disseminate information to other neighbors and constituent groups, and work with

the partners to develop Good Neighbor Agreements. The Ward 6 Community Advisory Team consists of representatives from the Bowser administration (Jay Melder, deputy director of the Mayor's Office of Policy & Legislative Affairs, and Project Manager Henry Miller of DC's Department of General Services), invitees from ANC 6D (Andy Litsky, representing SMD 6D02; co-chair of the Community Advisory Team, Stacy Cloyd, who at the time of the formation of the team was the treasurer of ANC6D, representing SMD 6D02; Lucky Rojansky, Amidon-Bowen PTA president; and Marilyn Melkonian, president & founder of Telesis), Southwest Neighborhood Assembly (SWNA) invitees (Andrenia Walker, resident council president for Greenleaf Gardens Extension; and community representatives Robin Walker, Katelynd Mahoney Anderson, and Vyllorya Evans), Councilmember Allen's invitees (Ward 6 Councilmember Charles Allen and Bob Hall, president and member of the Board of Directors for Capital Park IV Condominiums), as well as the DC Interagency Council on Homelessness invitee (Deborah Shore, executive director and founder of Sasha Bruce Youthwork).

The Community Advisory Team was convened in Sept. 2016 and has had three meetings to date (the minutes from which are available online), with the bulk of these meetings focusing on providing guidelines for the design of the Short-Term Family Housing building and its surrounding landscape. The team brought forth a wide array of concerns and input, ranging from protecting the Delaware Ave. view shed and thinking "outside the box" for the building's decision to add a coffee shop to ensure the site is mixed-use and becomes a part of the neighborhood beyond just the design. The team also highlighted the importance of keeping the health care clinic as a part of the final design, given its need in the neighborhood.

Two important topics for consideration the team brought forth were private bathrooms and the flow of people around the building. The team wanted to go above and beyond the minimum number of private bathrooms required by law, with the goal of ensuring each family had their own private bathroom. Although that was not possible given the size and need constraints of the site, the architects were able to exceed the minimum required by law.

Stacy Cloyd, who has been a vocal proponent of private bathrooms for each family said, "I support closing DC General and having smaller shelters in each ward. The architects who designed the Ward 6 shelter have a history of doing great work; while I don't agree with every aspect of what the District asked them to do, I think the building will fit well in the neighborhood and I'm glad that it will include a new community health clinic all neighborhood residents can access."

When it came to the flow of the building and how people would move through it, the team challenged the architects to incorporate a second elevator, particularly given the needs of families with young children. The architectural team was successful with this particular aspect of the design.

The building, designed by DC-based Studio Twenty Seven Architects, was unveiled at a public meeting on Dec. 15 and it will house up to 50 families on floors 2-7 of the seven-story building. Each of these floors will have its own 450-square-foot outdoor area (allowing for residents to enjoy the outdoors without having to go outside the building), as well as laundry facilities and a community room on the north side providing an unfettered view of the Capitol. The first floor will feature a dining area, as well as office areas and other needs for the administrative support

of the programs. The “cellar” (below grade portion of the building) will house the health care clinic, which will have its own distinct entrance on the first floor. There will also be a fenced-in play area along the Delaware Ave. side of the project.

Overall, the design both inside and out has been met with positive reviews, with Urban Turf calling it “an architecturally impactful enhancement to the neighborhood.”

Bob Hall, vice president of Capitol Park IV Condominiums, said, “We are proud of what we all did together to design a facility that works for both its residents and its neighbors. We’re not done, however. We have to make sure that the streetscaping provides a well-lit, attractive, and secure environment around the facility; that the promised Capital Bikeshare station materializes; and that site security is appropriate and effective.”

The project will require zoning relief (an application was filed Jan. 4 with the Board of Zoning Adjustments), specifically to allow more than 15 persons to reside in the building, as well as parking and a variance in height and number of floors. A hearing will be scheduled for March.

Moving forward, and barring any delays, permits will be submitted to the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs in June, with plans to start construction in November. The Community Advisory Team will begin work on the Good Neighbor Agreement in the summer of 2019, which is also the same time frame that the Ward 6 site will be opened. If all goes to plan across the city, DC General will finally be closed for good in 2020.

This process has not been an easy or uncontested one, but all in all the residents of Southwest have come together and worked to ensure that all residents have an opportunity to live in a safe and dignified environment, and that anyone moving into the neighborhood is welcomed.

“The generous, collaborative spirit of the residents of Southwest has been inspiring throughout this process,” said Jay Melder, deputy director of Mayor Bowser’s Office of Policy and Legislative Affairs, who has served as the mayor’s point person on the Short-Term Family Housing program in Ward 6. “Ever since Mayor Bowser released her plan to close DC General and replace it with family housing that is dignified, service enriched, and designed specifically for the empowerment and well-being of families, the Southwest community has been at the table, working with us to develop a best-in-class program, and I think that is exactly what we are achieving together.”

*By: Katelynd Mahoney*

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