

Testimony on the Stonebridge Plan for Washington Clinic Site

From:

Julie Hoskyn

4355 Fessenden St NW

Washington DC 20016

I am a 7 year resident of ANC 3E and I would like to speak in support of the Stonebridge Proposal because it's in keeping with the goals and plans of the District of Columbia for smart growth of our city. My reasons are as follows:

1. **Friendship Heights is a "Regional Center"** – located along major arterials served by transit, providing the largest commercial functions outside the Central Employment Area, and containing a large office component. (Comprehensive Plan ("CP"), Section 1107.5)

As a Regional Center, the District of Columbia expects that Friendship Heights will represent land use and development that relates "the overall height of new construction...to that of adjacent structures" (CP, Section 1406.9(a)) and relates "the size and proportions of new construction to the scale of adjacent buildings." (CP, Section 1406.9(b))

The Stonebridge Project proposes a seven-story residential building providing approximately 110 apartment units that is consistent with the building surrounding it. There are commercial buildings located to the northwest and south of the property that stand a minimum of ten stories tall. The Lisner Home to the east is four stories tall. The townhouses to the south are between three and four stories tall. Residential properties on the southeast side are positioned on a hill and are at least two stories tall. The Stonebridge Project provides "high density residential development adjacent to residential districts" that provides a "buffer" in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan. (CP, Section 1406.9(h)(2)) The bulk of the building is situated on Western Avenue, with an expanded green space strategically located between the building and residential properties. The building also provides a natural step-down in height from adjacent commercial properties, as well as an architectural transition from the commercial properties planned for Chevy Chase, Maryland to the residential district.

2. **Friendship Heights Provides a Housing Opportunity Area** -- an area where the District expects and encourages either new housing or rehabilitated housing because it is an area at a Metrorail station outside the Central Employment Area, represents unrealized employment and economic development potential as a "regional retail area", and will support additional housing units. (CP, Section 1118.7)

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The conversion of existing nonresidential buildings for housing and the return of vacant units to the housing market are also goals of the Comprehensive Plan. (CP, Section 1118.6) The Stonebridge Project locates housing within one block of both Metrorail and bus transport as well as the local shopping and retail area.

The Comprehensive Plan encourages housing on suitably located public or private properties that are vacant, surplus, underutilized or unused. (CP, Section 302.2(e))

DC will provide “zoning incentives, as appropriate, to developers prepared to build low-and moderate-income housing, such as permitting additional densities in exchange for incorporating low- and moderate-income housing in development projects ...and give zoning preferences to mixed-use sites that include housing near appropriate Metrorail stations.” (CP, Section 303.2(d))

Specific to Ward 3, DC plans to: 1) “provide the greatest housing densities on those corridors that have the best access to transportation and shopping” (CP, Section 1402.2(d)); 2) give “zoning preference to projects that include housing near each of the ward’s Metrorail stations” (CP, Section 1402.4(c)(5)); 3) “minimize reliance on automobiles and instead promote pedestrian transit and public transportation” (CP, Section 1403.5(b)); and “maintain and expand the housing stock” (CP, Section 1409(h)(2)).

Within the Stonebridge Project, approximately 5% of the apartments will be designated as affordable housing units, providing “low-and moderate-income housing,” as encouraged in the Comprehensive Plan. (CP, Section 303.2(d)) The property also includes underground parking for residents at a rate of 1.1 parking spaces per unit, plus visitor parking, which provides a benefit beyond DC expectations for parking in high-density residential developments in housing opportunity areas.

3. **Child Care** – The District of Columbia is desperately short of high quality day care. In many quality day-care programs in the area the waitlist is around 2 years duration and I personally know several neighbors whose children aged out on the CCPCC waitlist. The Comprehensive Plan has made one of its goals to “increase the supply of child care facilities” (Section 1409.2(m)), specifically, to “increase the supply of child care facilities in each residential area.” (Section 300.7) CCPCC is a successful, non-profit, community-based child care program created as an amenity to the community over 13 years ago, that places a priority on caring for children whose parents live and/or work in ANC 3E. CCPCC prepared to expand its operations and to more than double the number of students it currently serves to address the severe shortage of child care in Ward 3. For three years, CCPCC has tried to secure adequate space to facilitate this expansion. *The Stonebridge Project provides 3,000 square feet, FOR A SECOND LOCATION which would accommodate approximately 44 ADDITIONAL students.* A significant majority of the families at CCPCC support this expansion although they will not directly benefit from the expansion because they

will longer have children attending the school at the time the second location is complete.

4. ***Pedestrian and Vehicular Traffic*** -- Neighborhood traffic is already a concern. As a local I walk and drive this area on a daily basis. Stonebridge has hired traffic consultants to study the potential impact of their proposed development on traffic in the area and discovered that a 110-unit residential complex with a 1.1 ratio of parking spaces to residents will actually reduce traffic flows during peak traffic times. Despite the anticipated reduction in traffic as a result of this development, *Stonebridge is offering to provide the following traffic control enhancements: signal modification/improvement, Wisconsin @ Western Avenue, Western @ Wisconsin Circle and Military @ Reno & 41st; a Neighborhood Traffic Mitigation Study (8/15/02); signage improvements, Military @ Western, Military @ 43rd St., Military @ 42nd St. and Military @ Reno & 41st; Pedestrian crosswalk improvements: Military @ 43rd St., Western @ building entry, Western @ Wisconsin Circle, and Western @ Military; Traffic calming measures: 43rd St. from Military to Jenifer St. Additionally, the Stonebridge Project proposes a landscaped walkway from Military Rd. to Western Ave. (Note: Includes retaining wall for pedestrian cut-through to Western)*
5. ***Environment*** – The Comprehensive Plan calls for an “aggressive policy to replace trees and plant additional trees” (CP, Section 1403.5(d)), and “minimize reliance on automobiles and instead promote pedestrian transit and public transportation.” (CP, Section 1403.5(b)) Additionally, the Comprehensive Plan calls for the development of “a unifying system of well-designed streets, sidewalks, parks, and pedestrian ways.” (CP, Section 709.a) *The Stonebridge Project provides a much needed pedestrian walkway from Military Rd. to Western Ave. (Note: Includes retaining wall for pedestrian cut-through to Western). The Project also includes significant additional open space, tree preservation, creation of a "green" area, additional landscaping in open spaces, and landscaping enhancements to public space (including a gazebo along the sidewalk area on Military Road).*
6. ***Tax Revenue*** – A major problem DC faces is that a large proportion of it’s working population reside outside the District. Increased housing stock ensures that more individuals working in the District of Columbia can also live within the city. As more individuals reside in DC, the city’s tax base can be expanded – more housing means more income tax revenue .
7. ***Community Relations*** – For the past one and one-half years, Stonebridge Associates has been working closely with the ANC 3E, local residents, business operators, and officials of the District of Columbia to provide a development that represents attractive, smart growth for the District of Columbia and offers direct benefits to the members of our community. They have made numerous amendments to the proposal, responding to the needs expressed by the community, only to be faced by further demands. Stonebridge Associates has remained committed to developing this site and has demonstrated its strong desire to ensure that this project becomes a positive

component of this neighborhood (more than nine models have been designed). This developer chose to engage the community in planning of the project from the very beginning.

By right (requiring no special permission from the District of Columbia), Stonebridge Associates could build a five-story property with a much wider footprint than the proposed seven-story building, cut down existing trees, and offer no public amenities (traffic mitigation, child care space, adequate parking, landscaping, etc.) and the neighborhood would have no opportunity to provide input or receive any benefits as a result of the development. Stonebridge Associates does not want to build such a project, rather they have repeatedly indicated their intent to enhance the quality of the neighborhood and become partners with community members in this development.

8. *The Alternative* -- The opponents of the proposal have not provided a realistic alternative to the apartment building proposed by Stonebridge. They have made general suggestions that townhouses be built on the Washington Clinic property. Unfortunately, this option would result in the loss of valuable green space and existing trees. The pie-shape of the land would also make it unlikely that townhouses could productively be planned for that space and it is very likely that traffic flow would be seriously inhibited by such a development. Finally, developing that land with townhouses would deny us an opportunity for access to affordable housing, child care, traffic mitigation, or environmental enhancements within our community. The Stonebridge Project offers a PUD which can be used to protect and preserve the interests of all of the members of our community. The doctors at the Washington Clinic are disbanding and the property will be vacated. The Stonebridge Project is our opportunity guarantee that the Washington Clinic site is redeveloped sensibly, productively, and attractively.

Unfortunately, as with most proposals of this nature, the vast majority of the neighborhood is silent in their assent of the proposal. There is a small group of highly verbal opponents who are determined to impede this development, at whatever cost and regardless of the accommodations made by Stonebridge and the public amenities provided. Stonebridge have made every effort to work with the community in a positive way and I and many of my neighbours appreciate their efforts to contribute to the community with their public amenities package.

Thank you for your attention.