

## TESTIMONY

**In Support of:** Case No. 02-17 (PUD and Map Amendment @ Square 1663, Lot 805 and a Portion of Lot 7-5401 Western Avenue, NW)

**Name:** Allison Barnard Feeney

**Address:** 4519 Chesapeake Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20016

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I am a 15-year resident of Washington, DC. I have owned residential property in DC for 13 years, and for 10 years I have lived in the single-family home I own with my husband in AU Park. I am a working mother of two children. I have one son in Chevy Chase Plaza Children's Center and one son in Janney Elementary. We are active members of the American University Park/Friendship Heights community: we participate in ANC 3E meetings; we perform volunteer work for Friends of Friendship (Turtle) Park, where my husband is on the Board of Directors; and we are both active in the Janney PTA. We are committed to the city, to public schools, and to improving the quality of life in our community by doing what we can to ensure quality childcare, education and play opportunities for our children.

I have been following the progress of this project since the outset; I was in attendance for Stonebridge Associate's first presentation before ANC 3E in November 2001. I have followed with interest the changes to the design that have resulted from the many meetings before the ANC, meetings of a neighborhood focus group with the developers and discussion in other community forums.

I firmly believe that when a developer approaches a neighborhood with the intent of creating a PUD, it is an opportunity for a win-win relationship between the developer and the community. The neighborhood should use the PUD process to negotiate agreements on critical areas of concern then exchange compromises in density or height for amenities it values, but that cannot be secured by any other means. I believe Stonebridge Associate's proposal to be an excellent example of a PUD.

Let me highlight the improvements to the proposal that have been secured for the community through the PUD process:

- The quantity and type of residences has been changed from 225 apartments to 125 condominiums.
- The building height has been reduced from 90 feet to 78.75 feet.
- The entire building mass has been located along the Western Avenue property line, and a community-friendly green space has been secured as a buffer for the nearest residential neighbors.
- Desperately needed childcare space has been secured that will allow a successful childcare center to expand to care for 44 more community children.
- A small number of moderate-income housing units have been secured for young professionals just starting their careers, or retirees, or others with limited means.
- Traffic calming measures, signal improvements, and pedestrian crosswalk improvements have been secured.
- Adequate parking has been secured for the residents as well as visitors and staff for the childcare center.

ZONING COMMISSION  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
ZONING COMMISSION  
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EXHIBIT 194

- Improvements to the Chevy Chase Playground are also planned.

Stonebridge Associates has been consistently responsive to neighborhood concerns and has offered an uncommonly generous amenity package. Our neighbors have negotiated agreements on the key issues of parking, traffic, pedestrian safety, and have established a buffer for the stable, low-density residential area of Friendship Heights. At the same time, through the efforts of the Office of Planning, we've secured two key amenities that could not be secured by any means other than through a PUD—moderate-income housing units and a childcare facility that will accommodate 44 children. Both amenities are desperately needed in Ward 3:

- Escalating property values are nice for residents, but how will young professionals or retirees be able to afford to live in this neighborhood? How will we maintain the diverse population needed to make our neighborhood thrive?
- Chevy Chase Plaza Children's Center was created through a PUD, has a waitlist that is more than 2 years long; and has been looking for space to expand for 3 years without success. How else can we increase the available supply of quality childcare for infants?

So the question to be answered is: Are the amenities offered in this PUD sufficient to justify the additional height and density of the proposal that is above by-right development? In the October ANC 3E meeting, even the representative of the opposition group had no objection to the number of units, the site plan, or the footprint of the building. They simply asked for the same number of smaller units, and for the height of the building to be reduced by 2 stories. It is my position that the value of the amenity package clearly exceeds the cost to the community of the additional height over that allowed by right.

I also support allowing increased height and density on this site because I believe it to be consistent with the goals of the Ward 3 Comprehensive Plan. The dual goals of protecting the existing neighborhoods and increasing housing stock can both be satisfied only if housing density increases at the commercial nodes along arterial roads and at Metrorail stations. Friendship Heights is specifically designated in the Plan as a housing opportunity area, it is a regional retail center, it is well served by public transportation, and it is an appropriate place to increase housing density.

The Comprehensive Plan also calls for providing a variety of housing opportunities in Ward 3. According to the Comprehensive Plan, provision of moderate-income housing is considered both a justification for increased density and an important amenity. This need for this category of housing is mentioned repeatedly in the Plan as a distinct issue with the existing housing stock in Ward 3. Provision of childcare is also considered to be an amenity under the Comprehensive Plan. [See Attachment 1].

This PUD has been lauded by a jury formed by Smart Growth Alliance, a coalition of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Coalition for Smarter Growth, Greater Washington Board of Trade, Metropolitan Washington Builders Council, and the Urban Land Institute of Washington for "contributing to land use, transportation and environmental advantages to the Washington region." [The Northwest Current, Nov. 6, 2002]

We must keep in perspective that the opposition to this project numbers less than 500, in ANC 3E that has an estimated current population of 11,876 [OP analysis of Census Tracts], and in Ward 3 that has an estimated current population of 73,718 [OP]. Friendship Heights is a Regional Retail Center, one of only two in DC, further expanding the definition of its "community" to include the greater DC metro area.

Furthermore, the silence of the remaining 96% of ANC 3E does not imply opposition to the project. I have been discussing this project with my friends and neighbors and have they have communicated to me unanimous support for increased residential density on that site. They communicated to me such varied concerns as for the eroding DC tax base, the lack of a variety of housing types available in ANC 3E, the lack of affordable housing, and the need to increase the number of residents that work, eat, and shop in the neighborhood in order to attract better neighborhood-serving businesses. In talking to my immediate neighbors, I was surprised to find that 4 different households within 200 feet of my home have had a child on the waitlist at CCPCC for more than two years without being able to secure a space. There was overwhelming support for this proposal, and, in addition, overwhelming support for an increase in available childcare for the community.

In closing, I encourage you to approve this application as proposed because it is in accordance with the principles set forth in the Ward 3 Comprehensive Plan. It represents a cooperative effort between the neighborhood and the developer. It provides solutions for problems of import to the neighborhood while providing a generous amenity package to the community that contains desperately needed moderate-income housing and childcare space that are critical to the continued appeal of this neighborhood as a place to start out, raise families, and retire.

Thank you very much for your time.

## Attachment 1

Supporting Excerpts from Chapter 14 of the DC Comprehensive Plan  
<http://www.planning.dc.gov/documents/main.shtm>

### 1401 Ward 3 Economic Development

The Comprehensive Plan for Ward 3 includes the economic development goal of “maintaining and expanding the residential component” [1401.1.a.3].

“Ward 3 presents the opportunity for discrete, highly-focused economic activity at specific locations” including:

- “(b) Development of housing at Friendship Heights, particularly in the extant, large parking lots (Lord & Taylor and Metro) and in the 5300 block of 43<sup>rd</sup> Street, N.W.,”
- “(f) Development of multi-family housing on Wisconsin and Connecticut Avenues consistent with land-use designations in the Land Use Element” [1401.7.b, f].

### 1402 Ward 3 Housing

“Two (2) characteristics – the prevalence of detached single-family housing and the concentration of medium and high density housing on 3 major avenues – distinguish Ward 3 from the other Wards” [1402.1.a].

“...However, there is underutilized land in the ward that should be the focus for the development of new housing; these areas have been designated in the Land Use Element as housing opportunity areas.” [1402.1.g]

The “relation of Ward 3 to the declaration of major policies in the Housing Element of the Comprehensive Plan”

- “(a) ... The Land Use Element designated several housing opportunity areas in the ward – reflecting the ability of the ward to provide new housing” [1402.2.a]

“The ward’s land use policies as stated in the Land Use Element, have been developed to provide the greatest housing densities on those corridors that have the best access to transportation and shopping. Two (2) of the ward’s housing opportunity areas are designated at Metrorail stations; development potential (if any) should favor housing over commercial at the ward’s other three (3) Metrorail station areas” [1402.2.d]

“Where new development is permitted or is prescribed in the Land Use Element, use such development to provide additional housing, particularly for the elderly and low-to-moderate-income populations. Encourage a mix of populations within new or renovated multi-family structures, with up to twenty percent (20%) of the units set aside for low- and moderate-income residents.” [1402.3.b]

“Expand housing opportunities for the elderly and physically challenged, especially along the major transportation corridors and in the Friendship Heights and Tenleytown Housing Opportunity Areas” [1402.4.b]

“Provide zoning flexibility for the production of new housing, especially for the elderly and for low- and moderate-income households, through the following mechanisms:

- “(1) Permitting increased residential densities (consistent with design scale and infrastructure capacity) in exchange for incorporating low- and moderate-income or elderly housing in development projects;”

“(5) Giving zoning preference to projects that include housing near each of the ward’s Metrorail stations.” [1402.4.c]

“Provide more stock by encouraging the inclusion of housing in local neighborhood commercial centers” [1402.4.h]

“Revise the Planned Unit Development regulations, and treat housing, when consistent with this ward plan and when for low, moderate, or fixed-income households, and an important public amenity” [1402.5.d]

#### 1404 Ward 3 Transportation

“The district government should do the following:

“(1) Implement appropriate land use arrangements in Ward 3 that simplify and economize transportation services such as the following:”

“(b) Medium and high density residential uses (where designated in the Land Use Element) should be limited to the major arterials well-served by either metrorail or metrobus” [1404.3.a]

#### 1409 Ward 3 Land Use

Section 1409.2 relates Ward 3 to the land use policies in the comprehensive plan. In addition to

“(b) Protect existing residential neighborhoods and enhance their qualities” it includes

“(k) Maintain and expand the existing housing stock, where feasible and consistent with the Comprehensive Plan to ensure a greater variety of housing types, opportunities and choices”

“(m) Increase the supply of child care facilities in commercial areas within the ward.” [1409.2]

The Land Use Element designates four (4) housing opportunity areas in Ward 3, including Friendship Heights at Wisconsin and Western avenues. The plan recognizes that new development in residential areas is likely to be controversial, so to mitigate the controversy recommends

“(1) Encourage interest in and direct development of the housing opportunity areas” [1409.4.a]

“Where the production of new housing is desirable per this plan, zoning flexibility should be considered, especially for the elderly and for low- and moderate-income populations:

“(1) Consider increased residential densities (consistent with design scale and infrastructure capacity) in exchange for incorporating low- and moderate-income or elderly housing in development projects.

“(2) Consider the provision of elderly and low- and moderate-income housing, when it is a substantial portion of a project, as an important amenity at PUDs, providing that such housing shall be on site.”

“(5) Give zoning preference to projects which include housing near each of the ward’s Metrorail stations.” [1409.4.c]

#### Amenities

“Providing ‘amenities’ by meeting the needs of pedestrians and encouraging bicyclists is particularly important for Ward 3.” [1404.2.d]

“Improving the level of service at street intersections to “B,” or “C” at worst, is important for the protection and improvement of the quality of life, air quality, and residential character of the ward.” [1404.2.g]

“Increase the supply of child care facilities in commercial areas within the ward” [1409.2.m]

“Considering the provision of elderly and low- and moderate-income housing, when it is a substantial portion of a project, as an important amenity in Planned Unit Developments, provided that such housing shall be on-site (given the need for affordable housing in Ward 3, off-site housing shall be disfavored)” [1402.4.c.2]

Attachment 2

Wednesday, November 6, 2002

Serving Communities in Northwest Washington Since 1967

# THE NORTHWEST

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## CURRENT

### City planners give support to apartments

By **BETH COPE**  
Current Staff Writer

The D.C. Office of Planning came out in strong support of a Stonebridge Associates plan for a 125-unit condominium building in Friendship Heights in a report released Monday night.

The position is a change from the office's initial comments, which highlighted many problems with the original proposal for a 185- to 215-unit apartment building. The report drew quick criticism from residents opposing the development.

The plan requests an upzoning of the site of the Washington Clinic doctors offices from R-5-B to R-5-C; no rezoning of adjoining land owned by the Louise-Lisner Home that is zoned R-2; approval of a planned-unit development; and an additional 5 percent of density and height — which can be granted if deemed essential to the project.

According to the report, the new position is based primarily on the proposal's reduction in requested density and upzoning and the inclusion of four to six units of "affordable" housing, which is not required in residential projects under present zoning regulations.

"OP views the provision of on-  
See **Project**/Page 43

**THE BATTLE  
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Chase ANC  
votes to oppose  
project. *Page 5.*

## PROJECT

### From Page 1

site affordable housing as a key public benefit of this PUD. It is the single-most significant of the [amenities]," the report states.

Larry Freedman, a member of the Friendship Heights Organization for Reasonable Development, said that the report, while "exactly what we expected," is flawed both legally and factually.

"It's not well-grounded in the Comprehensive Plan or the zoning laws. I think it's deeply flawed, and I think it does a disservice to the neighborhood and to the city," he said.

Stonebridge Associates principal developer Doug Firstenberg made public the details of his most recent proposal for the site on Oct. 25. In August and September, he submitted two proposals that seemed unlikely to receive support from the local advisory neighborhood commission or the Office of Planning.

The advisory neighborhood commission that represents the area will vote on the new proposal tomorrow. The neighboring Chevy Chase commission voted 5-1 to oppose it Monday night.

The applicant proposes a 182,000-square-foot building, composed of a ground floor and seven stories, on the clinic site. Next door, on land currently owned by the Louise-Lisner home, would be a 3,000-square-foot space for expansion of the Chevy Chase Plaza Children's Center, which is located on 43rd Street.

The Office of Planning report details support for the plan as being based largely on the development of new — and affordable — permanent housing in an area designated in the city's Comprehensive Plan for growth. The area is classified as a regional center and a housing opportunity area, but has seen little residential growth since those designations, according to the report.

The report notes that, in accordance with city efforts to increase the tax base, the Office of Planning aims to bring 50,000 additional residents to the District by 2025. It states that the tax benefits of the project have not been recalculated to reflect the new plan, but that they will be greater than those that could be achieved with a matter-of-right development.

The report also praises the design of the project and amenities included: There are an "unusually high level of public benefits and amenities, especially for a residential project. ... [The Office of Planning] very conservatively estimates the applicant will be providing over \$1 million in 'out of pocket' public benefits."

Last week, the Friendship Heights residents organization, which primarily opposes a change in zoning for the site, filed a request for party status in opposing the proposal, along with a motion for summary dismissal. The motion was based on an argument that the amenities do not meet standards set for a planned-unit development.

Affordable housing — while an important goal for the neighborhood and city — "is described in an incredibly vague and general sense" in this proposal, said

Freedman, who has acted as a spokesperson for the group. "It's impossible to put any actual value on it" because there is no designation of how residents will be chosen, whether units that are turned over will continue to be affordably priced, how big they will be and whether they will be sold or leased.

The Office of Planning report reflects that assessment and requests that Stonebridge detail plans for the amenity during its testimony next week.

The residents' organization has also argued that the amount of affordable housing should be greater — to be in compliance with city planning goals that call for 15 to 20 percent of a development. The four to six units planned constitute 5 percent of the proposed development, which Freedman argued is not enough to warrant higher density. The organization further contends that the housing is unjustifiably used by the applicant as both justification for a 5 percent increase in height and as a project amenity.

"The affordable housing element is justification for the 5 percent increase over the maximum height and density. I don't see how they can get it for an amenity, too," said Freedman.

The group and report also differ on the site's zoning history. The report states that the site was downzoned in 1974, from a commercial designation to its current R-5-B zoning. Opponents of the development have claimed throughout the dispute that the 1974 change marked an upzoning to accommodate the incoming Metro station — and that no further upzoning is therefore legitimate.

Freedman said Tuesday that in 1974 the site was "carefully, deliberately zoned to be a residential buffer." He said that the change was from commercial to residential, but that it is hard to say whether it constituted up- or downzoning.

The neighbors have said that having a buffer remain between the commercial Wisconsin Avenue strip and the single-family residential neighborhood to the east is an important element of their opposition to the proposal. The Office of Planning report contends that the green space provided by the development — advertised as a "permanent transition" between the building and the neighborhood — and the height and design of the project provide such a buffer.

The report also states that, with approval of the plan, the Planning Office will not consider upzoning of either the Lisner property or any other Western Avenue plot.

Stonebridge Associates recently received praise for the plan from a jury formed by Smart Growth Alliance, a coalition of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Coalition for Smarter Growth, Greater Washington Board of Trade, Metropolitan Washington Builders Council and the Urban Land Institute of Washington. The organizations are dedicated to promoting uses, policies and practices that support what they term smart growth.

The plan for the Washington Clinic site was selected as one of three proposals honored for "contributing land use, transportation and environmental advantages to the Washington region," according to a release from the Urban Land Institute.