

**Testimony of Max Skolnik, Commissioner ANC-6D01 ZONING COMMISSION**  
**Before the Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia, Case No. 02-38A, June 14, 2007**

CASE No. 02-38A  
EXHIBIT No. 67

Good afternoon Mr. Chairperson and Members of the Zoning Commission,

My name is Max Skolnik, the ANC Commissioner for SMD 6D01, representing the neighborhood in which half of the Waterfront Mall project is located. I am testifying on behalf of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6D, and I urge you to give great weight to our concerns.

On May 14, 2007, at the monthly meeting of ANC-6D, at which a quorum was present and all seven members were in attendance, we voted 6-1 to support Waterfront Associates and RLARC's Planned Unit Development application. In the previous vote, ANC-6D voted to oppose the application in a 5-1 vote. We believe that this change in support demonstrates the great progress that has been made among ANC-6D, the Applicant, and the Southwest community.

In exchange for ANC support, the Applicant has agreed to the following community benefits:

1. **Grocery Store:** The Applicant has included and reserved space for a new 55,000 s/f grocery store within the first phase of the project. The Applicant has been working closely with the existing grocery store on the PUD Site to renegotiate its lease, currently set to expire in December 2020, and relocate the existing grocery store to the proposed new store location on the east side of the project.
2. **Retail:** The Applicants have agreed to guarantee a minimum of 110,000 sq. ft. and a maximum of 160,000 sq. ft. of retail space. To meet urgent neighborhood needs, the applicant has also committed to have retail outlets such as "restaurants, coffee shops, flower shops, video stores, grocery store, drug stores, banks electronic stores, bakeries, dry cleaners and the like." This is critical to promoting the idea of a vibrant town center. We also appreciate the commitment to identify local and small businesses as potential tenants.
3. **Housing:** The Applicants have committed to a minimum of 800,000 s/f of residential development, of which 160,000 s/f in the initial phase will be dedicated to affordable housing.
4. **Public Safety and Impact on Adjacent Buildings:** The Applicant has put forward a comprehensive security and construction mitigation plan.
5. **Community Office and Meeting Space:** The Applicant has committed to providing 1000 s/f of office and meeting space for ANC-6D and the Southwest Neighborhood Assembly.
6. **LEED Status:** The Applicant has proposed LEED Silver Certification for the 4<sup>th</sup> Street office buildings.
7. **Parking Traffic Issues:** The Applicant has committed to an ongoing dialogue on parking and traffic issues arising from the substantial increase in the residential and commercial populations in this project.

Despite this progress, ANC-6D believes that there are challenges still to be addressed, including:

1. **Reopening of Fourth Street:** The proposed opening of 4<sup>th</sup> St. involves a further challenge to pedestrian access across M St., SW. There is currently neither a traffic light nor crossing from the Tiber Island block across to Waterside Mall. Over the course of time, many pedestrians living on the west side of Fourth Street in the communities of Tiber Island, Harbor Square, Edgewater and Riverside -- some 2,000 residents -- have crossed illegally. To remedy this condition, ANC-6D wishes to see a fully articulated N/S pedestrian traffic crossing at the intersection on the west side of 4<sup>th</sup> St. across M St., SW.
2. **Project Density:** If this project is approved as presented, it will more than double the amount of square footage allowed on the property. While we appreciate that the Office of Planning wishes to maximize development above Metro Stations citywide, ANC-6D would also like to ensure that our neighborhood is not being singled out for such significant construction. In the interests of fairness, the Southwest community will be watching to see that neighborhoods similarly located above Metro stations -- whether on M Street, SW or along upper Connecticut or Wisconsin Avenues -- will bear a comparable burden.
3. **Height and Setback Issues:** ANC-6D is concerned about the M St. façade. The community seeks to avoid an overshadowing streetscape with an insufficient setback of 18 ft. Rather, ANC-6D would support a more

reasonable setback of 22 ft. We feel that it is necessary to minimize nearby residents' loss of views, open space, and light. We strongly believe that an accessible streetscape needs to be maintained given the high volume of development expected along this corridor. Additionally, ANC-6D still seeks to address issues of height and massing. To prevent structures that would overwhelm the neighborhood, it would be preferable to locate the taller structures toward the core of the project. This would align with the historic openness and lowered building heights found throughout the SW community.

**4. Flexibility of Residential Components:** The Applicant wishes to have the flexibility of converting what is currently planned as residential housing at the northwest portion of the site to office space. ANC-6D wants to ensure that the neighborhood retail component of the project is not affected as a result. With an increase in office workers, there will be a potential increase in retail that caters to their needs and not the needs of neighborhood residents. Should this option be exercised, we would like to see that any additional retail developed to serve the office property be developed on a one for one square foot basis with neighborhood serving retail above and beyond that which is currently provided for in the PUD.

**5. Community Office and Meeting Space:** The ANC had requested the following space: 1) two offices for the largest of the Southwest organizations, the ANC and SWNA, at 350 s/f each; 2) two additional offices for other community organizations at 250 s/f each; and 3) a multi-use conference room accommodating 20 people. Most importantly, ANC-6D seeks the inclusion of a large community meeting space to accommodate at least 100 residents. That was not provided. Further, the Applicant chose to provide meeting space as shown in the attached letter for only a period of ten years. To ensure greater continuity, ANC-6D proposes that any community meeting space be for the same duration as that of the site space leased by the District of Columbia.

**6. Establishing a Sense of Place:** The Waterfront Mall project is the most significant development to occur in Southwest Washington in the past forty years. From its inception, ANC-6D had anticipated that this PUD would incorporate the design concepts set forth in other residential properties in greater Southwest. We continue to hope that the Commission will embrace the residential properties located within the Southwest Redevelopment Area as worthy of recognition and preservation. The properties forming the residential boundaries for the current Waterside Mall super-block represent one of the largest concentrations of mid-century modernist architecture in the nation. As the project moves forward, ANC-6D continues to believe that the Zoning Commission needs to acknowledge these residential properties as an important city resource. We strongly urge the Commission to recommend to the Applicant and its architect that they incorporate in their design of the Waterfront Mall an inclusion of these mid-century modernist architectural characteristics. For example, while terra cotta materials may have been used in the past in historic Southwest, no such materials are currently on display in the neighborhood. Clearly, the use of such vibrant colors on the architectural renderings, while potentially attractive in another context, are in direct contravention to the design principles understood to be preeminent. Simply put, the finished product must be fully integrated with the surrounding neighborhood. Consequently, we urge the Commission to ensure that the Applicant and its architect provide a project that will serve as the geographic, civic, and social "Community Center of Southwest." As such, ANC-6D asks the Commission to make certain that the Waterside Mall does not simply develop as a collection of buildings. The community desires a project that reflects the distinct character of Southwest and **provides a sense of place** as the strategic center of our neighborhood.

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In conclusion, the Applicant, ANC-6D, and the Southwest community have discussed the details of this project for many years. After much negotiation, ANC-6D believes that this project needs to move forward. For too long, the local population has lived without its retail and social core. Given the increasing development and demographic pressures on the neighborhood, it is critical that the Waterfront Mall site develops as a touchstone for the community, a place where residents can shop, dine, and enjoy the social interactions so vital to the life of a city. With ANC-6D's strong support in mind, we ask you to consider the issues we have raised and urge the Commission to give *great weight* to our concerns. Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,  
Max Skolnik, Commissioner, ANC 6D