

December 17, 2021

VIA IZIS

Anthony Hood, Chairman  
D.C. Zoning Commission  
441 4th Street NW  
Suite 200 South  
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Application to the Zoning Commission for an Amendment to an Approved Campus Plan and Further Processing of a Campus Plan for The Catholic University of America (“University”) –

**Prehearing Statement for Z.C. Case No. 12-01E**

Dear Chairman Hood and Members of the Commission:

The Catholic University of America (“University”) is pleased to submit its final plans for the proposed Solar Facility (“Facility”) on the West Campus. This important and timely project has been well received by both the city agencies and the community. This large, undeveloped site represents a unique opportunity to promote both the city’s and the University’s clean energy goals. It is an ideal use of the West Campus pending its ultimate development.

Enclosed as **Exhibit A**, please find updated plans for the Facility. The plans provide slightly more detail than the original submission. The plans also include the modifications to the Campus Plan required to allow the proposed project as well as the other intended uses of the West Campus. We note that the current 15 year Campus Plan that is now in effect will expire in five years. Accordingly, Catholic University will have an opportunity to update its long-term plans for the entire campus, including the West Campus when the new plan is prepared. When the Campus Plan is updated, we will work extensively with the Office of Planning, the District Department of Transportation and other city agencies to address all relevant planning considerations.

**The refined plans now include:**

- Additional topographic information;
- More detail on the perimeter landscaping including the potential plant species for the landscape buffer;

- Details on the proposed pollinators;
- Details of the fence that will enclose the solar facility; and
- An indication of setbacks of the solar panels from all property lines.

The solar facility will make an extremely significant contribution to the supply of clean energy in the District of Columbia in a location that will have minimal impacts on the surrounding community. The project earned the support of ANC 5A at their public meeting on November 17, 2021.

As stated in the original application, the Facility will be located on the 41 acre West Campus which is designated RA-1. A large portion of this site is open space, but there is a remnant forest in the southwestern third of the property. All Special and Heritage trees on the entire West Campus have been inventoried. Also, an area at the northwestern corner of the site will continue to be used as a nursery staging area for Casey Trees. The facility has been sited so as to not encroach on any portions of the site with concentrations of high-quality forest resources, to minimize disturbance of other wooded areas, and to preserve individual trees according to DC standards.

As stated in the original application, the University has a campus-wide renewable strategy. The University offsets 100 percent of its purchased electricity with renewable energy credits and has one of the largest solar installations in the District of Columbia.<sup>1</sup> The University installed 2,600 solar panels on seven buildings and the O'Boyle Parking Lot in 2009 and 2010. At 677 kW of installed capacity, this was one of the largest solar installations in the District of Columbia at the time. In April 2019, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recognized the University as a Green Power College Champion and in 2021 the UI Green Metric ranked the University as the 10<sup>th</sup> most sustainable campus in the United States.

The proposed solar facility will occupy approximately 25 acres of the 41 acre West Campus and will be among the largest arrays in DC. It will occupy the entire area that was formerly designated for a roadway and parking lot. The array will directly support the District's renewable energy goals and will create learning opportunities for Ward 5 high school and university students.

The proposed solar facility will generate approximately 10,000 MWh per year or roughly one-fourth of the University's annual energy consumption. The University typically uses approximately 40,000 MWh per year, and while there are numerous conservation measures in place, this number will increase as additional campus buildings are constructed. The power generated will be connected to the grid thereby increasing the amount of clean energy produced and distributed on the grid within the District of Columbia.

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<sup>1</sup> More information regarding the University's commitment to solar energy can be found on the Catholic University website here: <https://facilities.catholic.edu/sustainability/energy.html>.

**Hearing Witness**

There will be only one witness testifying at the hearing although other members of the team will be available to answer questions as needed. We estimate that the presentation will entail approximately 30 minutes. This expert will address the facility's consistency with the University's mission and city's goals, the specifics of the proposed facility and the required modification of the Campus Plan.

Debra Nauta-Rodriguez, FAIA, LEED-AP

Associate Vice President for Facilities Planning and Management / University Architect  
The Catholic University of America

Expert in architecture and planning; resume attached as **Exhibit B**

We look forward to presenting this project to the Zoning Commission on January 6, 2022 and are prepared to proceed with the project immediately if it is approved. If there are any questions regarding this application or the attached materials, please feel free to contact the undersigned at 202-721-1106.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Allison C. Prince

Enclosures

## Certificate of Service

The undersigned hereby certifies that copies of the foregoing document were sent by electronic mail<sup>2</sup> to the following addresses on December 17, 2021.

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/s/

Allison C. Prince

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<sup>2</sup> Upon request, a hard copy can be mailed to you.